

## 2007 Holiday Concert Schedule

Please visit [www.virginiahandbellconsort.com](http://www.virginiahandbellconsort.com) for more information and schedule updates!

**Nov**  
**25** Sunday, November 25, 2007 -- 5:00 PM  
Cradock Baptist Church  
96 Afton Parkway, Portsmouth, VA

**Dec**  
**2** Sunday, December 2, 2007 -- 6:30 PM  
Beech Grove United Methodist Church  
4251 Driver Lane, Suffolk, VA

*Two special holiday concert performances with the Virginia Wesleyan College Choir!*

**Dec**  
**3,4** Monday, December 3, 2007 -- 7:30 PM  
Tuesday, December 4, 2007 -- 7:30 PM  
Virginia Wesleyan College  
1584 Wesleyan Drive, Virginia Beach, VA

**Dec**  
**7** Friday, December 7, 2007 -- 7:30 PM  
Williamsburg Baptist Church  
227 Richmond Road, Williamsburg, VA

**Dec**  
**8** Saturday, December 8, 2007 -- 7:00 PM  
Reformation Lutheran Church  
13100 Warwick Blvd, Newport News, VA

**Dec**  
**9** Sunday, December 9, 2007 -- 7:00 PM  
Blessed Sacrament Roman Catholic Church  
6400 Newport Avenue, Norfolk, VA

**Dec**  
**15** Saturday, December 15, 2007 -- 6:00 PM  
First Church of God  
8600 Granby Street, Norfolk, VA

**Dec**  
**16** Sunday, December 16, 2007 -- 5:00 PM  
Old Donation Episcopal Church  
4449 N. Witchduck Road, Virginia Beach, VA

**Dec**  
**31** First Night Williamsburg  
Monday, December 31, 2007  
Colonial Williamsburg

*VHC is honored to be returning as a performing ensemble. Concert location and performance times to be announced through the VHC and the First Night websites.*



## Director's Notes: VHC Plays Holiday Classics

VHC's holiday concerts will feature some of the most familiar orchestral music associated with Christmas. Yes, we said orchestral! But wait until you hear it played on handbells! You need not go see the ballet this Christmas - come hear us play *The Nutcracker Suite* instead!

You will clearly see in your imagination Clara and her Nutcracker as they visit the Land of the Sugar Plum Fairy and are treated to dances by the Sugar Plum Fairy, the Arabians, the Reed Flutes, and the Russian dancers. Tchaikovsky wrote this suite of music for concert performance before it was performed with the ballet, and it has become a staple of the Christmas repertoire.

Continuing with the fairy tale theme, VHC will play Leon Jessel's *Parade of the Wooden Soldiers*, stopping to wind up the toy soldier when he runs out of steam! Then it's on to Bizet's *Farandole* and Prokofiev's *Troika*.

But lest you really get confused at this point in the program as to whether you are at a handbell concert or an orchestra concert, we'll throw in selections from the most famous Christmas choral work of all, the *Messiah*. From the lilting melody of *He Shall Feed His Flock* to the rousing *Hallelujah* chorus, you'll be on your feet cheering at the end!

Yes, the holiday classics arranged for handbells will entertain you and lift your spirits this Christmas season!

We'll look for you at our concerts!

*Agnes L. French, Director*

## A Little Bit of History: *The Nutcracker*



Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky

The story of *The Nutcracker* was based on the story by E.T.A. Hoffmann, *The Nutcracker and the King of Mice*, which was part of a collection of children's stories written in 1816. After the success of *Sleeping Beauty*, Ivan Vsevolozsky, director of the Imperial Theaters, proposed

another partnership between choreographer Marius Petipa and composer Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky. Both men refused the commission because they disliked the story.

Vsevolozsky persisted with Petipa, allowing him to take charge of the scenario and make changes to the story such as creating the Sugarplum Fairy to reign over the Kingdom of Sweet. With the addition of a one act opera to the commission, Tchaikovsky agreed to join the project.

The premiere performance of *The Nutcracker* was shared with the opera *Iolanthe* on December 17, 1892. *Iolanthe* met with critical acclaim, but the ballet did not. (Tchaikovsky himself was less than satisfied with it. He did not particularly want to write it.)

The first full length production in the US was at the San Francisco Ballet in 1944. The version that we all know and love was choreographed by George Balanchine and performed at City Center, New York City, in 1954. Balanchine choreographed and premiered his New York City Ballet version, which has since been staged every year since then. It was performed live on television twice, and made into a full-length feature film.

Its success contributed greatly to making productions of *The Nutcracker* annual Christmas season traditions all over the world - a phenomenon which did not really come to flower until the late 1960s. In Balanchine's version, the roles of Clara (here called Marie) and the Nutcracker are danced by children, and so their dances are choreographed to not be as difficult as the ones performed by the adults.

