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ROSEDALE GARDENS United Presbyterian Church now has six handbell choirs, all

directed by Shirley Harden (right). Participants range in age from fifth graders through adults.

# Handbell Ringers Keep Old English Art Tuned

By BETTY MASSON

In Livonia's Rosedale Gardens United Presbyterian church, the saying is '42 bells and still growing.' They're not referring to a Navy clock gone haywire, of course, but to the English art of handbell ringing, which is becoming increasingly popular in the U.S.

Beginning seven years ago with a memorial gift of the first two octaves (25 bells), the church now has a three octave set and is working on a fourth.

Three are adequate and flexible, according to the church's music director, Mrs. Shirley Harden, but four and five octave groups are becoming more common.

Rosedale Gardens has also just added a new group of bell ringers to its roster, making six in all. The latest group is finally getting some 12 enthusiastic adults into the act.

The other five are the Prep Class (fifth and sixth graders), the Bell Boys (12 boys), the Rosedale Ringers (seventh, eighth and ninth graders), the Carillon Choir (high school girls) and the Senior Ringers (senior high students).

What does it take to be a good bell ringer?

The ability to read music and faithfulness in attending rehearsals and performances are most important, according to Mrs. Harden.

Sight reading ability is important because each ringer has to be able to pick out his own note or notes from among many (the more talented and experienced players can ring more than one bell).

And since everyone is responsible for his own note, there's a big gap when one of the ringers is missing. There are no other instruments or voices to glide over the gap as there would be in a group of singers or instrumentalists.

Bell ringing, originated in England, when the villagers complained about the loudness and discordance of the sounds created by the church change-ringers.

In change-ringing, church bells are rung by teams in which each member pulls the rope controlling one bell.

As a result of pressure by the villagers, the change ringers did their practicing on smaller (and quieter) bells, but using the same sequences they would on the bigger bells.

Mrs. Harden confesses that she started her handbell ringing career with some misgivings: "I didn't think I would like it."

But she has changed her mind and now feels that "the music grows on you. The more you hear, the more you want to hear."

Seven years ago, there was no school for handbell ringing.

Photos By  
Bob Woodring



KEEPING AN eye on the director is handbell ringer John Beumler.

being arranged for handbell choirs.

The Rosedale Gardens choirs are just as happy, and comfortable, presenting concerts of show tunes as they are playing at church services and weddings.

They are eager to play for community organizations, and interested persons should contact the church.

This month, two of the choirs, the Bell Boys and the Rosedale Ringers, are going

to Morehead, Ky., to attend the national festival of the American Guild of English Handbell Ringers ... only it's not really a national festival.

The guild has grown so large it has had to split its national meeting in two. One is held in Kentucky and the other in Arizona.

Twenty-two persons will be going from Livonia, to join with some 100 other choirs (consisting of about 10 persons each).

It's a thrilling experience to hear the muffled choirs play, reports Mrs. Harden.

Eighty choirs will present solos, including the two from Livonia. The convention, which begins June 25, goes through June 28.

Earlier this month, on June 17, at 7 p.m., the Senior Choir will present a farewell concert. The present group will be breaking up as many of its members go off to college. But many will be back to join in when they come home on holidays, as does Gina Valance, now a student at Central Michigan University.

Her sister, Patt, is one of the seniors and she will soon be off to Michigan State University. Patt has been studying handbells ever since they began ringing at the church.

But there will still be a Valance in the choir. Brother Jim, 13, is one of the Bell Boys.

Church affiliation is not a requirement for membership but it is encouraged, according to Mrs. Harden. The music may be English, but at least one of the choir's sets of costumes are strictly Scotch Presbyterian plaid.

## Plymouth Slates Concert Season

The Plymouth Symphony board has announced tentative concert dates for the 1973-74 season. The Sunday concerts will be at 4 p.m. in Plymouth Salem High School, Joy and Canton Center Roads. The Thursday concert will be at 8 p.m.

Thursday, Oct. 11 -- Pianist Richard Syracuse

Sunday, Nov. 18 -- Flutist Nelson Hauenstein

Sunday, Dec. 9 -- Kenneth Jewell Chorale

Sunday, Jan. 27 -- Family concert

Sunday, March 10 -- Severa Ballet performing "Giselle"

Sunday, April 11 -- Violinist Millard Taylor.



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## Outdoor Concert. Featured June 17

A free concert featuring six popular performing groups will be presented outdoors at Schoolcraft College the afternoon and evening of

Sunday, June 17.

Sponsored by Schoolcraft's student activities board, the general public is invited to hear Thomas Blood, a five-piece jazz group, start the concert at 3:30 p.m. The Chip Stevens Group, featuring jazz-rock, and Father, a vocal group accompanied by electric violins, will follow.

Folk-rock singing star Jonathon Round is scheduled for a 7 p.m. performance. The Whiz Kids, a 2-piece electronic sound will follow. The final act will be Bruce Sprout, a seven-piece country-rock group.

Schoolcraft student Pat Barret has coordinated the entire concert.

"In case of rain we'll move inside to the physical education building," he said, "but we hope this won't be necessary because our campus is just perfect for an outdoor concert. We think people will like what they see as well as what they hear."

The college is located at 18600 Haggerty, between Seven Mile, Livonia.

## Poolside Jazz Series Starts

The Poolside Jazz Series at the Hotel Pontchartrain in Detroit will feature the Austin-Moro Band in its first summer concert Wednesday, June 13.

The concert, featuring songstress Sandy Mandala, will run from 8 until 9 p.m.

The Brookside Jazz Ensemble, featuring vocalist Ursula Walker, will perform Wednesday, June 20. The two bands will alternate Wednesdays through the summer.

An "afterglow" dance period will follow each concert.



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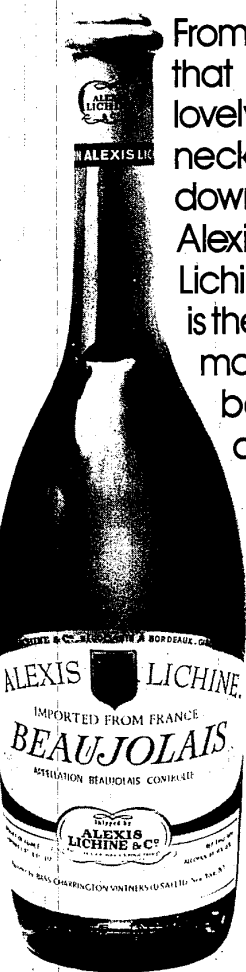
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