



# Bell Music

## Reading Course #2

### Terms and Techniques

D. Rod Lloyd

Columbia River Handbells

2010

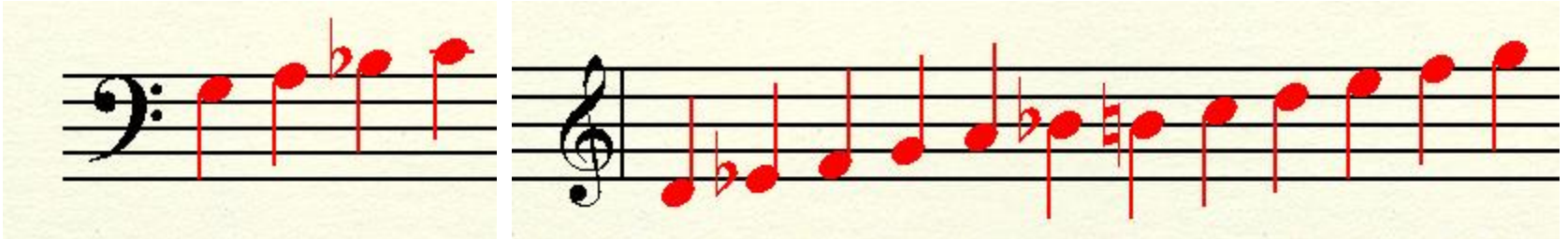
# Musical Terms and Signs Specific to Handbells

- Musicians new to handbells will need to be familiar with the following musical symbols and techniques.
- Review these terms often to save delays in rehearsal.

# Bells Used Table

- Most bell music has a 'Bells used Table' at the beginning (or end) of the music.
- This allows a ringer to see what bells are needed for that particular piece of music.
- It is especially useful to see if the music requires accidentals (sharps & flats).
- The bells used table should be the first place you look when opening a piece of music.

## Bells Used Table



- You can see here that  $Bb$ 's and  $Eb$ 's play instead of their naturals.
- And B natural also plays in the treble clef.

# Damping

- It is just as important to turn off a note on time, as it is to ring it on time.
- Notes left to ring after intended to be stopped create unpleasant, unintended sounds.
- Damp the bell exactly at the end of its note value, unless it plays again immediately with no rest between.

# Thumb Damp

- Thumb damp means placing your thumb on the bell casting while ringing the bell.
- This creates a 'stopped sound'.
- You have to experiment with the best place for your thumb for each size of bell to get the desired sound.
- It is written ***TD*** and indicated with dots over or under each note requiring a thumb damp.

# Let Vibrate

- When **LV** appears in the music we do NOT damp each note ...until:
  - Another **LV** is written, indicating damp all bells and start a fresh LV.
  - An **R** is written indicating back to normal ring and damping.
  - $\oplus$  This is a Grand Damp usually indicating end of the LV section.