(Article by Lois Reese)

## Handel's *Messiah*



George Frederic Handel

*Messiah* is an oratorio by George Frederic Handel. It is based on a libretto by Charles Jennens, who sought to tell the entire story of the Christ through passages of Scripture put to music.

Handel himself was a devout Christian, and the work is a presentation of Jesus' life and its significance according to Christian doctrine.

Although the work was conceived and first performed for Easter, it has become traditional to perform the *Messiah* oratorio during the Advent season.

Handel began setting the libretto to music in the summer of 1741. Though at the peak of his musical prowess, he was financially broke and sought to complete the work as soon as possible. He grew so absorbed in the work that he rarely left his room, hardly stopping to eat. Within six days part one was complete. In nine days more he had finished part two, and in another six, part three. The orchestration was completed in another two days. In all 260 pages of manuscript were filled in the remarkable short time of 24 days.

*Messiah* premiered on April 13, 1742 at the Music Hall in Dublin. Handel conducted *Messiah* many times and, as was his custom, often altered the music to suit the needs of the singers and orchestra he had available to him for each performance. Thus, no single version can be regarded as the authentic one. Many variations and rearrangements were added in subsequent centuries -- a notable arrangement was one by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, translated into German.

Handel died in 1759 and is buried in Westminster Abbey. *Messiah* is one of his greatest musical creations, and is arguably the greatest piece of Christian music ever written. Sir Newman Flower, one of Handel's many biographers, summed up the consensus of history: "Considering the immensity of the work, and the short time involved, it will remain, perhaps forever, the greatest feat in the whole history of music composition."

## VHC Merchandise: Are you in need of unique holiday gifts?

All items are available for purchase at most concert venues and online through [www.virginiahandbellconsort.com](http://www.virginiahandbellconsort.com).

I'm dreaming of a  
VHC Christmas!



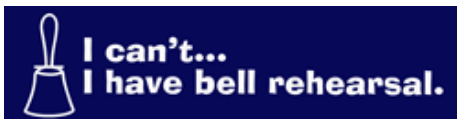
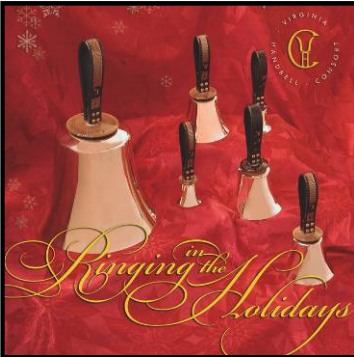
### **On This Day, Earth Shall Ring! \$15 each, \$25 combo**

Our newest recording, was recorded in December 2005, and represents a wide variety of sacred and secular music of the season, including some of our favorite selections!

1. *On This Day, Earth Shall Ring*, Hart Morris
2. *Masters in This Hall*, David Kent
3. *God With Us For All Time*, Betty Garree
4. *Greensleeves*, Cathy Moglebust
5. *Villancico*, Gail Downey
6. *Caroler's Hoedown*, Valerie Stephenson
7. *Go, Tell It on the Mountain*, Cynthia Dobrinski
8. *Mary Had a Baby*, John Behnke
9. *Feliz Navidad*, Hart Morris
10. *Shades of Forest Green*, Tim Waugh
11. *Ding Dong! Merrily on High*, Cynthia Dobrinski
12. *I Saw Three Ships*, Scarlett Varela
13. *Away in a Manger*, Cynthia Dobrinski
14. *Jingle Bells*, David Kent

### **Ring in the Holidays \$15 each, \$25 combo**

1. *Sleigh Ride*, Leroy Anderson, Robert Ivey
2. *Change Ring on 'Divinum Mysterium'*, Gramann
3. *Comfort, Comfort Ye My People*, Bourgeois, Handel, Cynthia Dobrinski
4. *Marche from 'The Nutcracker'*, Tchaikovsky, William Griffin
5. *Dance of the Sugarplum Fairy* from 'The Nutcracker', Tchaikovsky, Gramann
6. *Coventry Carol*, Cynthia Dobrinski
7. *The Holly and the Ivy*, Kris Anthony
8. *Sing We Now of Christmas*, Kevin McChesney
9. *Pat-a-Pan*, Hart Morris
10. *I Wonder as I Wander*, Niles, Hopkins, Fred Gramann
11. *Sleigh Ride (Troika from 'Lt. Kiji')*, Prokofiev, Kevin McChesney
12. *We Wish You a Merry Christmas*, Cynthia Dobrinski
13. *Up on the Housetop*, Arnold Sherman



### **Bell Rehearsal Bumper Sticker \$2.50**

Are you dedicated to the art of handbell ringing? Show off your fanaticism with one of VHC's newest, hottest selling products... *the dedication bumper sticker!* Attract glances of approval from fellow ringers

by displaying one on your car bumper; inspire your ringers by displaying one in your rehearsal room; dress up your bell cases in preparation for your next Area Festival; or buy one for each of your ringers!

