

ALFRED UNIVERSITY BULLETIN

A SHORT HISTORY OF BELLS

by

Kamiel Lefévere  
Carillonneur, Riverside Church  
New York City



Bulletin No. 4, Historical Series No. 2, Alfred, New York  
April, 1940

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Lefévere

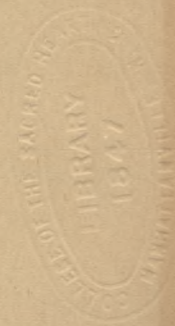
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## FORWARD

Lovers of bell music like to know something of the history of bells. This "Short History of Bells" comes appropriately from the pen of a leading carillonneur of the New World, Kamiel Lefévere, who is Carillonneur of the Riverside Church, New York City, and President this year of the North American Guild of Carillonneurs. Mr. Lefévere played the dedicatory recital on the Davis Memorial Carillon at Alfred University when that ancient instrument was dedicated in connection with the Commencement exercises in June, 1938. From dim antiquity to the present time the story of bells, their origin, evolution, names, uses, meaning, and their power to inspire and move the listener is told with interest and even affection.

The poems accompanying the story are by Mr. Lefévere himself, and by friends, and listeners inspired by his music as he has played on various carillons from time to time. They are themselves in a sense reflections or overtones from the bells.

This *Bulletin* is a happy companion to the Alfred University *Bulletin* entitled "The Story of the Davis Memorial Carillon" just published.

J. Nelson Norwood

Alfred, New York  
April 7, 1940

## A SHORT HISTORY OF BELLS

A flock of bells is winging East,  
To greet the dawn of day;  
Its rosy glow, a color-feast,  
With music-drops to spray.

A flock of bells is looking West,  
Where golden sunset dwells;  
And from the tower's rugged nest,  
Fly wishes from the bells.

Bells, a thousandfold in form and size, and made from a great variety of different metals and materials, may be reckoned among the oldest sound-giving instruments of human contrivance. Tracing the origin of bells, we certainly must look back to a period anterior to that either of the Romans or Greeks. Assyria, Etruria, Egypt and especially China have used bells for many centuries. The Turks were practically the only people who prohibited bells from their country. They never allowed them to be used with any ceremony or social function at all because they considered them an "invention of the devil."

Their forms have been greatly modified during the course of centuries, from the broad basin-like proportions of ancient times to the graceful pendulous shape, which nature herself may have suggested in the pretty wild flowers of the same name. Their voices have been refined, cultured and perfected to a high degree of pure beauty and musical delight. Also very few subjects receive more attention from the antiquarians than old bells of every description, because they sing and tell of past generations, of the greatness of peoples in their struggle for and pursuit of happiness, of battles and victories, of art and peace. The word "bell" is thought to be derived from the Latin word *pelvis*, a basin, or more properly a foot-pan, being compounded of *pes*, (foot) and *lavo* (to wash); and this if correct, would at once determine the hollow shape of bells at all times. However, the name "bell" is also described as coming from the antique Saxon word *bellan*, to bawl or bellow, and which is equally acceptable as the real origin. In the writings of Moses, the oldest literature extant, "bells of gold" are mentioned as suspended to the robe in which the high priest performed his duties in the sanctuary, and their ringing intimated his arrival or presence to the congregation when he was still hidden from their view within the veil.

Several names throughout history classified the classical and Latinized names of bells as follows:

- (1) *Tintinnabulum*, a little bell. This word is probably derived from "tin-tin," a tinkling sound which it produces; or else from the Latin word *tinnitis*, which means "ringing".
- (2) *Petasis*, a large-sized bell, so called for its resemblance in shape to a broad-brimmed hat, which the word signifies. This seems to have been the signal-giving instrument by which the ancient Greeks were called to their

fishmarkets, and also the Romans to their public baths and other social functions. It was suspended and was struck with a hammer, like a gong.

