

# HANDBELL MUSICIANS OF AMERICA CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

## I. BASIC MUSIC THEORY – COURSE C1

Course C1 will ensure a basic working knowledge of music theory, both generally and as it pertains to handbells and handchimes. Covered throughout the Course (general): basic rhythms, pitches, meters, key signatures, dynamics and performance markings, simple intervals and triadic harmonies, score navigation. Covered throughout the Course (instrument-specific): Handbells Used Charts (2-3 octaves), transposition of instrument. Successful completion will entail both written success from an academic knowledge standpoint, and experiential success in ear training situations.

*Prerequisites: none*

## II. COURSE RATIONALE AND OVERVIEW

- A. Members with basic certification should have a clear knowledge and understanding of the rudiments of theory and score construction, in order to intelligently and appropriately approach a piece of handbell music with integrity.
- B. The course can generally handle a large (20-30 students) class, though the needs and questions of individual students may cause pacing to vary. Success of the course will require specific equipment:
  - a. a white board and markers (ideally with lines for a grand staff);
  - b. a piano for the instructor, as well as at least one octave of handbells; and
  - c. a screen and LCD projector and appropriate cables to connect a laptop computer for Powerpoint presentation in lecture. (This will lessen, but not mitigate, the need for handouts. It will also allow the pacing of the class to move more quickly, as the instructor may reference areas of a common slide rather than individual handouts.)

## III. STATEMENT OF SPECIFIC COURSE OBJECTIVES

- A. **Concepts, principles and understandings.** *As a result of this course, students will:*
  - a. Know mechanical “parts” of a handbell score (barline, notehead, stem, beam, grand staff, etc.) and pitch names for C3-C6 (handbell designation C4-C7).
  - b. Understand the one-octave aural transpositional nature of handbells and handchimes as instruments.
  - c. Recognize and identify rhythmic values of notes and rests from sixteenth notes through whole notes (including the mathematical comprehension of dotted notes and triplets).
  - d. Understand measured construction of music and time signatures related to perfect simple and perfect compound meters (2/4, 3/4, 4/4, 2/2, 3/2, 6/8, 9/8 (3+3+3), 12/8), including abbreviations for “common time” and “cut time.”

- e. Recognize key signatures and associated scales up to 3 sharps and 3 flats, inclusive; understand and identify relative-minor equivalencies.
  - f. Comprehend basic dynamic markings (*ppp* through *fff*), *diminuendo/decrescendo*, *crescendo*, *mezzo*
  - g. Understand common basic performance markings:
    - i. *a tempo*, *accelerando*, *adagio*, *allegro*, *andante*, *col/colla/con*, *da capo*, *dal segno*, *fine*, *legato*, *lento*, *ma non troppo*, *meno*, *moderato*, *molto*, *non*, optional-note enclosures, *più*, *poco (a poco)*, *prima/primo*, *quasi*, *rallentando*, *ritardando*, *senza*, *simile*, *staccato*, *tacet*, *vivace*, voice-leading lines
  - h. Aurally recognize intervals of octave, perfect fifth, perfect fourth, major/minor third; understand difference between prime unison and colloquial unison (e.g., “unison at the octave”).
  - i. Have a basic understanding of triadic harmony and chord construction, and the difference/relationship between major and minor triads.
  - j. Recognize and understand basic enharmonic equivalents.
  - k. Comprehend simple score navigation: repeat signs, basic endings, *D.S.*, *D.C.*, *Coda*.
- B. Habits, conduct and skills.** *The students also will be able to:*
- a. Evaluate a handbell score and create a Handbells Used Chart for a three-octave piece.
  - b. Tap or sing any rhythm which may appear in a handbell score of Level 1, 2 or 3.
  - c. Demonstrate/describe any of the basic performance markings and tempi as outlined above (see III.A.g.).
  - d. Identify basic intervals (see III.A.h.) played between two handbells or two piano keys, ascending and/or descending, on hearing each interval played no more than twice.
  - e. Identify a triad as major or minor upon hearing it played [*una corda*] no more than twice.
  - f. Identify a scale/key (as both Major and relative minor) upon seeing a key signature or eight-note scale for keys described in III.A.e.
  - g. “Build” any major or minor triad, in root position.
  - h. Write a “navigation map” for a piece of music which includes items described in III.A.k.
- C. Attitudes, interests and appreciations.** *Further, the students will:*
- a. Approach score study with confidence about basic rhythms and intervals.
  - b. Speak with friendly authority to ringers about basic rhythms, melodies and harmonic sounds.

## IV. UNITS OF THE COURSE

### UNIT I: THE BASICS

#### A. Content description

This unit will cover (hopefully in review format) the terminology of the “anatomy” of a score, pitch names for C3-C6 (handbell designation C4-C7), and the transposing nature of the handbell/handchime instrument.

