

Villages Handbell Choir Chimes in With Spring Concert

The Village Ringers will present "Put Your Dancin' Shoes On!" on Sunday at New Covenant UMC.

By MICHAEL FORTUNA
Daily Sun Staff Writer

Since joining the Village Ringers in January, Jill Morris has enjoyed the challenge of playing the handbells.

She played in handbell choirs during a span of 25 years but hadn't played in four years.

"I missed them," Morris said. "I was a music educator. The handbell was a way to play another instrument."

Morris and the rest of the 15-member handbell choir, under the direction of Bonnie Fisher, will present "Put Your Dancin' Shoes On!" at 3 p.m. Sunday at New Covenant United Methodist Church. Tickets are \$15 at ncumcfl.com/tickets or at the door.

Expect to hear compositions written to various dances, including "Luck of the Irish," a Czech folk dance, some doo-wop, a country line dance and "Dorian Dance."

"It's a very difficult multi-rhythmic piece," said Fisher, of the Village of Piedmont. "It's their most challenging, and it's the one they love the most."

During "Aubrey's Waltz," the Ringers will have a couple demonstrate the dance. "It's unusual to have a



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BONNIE FISHER
Village Ringers director

handbell choir doing secular music," Fisher said. "They're not just for church. They can be used in numerous settings."

Amy Cornwall-Robinson, of the Village of Belvedere, joined the Ringers at its inception. She has played "Dorian Dance" before and said she is excited to return to the piece.

Cornwall-Robinson also likes the group's version of Bach's Passacaglia in C Minor.

"It's baroque," she said. "We don't normally play classical music. I like the way it sounds."

The group has been working on the music since January.

"I'm really excited to see it all come together," said Morris, of the Village of St. James.

arts & culture



Left: Donna Kagan, of the Village of Pinellas, rehearses with the Village Ringers on Thursday at New Covenant United Methodist Church. The group presents its spring concert "Put Your Dancin' Shoes On!" on Sunday at the church.

Below: Tom Eggleston, of the Village of Bradford, practices his parts for the upcoming performance.

Photos by George Horsford, Daily Sun

"We've got some fun things lined up."

The audition-only group has been around for about five years. It plays a variety of bells, weighing anywhere from 5 ounces to 12 pounds and covering a five-octave range.

Each player is responsible for certain notes throughout the piece.

"It takes every single person in their position to play every note at the right time to make it work, so it's definitely a team sport," Fisher said. "They have to be able to read music, count and play it at the exact spot. There's no improvising."

Morris said she's found playing the handbells to be challenging.

"When you play the piano, you play all the notes on the page," Morris said. "With the bells, it's only two notes."

"You follow one line," Cornwall-Robinson said.

Prior to the handbells, the piano was Cornwall-Robinson's main instrument, followed by her voice; she majored in both in college. She also tried her hand at the flute,

piccolo, oboe and English horn.

When Morris lived in Raleigh, North Carolina, she had some experience playing the piano and clarinet, and she sang in different choruses.

At times when playing the bells, Cornwall-Robinson has to hold four in her two hands. At times she has to know how to play one bell but keep the other one in her hand quiet.

Sometimes Cornwall-Robinson will highlight on her sheet music which notes she's responsible for in the piece.

Cornwall-Robinson usually moves around the tables to play the set of pitched bells. Morris has stuck with the middle- and low-range bells.

Morris likes to practice at home with kitchen implements, especially mixing spoons.

"It's to get the rhythms in my head," Morris said.

Morris explained what she likes most about playing handbells is that is challenging, while Cornwall-Robinson likes the many sounds she can create with the bells.

"When they're in harmony, it's angelic," said Cornwall-Robinson.