- (3) *Dodona Lebetes*, caldrons of Dodona, because at Dodona, in Epirus, was a temple dedicated to Jupiter, at which the most ancient of the Grecian oracles delivered predictions by means of large bronze kettles suspended in the air near a statue, which held a wand in its hand. When the wind blew strong, the statue with the wand began to move and commenced to get in contact with the nearest kettle; this first slight movement set in motion and communicated with the other kettles, which produced a very disagreeable sound. The artifice of the priests drew responses for the ignorant inquirers who resorted to their shrine.
- (4) *Codon*, the Greek term for what we should commonly call a hand-bell. The meaning of the word signifies the wide orifice of a trumpet, hence the open-mouthed form of the bell is suggested. These bells were carried by the sentinels in Grecian encampments and garrisons who used them to keep the soldiers and guards attentive at their watch and outposts. They were used as ornaments and emblems on triumphal occasions and for domestic uses. They summoned guests to feasts and were also hung round the necks of animals to prevent them from getting lost in the pastures and valleys.
- (5) *Nola*, a bell similar in size to the ones just mentioned, although this term was also applied to the smallest kind of bells, such as were appended to the necks of dogs, the feet of birds and the trappings of horses. It took its name from Nola, a town in Campania, in Italy, where it has been supposed by some that bells were first invented.
- (6) *Campana*, which really means a bell of larger size, was made of brass and suspended in a turret for the purpose of summoning the people to church.
- (7) *Squilla*, meaning a little bell. This word is probably of Italian origin and appears in the writings of early Italian poets.

Medium-sized bells, used in the earliest Christian period, were merely made of two or three pieces of metal, beaten into the required form and shape and roughly riveted together, either in square or rounded form. The sound produced from such rough plates of metal was very crude. Since nothing was then known of that nice combination of sounds with reference to the effect of each and all upon the sound produced, or of the shaping of the instrument to modify the vibrations, or of the elevation and kind of tower in which to hang them, it was left to the genius of a later day to develop these scientific facts and fix their relation to the efficiency and pure musical character of the bell. But as soon as the method of melting metal and molding it into shape was discovered, (although the Chinese had done this already with great success during the past centuries) bells began to grow in size and number, and their quality of sound gradually improved musically in tone and volume. Bell-making became a regular art and trade.

The top part of a tower where bells are hung is commonly known as the "belfry", although it seems that the first syllable "bel" chances to be only a resemblance to the real "bell." In olden times the Teutons gave the word *bergfrid*, from the Latin *beresfredus*, to a movable tower used by warring peoples to protect their watchmen. *Berg* means

"to protect," and *frid* means "peace." These gradually merged to where they became pronounced through the times as "belfry." Afterwards such towers became the first symbols of a settlement of people, the origin of a community, and later were architecturally improved in size and form, as a sign of municipal power, a bell being hung in these towers, called "alarum-bell," to warn the people of approaching dangers.

The natural desire for beauty, plus the growing number of bells in every tower, opened the first opportunities of identifying them from each other, not only in musical tone, but in the form of decorations, because it was now possible to cast letters and ornamental designs on the bells. Names were given to them and inscriptions followed. As the first bell foundries originated in the monasteries, or closely associated with them, the names given to the bells were mostly those of saints and the inscriptions were always in Latin. Monks and priests, with their wide knowledge of Latin, were responsible for the inscriptions and most often dedicated bells to their saints. Expressions of religious praise were added later and larger inscriptions followed during the 15th and 16th centuries. Such an example, found on an old English bell, typifies the miraculous power the people believed their bells to possess. Translated from the Latin it reads: "I praise the true God; I summon the people; I assemble the clergy; I mourn the dead; I put the plague to flight; I grace the feast; I wail at the funeral; I abate the lightning; I proclaim the Sabbath; I arouse the lazy; I scatter the wind; I soften the cruel."

A most extraordinary feature of the career of bells was in undergoing the whole exterior process of Christian baptism, including naming, anointing, sprinkling, robing, sponsorial engagements and every initiative accompaniment which marks the admission of rational beings into the Gospel covenant. This was not with the intention of the remission of sins, but that they may receive the power to "act as preservatives against thunder and lightning, and hail and wind, and storms of every kind, and that they may drive away evil spirits." A large majority of the people believed in those early days that the air was filled with evil spirits, which could be driven away by producing loud sounds by various instruments or objects, and their superstitious impulses originated from certain natural appearances which they could not explain. For instance, a *codonophorus* or bell-man would walk in funeral processions, a little in advance of the corpse, not only to keep off the crowd, but to warn the *flamen Dialis* to keep out of the way, lest he should be polluted by the sight or by the funeral music, and to rout the evil spirits from claiming the soul of the dead person.

Even at the present time, the dedication of new bells is nearly always accompanied by reverent ceremonies and rejoicing festivities. This is not any more done for the old purpose to derive supernatural power and protection from the bells, but simply because they have taken such a large and active part in the life and existence of the people, singing their joys and sorrows in their daily struggles and being in full reality "the voice of the people."