Start Let  
Vibrate

Start new  
Let Vibrate

Back to Normal  
Ringing and  
Damping

LV

LV

R



Don't Damp notes until  
the next LV

Don't Damp notes  
until the R

Damp all Notes

Damp all  
Bells

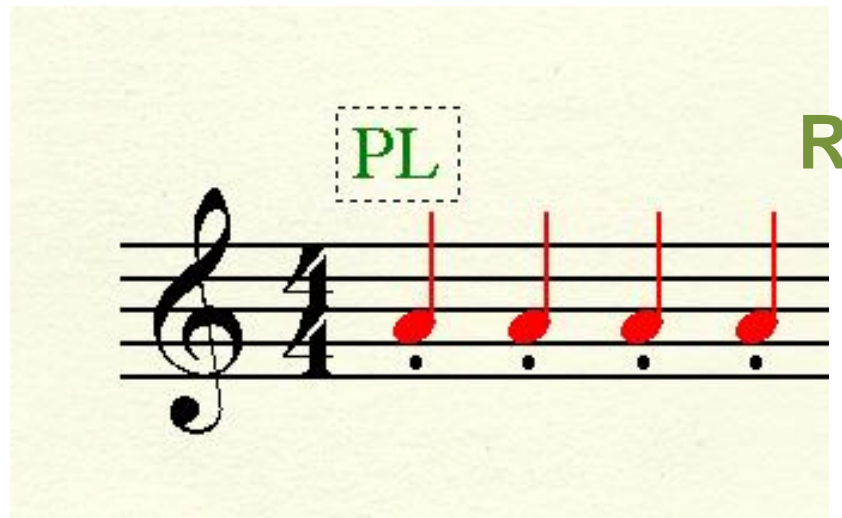


# Mart

- The symbol ▼ means gently drive the bell into the foam table. Drop it only the height equal to the diameter of the bell to produce a dull note.
- If an up arrow ▼↑ is added to the symbol, mart into the table and immediately lift the bell to reveal a little sound left in the bell. This is called a Mart Lift.

# Pluck

- The **PL** symbol means throw the clapper down with you hand with the bell on the table.
- Each note to be plucked will have a dot over or under it.
- When the plucking ends an **R** will indicate normal ringing



# Tower Swing

- The sign ↓↑ means rotate the bell down by your side, making sure the mouth of the bell rotates past facing the floor, and back up to the ready position on the beats indicated.
- You need to step back to miss the table.
- Make sure behind you is clear of obstructions.

# Mallets

- Dots placed over or under the notes can also mean play the note with a mallet as instructed by the director or by a foot note.
- Always play with two mallets for smoother sound.
- Strike the bell with the mallet with the bell on the table, at the same place the clapper would strike.
- Use the correct mallet for each bell.
- Newer music may have a plus instead.

# Suspended Mallets

† Strike the bell with a mallet while the bell is held off the table.



All ringers should hold the bells in the same direction [either up or down].



# Pluck

- Dots over or under the note might also mean pluck.
- Look for a footnote or directions from the director.
- With the bell on the table and the handle towards you, lift the clapper and throw it down on to the casting with your thumb and first finger to create a stopped sound.

# Shake

- A shake, noted *sk* means to shake the bell rapidly for the value of the note.
- Sometimes a zigzag line  appears with the *sk*

# Echo

- The symbol  $\cup \uparrow$  means rings the bell and touch the table pad lightly and lift the bell again creating a wow sound.
- You need to experiment to get the right sound



# Ring Touch

- *RT* indicates you make a short ring and damp it quickly against the body.
- Ring it close to the body and quickly damp.

# Optional Notes

- ( ) [ ] < >
- Notes enclosed in any of these containers are only played under certain circumstances which will be explained by a *Note* at the start of the piece or in a *foot note*

# Marking Music

- Most bell choirs (or teams as I like to call them – it IS a team sport!!) allow ringers to mark their music.
- This is especially helpful for beginners.
- To start you can circle your notes or place the note name under or over it.
- As you play more complex music you may wish to make notes on changing to accidentals, repeats or key changes.

- It is a good idea to mark at the beginning of the piece, the notes you use during the piece.
- Circle the starting notes.
- Note if chimes or mallets are needed.

# Ringling while Sitting

- Ringing while sitting down is very difficult and should be restricted to emergencies.
- If you must sit and ring, use a very high stool that gets you arms as high as if you were standing.
- Use a step if necessary to get on the high stool.

# The Unwritten Rules

At rehearsal:-

- Arrive early to help set up.
- Stay to put away the bells and equipment.
- Set up bells and music of other members who must arrive late.
- Do not chew gum [spit gets on the bells]
- Do not talk during rehearsal, especially when the director is talking.

- Wear gloves as appropriate.
- Wipe off the bells at the end of rehearsal.
- No jewelry, sequins, pocket buttons/snaps that will compromise damping.
- Study you music at home.
- Know your musical terms and symbols.
- Comfortable shoes [heels not recommended].
- NO chewing gum.
- Always have a pencil handy when rehearsing to make notes.