Stickers are available at concerts for \$2.50 each. Stickers are always available for online purchase from the VHC website. All stickers are shipped in a cardboard mailer to prevent folding or damage. Shipping is \$1.50 per order, regardless of quantity.



### **Friends of VHC Decal**

Are you a Friend of VHC? Our program growth is dependent on the generosity of corporate and individual donors from our community. Donations go toward the purchase of new equipment and the commissioning of new handbell compositions.

Please consider making a donation by using the form on the back of this newsletter. *Let everyone know that you proudly support the VHC!*

(VHC is a non-profit organization. Donations are tax-deductible.)

## VHC On Tour... Again!

Early on Friday, May 18, 2007, VHC met at our host church, First Presbyterian Church in Hampton, to load all our equipment for a weekend concert tour that would take us to Maryland and northern Virginia. Unlike last year's trip, traffic moved pretty well and we arrived at Dulin United Methodist Church exactly at 3 pm, according to Norman's well thought-out itinerary. Next came the fun of unloading and setting up, as well as cleaning some errant trail mix out of Cindy's van, which became a daily activity.

One of the biggest challenges in touring is setting up in venues we've never seen. Dulin UMC presented one of those challenges. We are most comfortable setting up in two rows - four tables in the front row and two tables in the back for the bass ringers. We decided to set up in three rows - two tables to a row. The bass ringers are never fazed by these situations as they always get two tables for the bass bells no matter what. It's the rest of the ringers who have to adjust!

The program included *Cascades*, *Reflections on the Plains* (with Al sounding the trumpet call at the end of the third movement), *Visions*, *Plink, Plank, Plunk*, *Metamorphosis*, *Jazz Waltz on "Praise to the Lord"* (featuring Lois playing the flute solo), *Bell Hop Boogie and Blues*, Gershwin's second *Prelude for Piano*, *Rêverie* by Debussy and a new piece we commissioned Hart Morris to write, entitled *Breakaway!*. *Breakaway!* is exactly what you would expect from Hart, very rhythmical, some optional percussion, and a lot of fun.

The third movement of Cathy Moglebust's *Reflections on the Plains* was written in memory of those who lost their lives in the bombing of the Federal Building in Oklahoma City. That movement took special meaning to us as the tragedy at Virginia Tech happened just before our spring concert season.

We played to a very warm audience that Friday night and then packed the van up and headed to our wonderful host homes for a well-deserved rest.

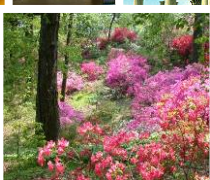
Saturday morning we bid farewell to our hosts and began the day with a side trip to the National Botanical Gardens in Washington, D.C. Among the beautiful displays was a section devoted to bonsai, including one that had survived the atomic bombing in Japan and was brought over to the United States. Some of these trees had been in training for hundreds of years.

We continued on to Easton, MD for a concert at the First Baptist Church. We were happy to be able to use our regular set up in their sanctuary. Saturday's audience was another enjoyable one and we once again headed to our host families for the evening.

Sunday morning we traveled over to Frederick, MD to the Evangelical Lutheran Church. We were pleasantly surprised to find out that the downtown area of Frederick has a really nice "quaint old town" feel to it. We all ate lunch at a downtown restaurant before heading to the church to set up.

We found out that the church was used as a hospital during the Civil War battle at Antietam. Our third and final concert of the weekend tour was played to an eager afternoon audience. After the standing ovation, we began the task of loading up and preparing for the drive back to Hampton.

It was another successful weekend tour! We were able to spend time with each other, meet new friends, renew friendships, and show people what a bell choir can do. It's exciting to think that while P.T. Barnum brought the idea of handbell choirs to the United States as a sideshow or carnival attraction, handbell choirs of today are able to harness the "controlled chaos" of group ringing and present such wonderful musical performances.



## VHC Notes

🎵 Are you an advanced handbell ringer? Open auditions for 2008 will be conducted in January. Please contact us at 757-456-1312. See our website for more information.

🎵 We are accepting concert dates for our 2008 schedule. If you're interested in hosting VHC for a concert, wedding, or workshop, contact us at 757-456-1312 or by e-mail at [vhc@virginiahandbellconsort.com](mailto:vhc@virginiahandbellconsort.com).

🎵 VHC is excited to announce the purchase of two additional bass bells, A2 and B2. This brings our "low bass" collection to a total of four bells (G2, A2, A#2, B2). These bells weigh a ton and are nearly a foot in diameter! WE NEED A TRAILER now more than ever!! Anyone?