It is not very definitely known when the baptism of bells began. It has been stated that it first originated under Pope John XIII, (A.D. 970), but it must have prevailed long before this time, as in the capitulars of Charlemagne (A.D. 789) the baptism of bells was distinctly forbidden. It is also most interesting to make mention of the "clepsydra" which was one of the horologies, also called "water bell." When the water which was constantly dripping out of the vessel reached a certain level, it drew away by means of a rope connected with the piston in the water vessel, the ledge on which a weight rested; and the falling of the weight, which was attached to a ball, caused it to strike. This perhaps was the earliest kind of striking clock.

In the beginning of the 17th century bellfounders began to make use of their own language for inscriptions on bells and the character and nature of these showed a greater variety of sentiment and color and definitely a closer relationship with the people.

Some of the bells explained also their own particular duties to the community in a personal manner, as for instance:

I ring at six to let men know,  
When to and from their worke to go.

Another bell of the year 1645 tolls the following message:

All men that hear my mournful sounde,  
Repent before you ly in grounde.

And one in Oxfordshire, cast in 1667:

I ring to sermon with a lusty boome,  
That all may come, and none stay home.

Another inscription found on a bell of 1652, and which was more or less similar to many other "fire-bells" said:

Lord, quench this furious flame,  
Arise, run, help, put out the same.

Healthy humor was often found on bells, as this one, cast in 1700 shows:

All you of Bath that hear me sound,  
Thank Lady Hopton's hundred pound.

Also on a bell of St. Benet's Cambridge, one of a peal of six dating 1607:

Of all the bells in Benet I am the best,  
And yet for my casting the parish paide lest.

The famous bell Roeland, largest bell in the carillon of Ghent, Belgium, has the following inscription translated from the Flemish:

My name is Roeland, when I clap there is a fire;  
When I toll there is storm in Flanders.

This bell was once dismounted by order of Charles the Fifth, after being "convicted of having played a very turbulent part with its tongue" during the Flemish insurrection.

Different countries shaped their customs and community activities by the sound and song of the bells, first with a single bell for each different call and later with the joyous ringing and playing of the carillon.

The following bells stand out in their individual voices in the community:

The *Ave Maria* bell for instance would toll every day at six and at twelve on the clock; everyone, either in the street or in the house, would offer a silent prayer which was commonly directed to the Virgin.

The *Gabriel* bell rang in the early morning to awaken the people of the parish and prepare them for their daily tasks.

The *Sanctus* bell at the present time only a small handbell, used in the Roman Catholic service, calls attention to the more solemn parts of the mass. It used to be a larger bell, hung in a turret or smaller tower outside the church, as may be seen yet in some of the older churches and cathedrals. It was always rung to the words: *Sancte, sancte, sancte, Deus Sabaoth*, which means: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts."

The *Passing* bell was being tolled when any one was passing out of life; and it was in some places requested that everyone within hearing should offer a prayer for the

soul of the dying. It was also customary in some places to repeat a certain number of strokes at the end of the tolling, to intimate whether the deceased was a man, woman or child. The most common signal was three rings for a child, two times three for a woman and three times three for a man.

The *Pudding* bell was being rung directly after the service as a signal to serve the dinner on Sundays, after the people walked home from church.

The *Angelus* bell was being rung at six in the morning, at twelve noon and at six in the evening and is three strokes thrice repeated. This custom is still in use in many countries and it is a most impressive sight to watch the workers in the fields, their rugged faces bronzed in the sunset, stop their labor, lower their heads or kneel down to offer a silent prayer to the Lord for the blessings of the day.

The *Curfew* bell was introduced, or rather enforced, all over England by William the Conqueror and originated in Normandy. It was rung at eight in the evening when everybody was requested to extinguish the fire and lights in the house. Houses were heated by open fires and it became the custom to cover the red-hot coals with ashes in the evening before retiring for the night. This was done by means of a metal cap, called "fire-cover," or as in French *couvre-feu*, which finally came to be pronounced "curfew." This metal cap would keep out most of the air and keep the fires alive until the following morning.

The *Fire* bell has been in use for many centuries and was to arouse the people and call for help.

The *Storm* bell warned the people to take all precautions against the devastating effects of approaching storms and bring their animals and belongings under safe cover.

The *Vesper* bell is still being heard in most places as a call for evening prayer and creates an atmosphere of peace over the community.

Bells were also used for many other different parts in the community life. For instance, to open and close the city gates and bridges around the town in the morning and in the evening, to open the markets, to summon the alderman to the sessions and the courts of law, to celebrate the nuptials of nobles and principals and for every sort of celebration or mourning. Another old custom still prevails in different parts of Europe. During the whole week before Easter all the bells are quiet and supposed to have left for Rome. Not a single sound is being heard until the Saturday evening when all the bells throughout the country begin to toll, ring and play to announce their return and the happy coming of Easter. Easter eggs and bells in sugar and candy are supposed to have come with the real bells and dropped out of the sky and everybody starts looking for them all over the place. This is a delightful and fascinating time for the children and grown-ups alike.