- B. **Learning activities**
- a. Review/discuss terminology of mechanical “parts” of a handbell score, as well as pitch names for C3-C6 (handbell designation C4-C7).
  - b. Play middle C on piano and a C5 handbell (and other such examples) to discuss transpositional nature of the instrument (or more specifically, the printed music for the instrument); also reference other transposing instruments.

## **UNIT II: RHYTHMS AND METERS**

- A. **Content description**  
This unit will cover rhythms, note values and rest values, including how they fit within various basic time signatures.
- B. **Learning activities**
- a. Discuss various note values (including dotted notes and triplets) and how they are incorporated into various time signatures.
  - b. Corporately and individually tap/sing various rhythmic examples, both single-line and from handbell literature.
  - c. Discuss definitions of “perfect,” “simple” and “compound” as these terms pertain to time signatures.
  - d. At the whiteboard, students will each create various multimeasure examples of single-line rhythms using the note values described above. These will be tapped/sung by the class and evaluated for accuracy and practicality.

## **UNIT III: KEY SIGNATURES AND SCALES**

- A. **Content description**  
This unit will introduce the Circle of Fifths and examine major key signatures and scales up to 3 sharps and 3 flats (inclusive), as well as relative-minor equivalencies. Also covers basic enharmonics.
- B. **Learning activities**
- a. Students will be given a Circle of Fifths chart to examine. The concept behind Circle of Fifths will be introduced.
  - b. Keys as described above will be discussed, as will their relative minor keys (and the minor third relationship between their tonic notes).
  - c. Students will be introduced to the concept of basic enharmonic equivalents, and asked to create several “pairs” of enharmonics to share with the class.

## **UNIT IV: INTERVALS AND CHORDS**

- A. **Content description**  
This unit introduces basic intervals (both printed and aural), and covers the usage of major/minor thirds in construction of major/minor triads.
- B. **Learning activities**
- a. Using a keyboard handout, students will be introduced to basic intervals as they relate to one another on the keyboard.

- b. Students will listen to different intervals to evaluate them aurally. Memory aids based on common tunes will be brainstormed by the class and/or provided by the instructor to help remember what intervals sound like.
- c. The students will listen to various intervals in ear-training exercises and work to identify them, corporately and individually.
- d. Triadic harmony will be introduced (major/minor), and students will listen to various major/minor triads in root position to evaluate and identify them aurally.

## **UNIT V: BEYOND THE NOTES**

- A. **Content description**  
This unit will review/discuss basic dynamics and performance markings.
- B. **Learning activities**
  - a. Students will receive a handout with various performance markings and given the opportunity to fill in definitions on their own, individually, for all that they believe they know. The class will then review the document together, each student completing and/or correcting his/her document as required.

## **UNIT VI: SCORE NAVIGATION**

- A. **Content description**  
This unit will examine simple score navigation involving repeats, endings, etc.
- B. **Learning activities**
  - a. Repeats, endings, *D.S.*, *D.C.*, Coda and such will be discussed.
  - b. Various pieces of music will be projected to allow students to practice simple score navigation and create “navigation maps.”

## **V. RECOMMENDED EVALUATION PROCEDURES**

- A. Each component will be in written form and will be evaluated “pass” or “fail” by the instructor based on student’s demonstration of working knowledge for each concept. Testing topics shown below may be combined by the instructor.
  - a. Score “parts diagram” test
  - b. Pitch/range (printed recognition) test
  - c. Definitions test
  - d. Key/scale/chord identification and creation test
  - e. Ear-training test: intervals and chords
  - f. Ear-training test: rhythmic dictation
  - g. Printed rhythm test (completing measures, identifying beats, etc.)
  - h. Score navigation test
- B. All written evaluation components must be successfully passed in a way which demonstrates solid working knowledge of all concepts to complete Course C1, Basic Music Theory.

## VI. RESOURCE MATERIALS

### A. For the students

#### a. Required textbook and other materials

Behnke, John (ed.). Handbell and Handchime Notation. Cincinnati, OH: AGEHR Music. AG015. 2017.

### B. General bibliography (not required, but recommended)

a. Gerou, Tom; Lusk, Linda: Essential Dictionary of Music Notation. Van Nuys, CA: Alfred Publishing. ISBN 0882847309. 1996.

b. Randel, Don Michael (ed.) New Harvard Dictionary of Music, The. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press/Belknap Press. ISBN 0674011635 (4<sup>th</sup> edition). 2003.

c. Read, Gardner. Music Notation: A Manual of Modern Practice. New York, NY: Taplinger Pub. Co. ISBN 9780800854539 (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). 1979.

d. Surmani, Andrew; Surmani, Karen Farnum; Manus, Morton. Alfred's Essentials of Music Theory: A Complete Self-Study Course for All Musicians. Van Nuys, CA: Alfred Publishing. ISBN 9780739036358 (includes 2 CDs and answer guide). 2004.

e. Various handbell music as recommended by instructor

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