

# Handbell Band Will Ring In A Unique Trip

The Village Ringers will present "Travelogue" at 7 p.m. Saturday at Laurel Manor Recreation Center.

By MICHAEL FORTUNA  
Daily Sun Staff Writer

If the idea of handbells conjures thoughts of church or Christmas, the Village Ringers would like to shatter that mold.

The group, under the direction of Bonnie Fisher, will accomplish that with its first spring concert, "Travelogue," at 7 p.m. Saturday at Laurel Manor Recreation Center. Tickets are \$15 for Villages residents and \$20 for the public and are available at any Villages Box Office location or online at [thevillagesentertainment.com](http://thevillagesentertainment.com)

The 17-member handbell band will perform music from around the world, with stops in Mexico, Italy, Germany, Ireland, Russia and the United States, among other places.

Among the songs played on handbells large and small are "The Great Gate of Kiev," "Luck of the Irish," "Amen Siakudumisa" or "Amen We Praise Your Name God," "C Jam Blues" and "Around the World in 80 Measures."

Two professional dancers will move to the sounds of a waltz,



Michael Fortuna | Daily Sun

Members of the Village Ringers practice "The Great Gate of Kiev" during a rehearsal March 25 at Élan Buena Vista Senior Living.

while a penny whistle player will join the Irish portion of the show.

"It's a really fun concert," group member Donna Kagan said.

The Ringers' first official concert last December was centered around Christmas.

"The program went great," Fisher said. "I was very pleased."

When the Ringers played in the lobby at The Sharon L. Morse Performing Arts Center before the production of "A

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Christmas Carol," the group had to end its concert early because the audience wasn't heading into the main theater.

"I thought that was pretty cool," said Fisher, of the Village of Glenbrook.

Fisher has been directing handbell choirs for about 20 years. When she came to The Villages, she didn't see a community handbell band that played more advanced music.

She put the call out for a new group and auditioned residents.

An anonymous donor gave the group \$20,000 to help pay for the instruments, including five octaves' worth of bells, three octaves' worth of chimes and mallets.

"Handbells are an instrument that requires many different people to play," Fisher said. "You can't play them

alone. It's like putting 17 people at the piano. Everybody plays a crucial role. They work very hard. They're very passionate."

Marcia Barber plays three to four bells in the middle range of notes, while Kagan plays the higher register. They also are responsible for three or four chimes.

Sometimes they play one bell while putting down another bell, then picking up another to

play after the first. And they're turning the pages of the music while playing.

"I like the challenge of doing all these things, sometimes in the same piece," said Barber, of the Village of Pine Hills.

Both have been with the Ringers since its inception.

"It's like a family," said Kagan, of the Village of Pinellas.

"It's a team effort," Barber said. "All the bells are one instrument."

Barber has been playing the handbells since about 1985, starting out with her local church. Kagan already had

the piano and harp under her musical belt before adding the handbells.

"(The handbells) are a different instrument," Kagan said. "They make such beautiful music together. It draws you in."

If you have some experience playing the handbells and would like to try out for the group, the Ringers will host auditions at 11 a.m. Monday and Friday at Élan Buena Vista Senior Living, 5867 East County Road 466.

For information, email Fisher at [bonniefisher53@gmail.com](mailto:bonniefisher53@gmail.com).