Only one or two bells were most often used in these early times to ring for all these various needs and calls of the daily life but as soon as the community began to grow and expand and its dignity and position became more dominant, bells of different size and tone were added so that a different and often deeper tone could be sounded for each communal need. The wealth and commercial welfare of the town and people were reflected with pride in the number of bells in their cathedral or city hall tower. Not only was it best shown in the number of larger bells with their deep tones but also the musical range of the smaller bells became rapidly increased. Around the middle of the fourteenth century a record showed for the first time that a special man was appointed



whose duty it was to "perform on these bells by hand, for every need of the community and its people."

The mechanical progress made in clocks during the latter part of the **fourteenth** century allowed an even greater use of the bells when clocks were being installed in every tower and the hours were being announced by the clock. A definite beginning of the use of bells in a more musical manner made its appearance when the *voorslagh* was introduced. This consisted first of a little simple melody mechanically played and operated by the clock and was first only used before the striking of the hour on the largest bell, to call the attention of the people that the time was going to strike. This simple *voorslagh* was also gradually being extended to the half hour. The friendly competition between the different towns and cities soon extended this mechanical playing to the quarters also and even a flourish of notes, up and down the whole scale, in the form of a rapid arpeggio, for every half quarter seemed to "sing the time away with a smile." This development was most dominant in those countries where the bells had become a regular and loved part of the people and what is at present known as the northern part of France, Belgium, Holland, England and the north-western part of Germany.

The musical possibility of the bells as an instrument was greatly increased when, around the latter part of the fifteenth century, keyboards or claviers made their appearance in different cities in Belgium. The usefulness and practical benefit of these were soon found to fill a very important part in celebrations and festivities of every kind because a much greater variety of music and martial numbers for colorful pageants could be played at any time now, in complete harmony with requirements for the occasion, thus creating the right and colorful atmosphere over the whole community.

The musical quality of the bells was greatly perfected through the artistic efforts and accomplishments of the bellfounders. By the middle of the seventeenth century, when the Flemish and Dutch art was reaching the peak of its Golden Period, Rubens, Van Dyck, Breughel, Jordaens, Rembrandt, Teniers, Frans Hals and so many other great artists were creating their world-famous master-pieces to the music and the inspiration of the bells. Carillon music had become the musical expression of the people on every and all occasions. The artistic and historic pageants, cavalcades and celebrations, a mosaic of glistening, harmonious colors, displaying costumes of regal splendor, with flags of the finest silk floating in the salty breezes of the North Sea, the powerful guilds marched to the joyous music of the giant bell instruments, the carillons. Music pealed merrily from street to street, dancing over the rooftops, it was felt in the shade of the trees around the peaceful canals, palpitating with the hearts of the people at their daily tasks, singing of a glorious past and vibrating with hope for the future.

Carillons are played and operated in two different and distinctive ways: (a) automatically, by the mechanism and in time with the clock and (b) from the keyboard or clavier. The "automatic playing," an extended development of the early and simple *voorslagh*, is done by means of a large drum or cylinder, formerly of wood and later of metal. Rows of even holes are punctured through the cylinder wall, and spikes or pegs, called notes, are put in their proper place by the carillonneur, from specially arranged and fully harmonized music. The revolving drum brings each peg in contact with a metal tongue, which pulls a wire connected with a hammer, raises the hammer and lets it fall on the outside of the bell. The musical effect of such automatic playing, either in form of folksongs or classical compositions in full harmonized style, is very characteristic and announces the time with "a song and a smile." In many places this playing occurs: at the hour, when a fully harmonized classical composition or a combination of

folksongs plays from three to four minutes, before the striking of the hour on the largest bell, called *Bourdon*; then again at the half hour, when it plays a somewhat shorter melody; again a few bars of music announce each quarter and a flourish of notes, up and down the whole range, mark the time every seven and a half minutes. This type of automatic music is not especially a contribution to expressive art, but it is most pleasant in its human expression, because it lives and sings with the people.

