

## Chimesmaster's Corner

Aidan McNay '24, '25 Head Chimesmaster

Greetings from the Chimes! 2024 has been an exciting year in the tower, emphasized by the ongoing construction and anticipation of re-opening to visitors.

After a brief intermission, construction on the tower resumed this past March and is currently under way in its final stretch. While the tower is closed, we've enjoyed ringing the bells on a modified schedule, keeping the campus alive with music. We've continued our events throughout the year, including our specialty concerts, the Summer Sunday Sunset Series, and taking concert requests from various members of the community. Keen-eyed visitors to the Arts Quad may have seen the orange pumpkin grinning in the clock tower face, peeking out from behind the scaffolding during Halloween as we played the Great Chord.

With the tower getting some well-deserved renovations to help maintain it, it's been a great opportunity to reflect on the legacy of the Chimes and celebrate all the people for whom it's had a positive impact. In September, we got to spend time with Mike Mage '55, who shared great stories of his experiences playing

the bells. Over this past summer, we also had our own JLCLM '96, '97 become an official Carillonneur Member at the 81st annual Guild of Carillonneurs in North America (GCNA) congress! Finally, as always, it was great to see so many chimesmasters at CAC to share memories and create new ones, as well as see all the amazing projects in the works, such as a new book and database.

Adding to our numbers, we accepted two new chimesmasters this past spring after our annual competition. After much practicing, we welcomed Benjamin Isaacson '27 and Kimon Vontas '27 as our newest chimesmasters!

Lastly, the clock tower renovations have given us an opportunity to prepare to have a special reopening in the spring. When you next visit, you'll see a refurbished museum, with new articles to remember the history of the Chimes. Making your way up, you'll find an updated playing stand level with new furniture. These refurbishments will help the Chimes stay up-to-date and ready for visitors for many years to come.


When I look back at all my fond memories from the Chimes, it's always the people who stand out. From getting to see competitors become incredibly talented musicians, to

seeing hundreds of visitors pass through—it's amazing how many people are touched by our music. I'm thankful for being a part of so many Cornell experiences, and although I'm graduating soon, I already can't wait to come back and create more memories with all of you.




Aidan McNay '24, M.Eng. '25 at the playing stand.

## Connect to the Cornell Chimes All Year Long!

 @CornellChimes

 facebook.com/chimes.cornell

 Join the chimesmasters' private Facebook group or alumni email list. Email [chimes@cornell.edu](mailto:chimes@cornell.edu) to learn more.

 [chimes.cornell.edu](http://chimes.cornell.edu)

Tower construction project updates can be found at the library space projects website:

[blogs.cornell.edu/libraryspaceprojects/uris](https://blogs.cornell.edu/libraryspaceprojects/uris)

We will plan a reopening celebration once construction ends and the tower is accessible!



# Guild of Carillonneurs Congress at Concord University

Jen Lory-Moran '96, '97

The 81st annual Congress of the Guild of Carillonneurs in North America (GCNA) was held at Concord University in Athens, West Virginia, from June 5 to 8, 2024. Jennifer Lory-Moran '96, MAT '97 and Ryan Pinard '25 from the current Chimes staff were able to attend as were chimesmasters Amrhen Ortega '15 and Keiran Cantilina '15.

Concord University has a 48-bell carillon that was built by Paccard in 1997. It is the only carillon in the state of West Virginia, and this was the first time a GCNA Congress was held there. The Concord campus is lovely, and many breath-taking state and national parks are just a short drive away.

This year's congress included artist recitals, workshops, presentations, and master classes. One of the recitals that regularly occurs at the Congress is the Franco recital—a performance of pieces the GCNA has commissioned through the Johan Franco Composition Fund. This year that recital was preceded by a talk by the composers, who each explained how they were inspired to write their pieces and pointing out things to listen for during the performance; this was a very thoughtful addition to the programming. Another nice feature of the week was that three different levels of master classes were offered, with separate classes for beginning, intermediate, and advanced players. Throughout the week two practice keyboards were available, on which Ryan enjoyed playing the “Jennie McGraw Rag” over and over again.

This year, the attendees and jurors listened to and voted on a total of 16 exam recitals. That is an extremely large number of candidates, and it led to thoughtful discussion at the final business meeting about what changes might be warranted in the exam process in the future to accommodate such high numbers of people taking the exam.

The next GCNA Congress will be held at the University of Kansas, June 10–14, 2025. We hope to see some of you there!

*Many thanks to the Monica Novakovic Endowment for making attendance at GCNA Congresses possible for our chimesmasters.*



Amrhen Ortega '15 and Keiran Cantilina '15 at New River Gorge Bridge during a break from Congress activities



Jennifer and Ryan both enjoyed time at the Concord University practice keyboard during GCNA.



*An annual newsletter of the Cornell Chimes*

## Campus Activities

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[activities.cornell.edu](http://activities.cornell.edu) / [activities@cornell.edu](mailto:activities@cornell.edu)

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## Your Gift Matters!