🎵 The Consort would like to thank our friends, volunteers, and sponsors for their continued support:

Benefactors (\$500 and above) - Ernie & Lynn Dash, Olaf & Martha Elton, Marilyn & David Tyrrell

Corporate/Organization Support - First Presbyterian Church (rehearsal space), Sammons Commercial Printer (printing), Art Louis Photography (website pictures), Virginia Commission for the Arts, City of Newport News and the Newport News Arts Commission, Charm Peterman (bell maintenance), and Loran Easter (printing support).

🎵 A big "welcome back!" to charter member Karen Simons. Just look for the ringer who smiles the most!

🎵 VHC is proud to debut its newest website design. This is the third design for VHC's online presence, which started many years ago with two simple pages. We hope you enjoy the new site.

## Congratulations!

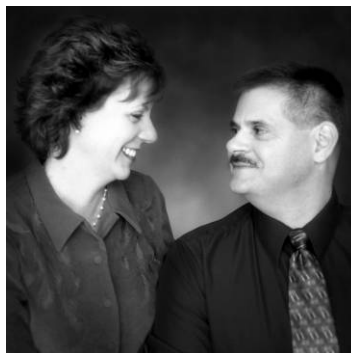


Norman and Rebecca Elton were married on August 5, 2007!

Norman is a network engineer at the College of William and Mary. Rebecca has a Masters of

Science degree in Environmental Education and is teaching at the Williamsburg Christian Academy.

## Meet: Al and Lois Reese



Al and Lois met in 1981 while studying music at Indiana University of PA.

Married in 1986, they began their ringing careers the following year at First UCC in Hampton, VA. Al's

military career as an Army bandsman led them to West Point, NY in 1994. While there, they dove into many musical adventures together.

Al learned to play the organ, enabling them to work together at First Presbyterian of Monroe, NY – he as the organist and she as the music director. They expanded the handbell program over the next 10 years from one to two choirs and added the fourth octave of bass bells., (Lois needed a way to keep Al out of trouble during rehearsal). They also formed several small ringing groups to keep all the bell hogs happy... all this while both obtained their Masters degrees in church music from Concordia University in Wisconsin.

Lois' positions as choir director led her into vocal studies, with Al following close behind. Any good Welshman would not miss the opportunity to improve his singing. At Lois' first voice lesson with Ron DeFesi, a well known opera director in the Hudson Valley, she declared, "I am not here to study opera." It did not take long for Al and Lois to see the light, and they both headed for the stage to sing in operas.

After Al's retirement from the military in 2005 they headed back to Hampton Roads and now reside in Norfolk with their lab mix, Coppelius (or "Copie" for all the non-opera geeks). Lois is enjoying her new position at Trinity Lutheran School as music teacher. With all Al's free time during retirement he has become a published handbell composer, but Lois isn't quitting her job yet. They now go in separate directions Sunday mornings to different church positions, but they still sing together with Virginia Opera and spend every Saturday morning together with VHC.

(Article by Missy Cernigliaro)



Virginia Handbell Consort  
 P.O. Box 64591  
 Virginia Beach, VA 23467

***Are you an advanced handbell ringer? Contact us for an audition!***

**Friends of VHC**

The VHC is a non-profit community handbell ensemble that owns and transports all of its own equipment. Our program growth is dependent on the generosity of corporate and individual donors from our community. Donations go toward the purchase of new equipment and the commissioning of new handbell compositions. Our current goals include the purchase of bass bells (to complete the 6<sup>th</sup> octave set) and transportation for our equipment.

**All donations are tax deductible.** All donors to our capital campaign at the designated levels will be members of "Friends of VHC" and will be recognized as such on our VHC website. "Friends of VHC" are also offered reserved seating at all concerts and will receive the gifts indicated below. Please join today by completing this form. Please make payment to "VHC". Send to: P.O. Box 64591, Virginia Beach, VA 23467.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Benefactor: \$500  
 Contribute at this level and receive 2 VHC CDs of your choice.

Patron: \$250 - \$499  
 Contribute at this level and receive 1 VHC CD of your choice.

Donor: \$100 - \$249  
 Contribute at this level and receive a VHC gift.

Joan Monroe Memorial Fund: \$\_\_\_\_\_ (please specify)



The Virginia Handbell Consort (VHC) was formed in the Fall of 1996 as the first community handbell ensemble in the Hampton Roads area. VHC's goal is to promote the art of English handbell ringing by performing concerts in the local area. The group is comprised of auditioned musicians performing on five and a half octaves of Schulmerich bells, six octaves of MelodyChimes, three octaves of Petit and Fritsen bells, and other percussion instruments. Concert repertoire includes selections of secular, classical, and sacred pieces that demonstrate a multitude of bell techniques currently being explored by composers.

If you would like to host that VHC for an upcoming concert, wedding, or workshop, please contact us today!  
 Phone: 757-456-1312, e-mail: vhc@virginiahandbellconsort.com