The "personal playing" of the carillon is done by a carillonneur from the keyboard or clavier, which is by far the best and only way to bring out the full artistic qualities and beauty of the instrument. This clavier has an arrangement of two rows of well rounded keys for the hands and two rows of pedals for the feet. Each of these two ranges of notes represents or rather corresponds to what the white and black notes are on a piano or an organ, that is, the chromatic arrangement of the musical scale. Each key is connected with a bell by means of a wire which, when pressed down, pulls the clapper against the bell on the inside. Lightness of touch and the amount of tone as produced in rapid passages or in simple playing depends entirely upon the ability and amount of pressure by which the key or pedal is pressed down. A well installed carillon will allow the most delicate interpretation, from a light pianissimo to a strong fortissimo, by the human touch.

Carillon playing may be readily classified in three distinctive categories, looking at it from an international point of view:

(1) The customary playing throughout the year, on regular Sundays and weekdays, usually during the middle of the day, and always on the weekly market day when town and country people sell their wares from little stands spread over the market place and adjoining streets, adding a touch of color and gaiety to the typical atmosphere of community life after the European pattern. Such playing is mainly of a very popular character sometimes mingled with little ordinary street songs, which immediately attract the attention of the less musically educated of the people, but always with a very pleasing effect. They constitute more or less a musical education, teaching them to listen and appreciate more readily the better music, which in turn elevates and beautifies the character, awakening and developing the better qualities in the listeners.

(2) Carillon playing of a more festive character on feast days, holy days, and national holidays. Such programs depict the nature and character of the day, with appropriate songs and compositions, alternating with hymns or other religious numbers. This playing does not necessarily require the careful and well-chosen order of program of the summer evening recitals because its main purpose is to create an atmosphere of festivity and celebration over the whole community and is very often followed, in the evening, with the illumination of the whole tower and by the swinging of the Bourdon bell.

(3) The evening recitals, ordinarily given during the summer months. These programs should be of a very careful order and choice artistically leading up to a climax of fine interpretation and brilliancy. To win the complete attention and interest of the people it is very necessary to start the recital with such introductory numbers as a prelude, cavatina, fantasia, theme with variations, numbers that require a great virtuosity and brilliancy bringing out the full musical value and possibilities of the instrument, and captivating the audience at once. This should be followed with a couple of well-known folksongs, simple in character and interpretation in direct contrast with the brilliancy and full play of the preceding number and understood and enjoyed by everybody. Then the program may be continued with two well-chosen hymns, which

will at once bring out the religious character and qualities of the carillon, and which have made many a poet and artist cry out in exultation "like a mighty prayer in the heavens." As the middle number on the program in great contrast and variety, a classical composition should be played, either in the form of sonata, menuetto, rondo, or allegretto, full of majestic rhythm and refreshing in interpretation and beauty, to satisfy the more musically educated of the listeners. Following this should come a group of folksongs of greater musical value than the first group of folksongs, preferably by the better known composers and loved by everybody; or a few delicate French bergerettes or characteristic compositions of fine beauty, either religious or poetic in character and interpretation in order to leave the best possible impression with the audience.

### SUMMER EVENING PROGRAM

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|----|--|----------------------------------|
| 1. | <i>Cavatina</i> , from the <i>Barber of Seville</i>  | Rossini                          |
| 2. | Two Folksongs:<br><i>My Old Kentucky Home</i><br><i>Drink to Me Only with Thine Eyes</i>                       | Stephen C. Foster<br>Traditional |
| 3. | Two Hymns:<br><i>Lead, Kindly Light (Lux Benigna)</i><br><i>Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart (Marion)</i>             | John B. Dykes<br>Arthur Messiter |
| 4. | <i>Sixth Sonata</i>  | Valentin Nicolai                 |
| 5. | <i>O Lord, Correct Me</i> , from <i>Rinaldo</i><br><i>War March of the Priests</i> , from <i>Athalie</i>       | Handel<br>Mendelssohn            |
| 6. | Two Bergerettes of the 18th Century:<br><i>Que ne suis-je la fougere</i><br><i>Non, je n'irai plus au bois</i> |                                  |
| 7. | <i>Ave Maria</i>   | Schubert                         |

A memorial program is often given when the bells send their mighty voices to the heavens, and the whole community mourns the passing away of a beloved friend in the community, or a great leader or head of the land, the anniversary of a great catastrophe or the commemoration of the World War when millions of young and innocent soldiers were sacrificed on the battlefields in defending their home and country. Such a program leaves an atmosphere of sadness over the whole community.

### MEMORIAL PROGRAM

(Slow tolling of the Bourdon bell for a minute)

- |    |   |              |
|----|---|--------------|
| 1. | Hymn:<br><i>Nearer, My God, to Thee (Bethany)</i> | Lowell Mason |
| 2. | <i>Consolation (Song without Words)</i>           | Mendelssohn  |
| 3. | Hymn:<br><i>When Peace Like a River</i>           | Spafford     |
| 4. | <i>Chanson Triste</i>                             | Tschaikowsky |

5. Hymn:  
*Softly Now the Light of Day* (Seymour) Carl M. von Weber
6. *Marche Funebre*, from *Sonata*, Op. 35 Chopin
7. *Peace, Perfect Peace (Pax Tecum)* G. T. Galdbeck

*(Slow tolling of the Bourdon bell for a minute)*

Christmas brings a totally different kind of program with the rich bronze voices of the bells, singing, tolling, announcing and proclaiming the merry season, Peace on Earth, Good Will to all Men, and which finds a warm response in every human heart. The beautiful old Christmas songs and carols, deeply religious in character, popular in their noble greatness, full of true simplicity, are born creations for the bells and fully appreciated by everyone. It is with a feeling of deep satisfaction that the carillonner climbs to his belfry to send these mighty prayers of peace and good will from his lofty bellnest, enveloping the whole community with a festive atmosphere of rest and thanks in a feeling of contentment.

### CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

- |  |                              |
|--|------------------------------|
| 1. <i>Adeste Fidelis</i>                     | Wade's <i>Cantus Diversi</i> |
| 2. <i>It Came Upon a Midnight Clear</i>      | Carol                        |
| 3. <i>Noel</i>                               | Adams                        |
| 4. <i>Hark! The Herald Angels Sing</i>       | arr. Mendelssohn             |
| 5. <i>Il est ne le Divin Enfant</i>          | French Carol                 |
| 6. <i>Joy to the World! The Lord is Come</i> | Handel                       |
| 7. <i>Herders, Hij is geboren</i>            | Flemish Carol                |
| 8. <i>March of the Kings</i>                 | Provence                     |
| 9. <i>We Three Kings of Orient Are</i>       | Traditional                  |
| 10. <i>Ye Watchers and Ye Holy Ones</i>      | Cologne, 1623                |
| 11. <i>O Little Town of Bethlehem</i>        | Carol                        |
| 12. <i>Silent Night, Holy Night</i>          | Gruber                       |

Old and modern folksongs of many countries present an inexhaustible source of suitable and varied compositions for the carillon. The delicate and ever-refreshing French bergerettes of the 17th and 18th centuries, the typical Negro spirituals with their swinging rhythm, the old English ballads of the Shakespearian period, the rich collection of the old Flemish and Dutch folksongs, the numerous Christmas carols are perfect numbers for the instrument. Classical compositions in the form of sonata, giga, rondo, menuet, adagio, allegro, and allegretto by such composers as Couperin, Vivaldi, Hendel, Pleyel, Nicolai, Krafft, Steibelt and many others are most appropriate. Also the melodious compositions and songs of Schubert, Schumann, Greig, Tschaikowsky, Rubinstein, Gounod and other well-known composers form a different sort of fine interpretation. And a careful research in the priceless musical treasures of the different countries will further reveal a wealth of material to enrich the repertoire of the carillon.

This beautiful and characteristic folk instrument, a true part of the people, has found a warm welcome in the hearts of the American people, where such carillons have

been introduced. Fifteen years of hard but delightful pioneering have resulted in the erection of approximately sixty carillons, representing sixty singing towers in the United States and Canada, a mighty chorus of around two thousand bronze voices working and singing for peace and the happiness of the people. It has been very fortunate that so many wealthy people, lovers of art and beauty, have been responsible for the greater part of these carillons; the giving of such "singing memorials" to schools, colleges or churches constitutes a musical contribution for the living as well as the dead.

In Europe nearly every carillon, whether it is installed in the tower of the cathedral or in the belfry of the city hall, is a municipal carillon, and a municipal carillonneur is appointed by the city council, with special duty to play and perform on the instrument at regular times each week, and also on every special occasion and during the summer months. The people love their carillon because it sings and lives with them in their daily life, it expresses their joys and sorrows, it takes part in every event from birth to the grave and it has often been said that "the carillonneur rules the community."

And we need the municipal carillons in this great country. Hence we need municipal carillonneurs to give the people their regular and customary music at the proper and expected days. It is possible in this great country where freedom is still the happy heritage of the people, where people of every race, creed and religion have come to share this freedom and expression with a background of art and music, to raise the level of this popular art to an unknown peak of success. Every state, every community should have its own singing tower. The lack of old cathedrals with high, open belfries, of historical city halls with their central towers, because of the relatively new communities, offers a splendid opportunity for every town and city to erect its own singing tower as a symbol of the wealth and prosperity of the community. The architectural style and beauty of each tower as a single building in friendly competition with the neighboring towns, would at the same time stimulate the desire for art, and each tower would be a valuable addition to the architectural part of the town. The carillon will then be able to fulfill its human mission to the fullest expectation and the creation of municipal carillonneurs will enable them to devote all their time and energy in giving the people their proper music and fill the community with the happy songs of the people, a proper atmosphere in their pursuit of happiness.

There is something deep and truthful in the sound of a bell, unseen but felt, like the trustfulness of a friend, something that binds us to home and church, the very best in life, something that vibrates the innermost strings of the heart and turns us toward the nobler side of life like a sermon. And the message of the carillon, as the instrument of the people, will teach them to sing again their old folksongs of freedom and happiness, of church and home, simple but truthful in its humble expression.

In times of distress, cold and snow;  
Through summer heat; when rainbows glow;  
By mystic moonlight, glittering sun;  
Through centuries, since passed and gone;  
They send their message, now as then:  
"Peace on Earth, Good Will to Men."

—K. L.

POEMS

*Impressions of Carillon Music*

Like numerous fountains, spraying the air,  
With unrestrained rhythm and graceful in flight;

Like mountains of color, no palette would dare,  
The brilliance of sunlight, the depth of the night.

Like rippling laughter of children at play,  
A youthful cadenza of tumbling vibrations.

Like crystal-clear raindrops on a bright summer's day,  
A symphonic poem of long generations.

Like wild-foaming waves rushing in from the sea,  
Breaking the rocks in their fight for the shore.

Like nature's great choir of birds, singing free,  
A prayer of Peace that will last ever more.

—K. Lefévere

*Our Lady of Good Voyage*

*(Noosa Senhora da Boia Viagem)*

Vespers sung at sea by the Portugese fishermen of Gloucester  
To Captain Joseph P. Mesquita, Vessel and Crew  
and to Mr. Kamiel Lefévere, Carillonneur

*Ave Maria, Maris Stella!*

Our Lady of Good Voyage, whose care  
Heedeth the lowly fisher's prayer,  
Be with us when the storms o'erwhelm,  
To trim our sails and hold our helm—

*Ora Pro nobis, Mater Dei!*

As sinks the sun beneath the wave  
We turn to Thee our souls to save;  
Give us the strength unto our need,  
Our homes to keep, our babes to feed,  
*Ave, Sanctissima!*

*Ave Maria, Maris Stella!*

The sea is great, our boat is small,  
Thy grace sufficeth each and all;  
While on the reeling deck we kneel,  
Calm Thou the waves that wash our keel—

*Ora pro nobis, Mater Dei!*

Pilot whose vigil never fails,  
Shape Thou our course to breast the gales;  
O ship with us, cast out our fear,  
We give Thee all, boat, fish and gear,  
*Ave, Sanctissima!*

*Ave Maria, Maris Stella!*  
The Saviour walked upon the sea,  
And filled the nets of Galilee;  
Cheer us, sweet Mother, for His sake,  
And fill our nets until they break—

*Ora Pro nobis, Mater Dei!*  
Sink deep the twine with gifts of gold,  
More than our tossing boats can hold;  
Lo, ev'ry fish that swims the sea,  
To Thee our offering shall be,  
*Ave, Sanctissima!*

*Ave Maria, Maris Stella!*  
From thy twin towers the carillon,  
Chants clear the heavenly benison;  
Echo our singing souls at sea,  
The bells' soft benedicite—

*Ora pro nobis, Mater Dei!*  
Far music charms the surging seas,  
And hallows ev'ry threat'ning breeze;  
It is the bells' pure orison,  
The voice of thy beloved Son,  
*Ave Sanctissima!*

*Ave Maria, Maris Stella!*  
Dear Mother of the blessed bells,  
Thy voice the Christ-child's glory tells;  
Precious as miracle of old  
Thy love divine doth us enfold—

*Ora pro nobis, Mater Dei!*  
O shield us, Mother, our boat bless,  
When fierce the waves of sin oppress;  
Sore buffeted upon life's sea,  
Our souls thy floating temples be,  
*Ave, Sanctissima!*

*Ave Maria, Maris Stella!*  
The sunset splendors fade away,  
Thy grace shines in our souls alway;  
Hear us as with sweet song and prayer,  
We grateful haul our humble fare—

*Ora pro nobis, Mater Dei!*  
Our Lady of Good Voyage, elate,  
The world-mother immaculate,  
Thy love hath power to still the sea,  
And so we set our course for Thee,  
*Ave, Sanctissima!*

—Dr. William Hale  
Safe Harbor Light  
Gloucester, Mass.  
December 6, 1931

*Bell Moods*

For rich and poor, for old and young,  
For one and all alike;  
From early morn, and all night long,  
We mark the time,  
And strike.

To call the people churchward bound,  
For all to be on time;  
With reverent and solemn sound,  
To offer thanks,  
We chime.

And for the fair, with song and dance,  
With joy we start to swing;  
To bring the people in a trance,  
In joyous mood,  
We ring.

But when we sorrow for a friend,  
A true and faithful soul;  
Whose parting brings us grief no end,  
In sympathy,  
We toll.

And when the sun is setting west,  
And nature's beauties bring  
A golden show'r of peace and rest,  
With heart and soul,  
We sing.

—Kamiel Lefévere





*St. Rombouts' Tower*

Oh ! Proud and grey St. Rombouts' Tower,  
Soaring upward to the sky;  
Tell your tale for ev'ry hour,  
From your mystic bell-nest high.  
Keep on striking, keep on singing,  
Faithful watchman of the past,  
We'll be praying, we'll be wishing,  
'Cause the years are fading fast,  
That your voice may never cease,  
It means freedom, it brings Peace.

—Kamiel Lefévere

*The Tower Ascent*

Bells above and bells below,  
On the stairway as we go;  
All suspended from the heights,  
Each one jealous of its rights,  
Singing at the master's will,  
Summer's heat or winter's chill.

Bells ranged idly in a row;  
Bells so full they overflow;  
Some are silent as a stone,  
Voicing not a single groan;  
Others jubilant as mirth  
When the spring embraces earth.

Bells bear up the load of woe  
Sad at heart alone can know;  
Some lead out in sure conviction;  
Others sing a benediction;  
Bells an inner force may lead  
To the altars where men feed.

These may pledge a lover's troth;  
Those proclaim the doom of sloth;  
Bells that tinkle in the skies;  
Bells that shrivel as we rise  
From the Bourdon's tender note  
To the midget's treble throat.

These are bells beside the stair  
On the way we climb to where  
Sits a master at his seat  
In his musical retreat,  
And we tremble with surprise  
That a sound so dormant lies.

—William Byron Charles

*The Carillon*

We sat  
On the cool, pale brow  
Of a jagged rock.

A full red moon,  
Across whose face  
The night had gently  
Laid her fingers,  
Climbed the branches  
Of a featherly pine  
Till she rested  
On the topmost branch.

Fireflies stopped  
Their ceaseless dance  
To hang suspended  
Like tiny lanterns  
Spangling the silken scarf  
Of night.

Bells—low and resonant  
Like the deep spell of  
Wise men's thoughts.

Sounds—lovely as the laughter  
Of a waking child.

Chimes—the sequined-studded hood  
Of a holy sister against the sunlight.

Music—the rush of sun-flecked waves  
That kiss the cool of evening sand.

Chopin on the rainbow-colored hue  
Of a slender shell.

Love caressing the notes  
Of a silver-toned flute.

My soul  
A vibrant keyboard  
Resounding to the touch  
Of God.

—E. Chamberlain  
Cohasset, Mass., 1925

*The Carillon Call*

Help us to dedicate, O God and people,  
All bells, memorials of peace and war,  
To harmonize life's music, void of scruple.  
The tongue of a carillon speaks clear and far.  
All carillons alike in time and scope,  
Grant harmony to link the earth's finesse—  
Man with the upward reach in faith and hope;  
God in his downward touch of tenderness.

A healing balm and reassurance made,  
That this, our blood-drenched earth, shall never be  
Blood-drenched again, the angry hand be stayed  
By a sound omnipotent; a symphony  
When heard at vespers is a peace assured;  
At dawn it is a mortal illness cured.

Such music wings to men the hymns of peace,  
Dispelling ghosts of fear and dread and hate.  
In this harmonic splendor all heart's-ease  
Shall tendered be, and each shall sing, though late,  
In his own tongue, the melody all sing  
And understand; each hear in his own way  
His mother tongue; the mighty music ring  
Around the world, and turn our night to day.

Song shall mount heaven's dome, and herald peace  
Perennial, divested of all fear,  
And art, perfected artistry, shall lease  
And lead the way, shall call to paths more clear,  
Up to that shining temple, with each mood  
The benediction of true brotherhood.

—William Byron Charles