**Did you know the Cornell Chimes relies entirely on the support of alumni and friends to fund our program?**

Consider making your gift today to the Cornell Chimes General Fund (#362303) or the Unrestricted Chimes Program Endowment (#0007341)

Learn more at [chimes.cornell.edu/giving](http://chimes.cornell.edu/giving)



# Notes from the Chimes Advisor: I Passed!

Jen Lory-Moran '96, '97

This summer's GCNA Congress was especially exciting for me because I was one of the 16 exam candidates playing, and I passed. I am now a Carillonneur Member of the Guild!

To pass the exam and become a Carillonneur Member, I had to submit an anonymous recording of myself playing a carillon of four octaves or more. This recording needed to include two selections from a list of technical and expressive pieces. (One of the choices of required expressive pieces this year was one I had arranged, which made me particularly excited to try passing the exam so that I could play my own arrangement.)

A jury listened to the recordings and voted on whether I passed the recording stage. (Ironically, the only "NO" vote I got was from one judge who critiqued the fact that I did not play my own arrangement at the tempo the arranger had written on the score. Oops.) The next step was to perform an anonymous recital at the annual Congress of the Guild, to be judged by the jury and all the Carillonneur Members in attendance. (Fun fact: one of the jury members this year was Cornell alumnus chimesmaster Keiran Cantilina '15, who had no idea he was listening to me during the exam. Where once I judged whether he was ready to be a chimesmaster, this time the tables were turned!)

Passing the Carillonneur Exam has been a goal of mine for a long time, but it was difficult to achieve given the area we live in. I began attending meetings of the GCNA in 2001 after I became the Chimes advisor, and every year I listened to the carillonneur exam recitals and wished I could get to the point of being able to play one myself. But for all the things Ithaca does have, it does NOT have a carillon anywhere nearby. The closest carillons are all two to three hours away, at Alfred University, the University of Rochester, and Albany City Hall. I took some lessons at Alfred in 2012, but when you have to drive two hours just to practice your instrument, it's hard to make much progress. After a few years of halting progress, I started renting an electronic practice keyboard, enrolled in the Royal Carillon School "Jef Denyn" in Mechelen, Belgium, and embraced distance learning by taking lessons over Skype with Koen VanAssche using the practice keyboard in my living room.

I first tried to pass the carillonneur exam in 2020, in the middle of lockdown. Having a goal to work toward that year gave me a sense of purpose and kept me sane. I skyped with Koen in Belgium to prepare and drove out to Alfred University to make my recordings. But I didn't pass the recording stage of the exam that year. In the end, no matter how much you practice on an electronic instrument, it can only get you so far toward understanding the nuance of playing the real thing.

This year when I prepared for the exam, I did much of my practice at the University of Rochester, but I also visited carillon towers in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Florida, and West Virginia to be better prepared to play on a different carillon during the recital part of the exam. I was so grateful for the generosity of all the carillonneurs who opened their towers to me while I was preparing. I could not have done it without their incredible hospitality.

Becoming a Carillonneur Member of the Guild, to me, means an increase in opportunities. This designation can result in invitations to perform recitals in towers around the country. If I were ever interested in a permanent carillon position, passing this exam also shows that I have a certain level of qualification/proficiency on the instrument. It will also allow me more voting privileges in the Guild.

But in the end, this was a personal challenge that I set for myself that I am proud (and relieved) to have finally accomplished. And the journey here all started with responding to a certain flier 32 years ago that said, "Do you want to learn to play the chimes?"



Jennifer Lory-Moran '96, MAT '97 celebrating becoming a Carillonneur Member of the GCNA

Thank you to our generous alumni and friends for their gifts to the Cornell Chimes last year. Your gift today will make an immediate and lasting impact on the Chimes program.

Thomas Bantle  
Eileen Blecher  
Kathryn Bolks  
Sean Bolks  
Nancy Brown  
Timothy Brown  
Keiran Cantilina  
Cameron Carr  
Kevin Casey  
Lauren Casey  
Richard Chang  
Eva Charles  
Bryan Chong Hau Foo  
Fred Cohen

Kevin Cook  
Elizabeth Cowles  
Richard Cowles  
Crystal Cun  
Mary Lou Curriuan  
Xiaoben Dai  
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Katie Hamren  
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Erica Ho  
Donald Horowitz  
Linda Hu  
John Hupcey  
Emma Jacob  
Grace Jean  
Richard Kang  
Wayne Kim  
Courtney Kimball  
Alexander Koenigsberger  
Carey Lau

Wan-Lung Lau  
Linda Li  
Emily Liu  
Catherine Longley-Cook  
Giles Longley-Cook  
Jennifer Lory-Moran  
Chenchen Lu  
Allegra Marcell  
Lane McClelland  
Clarío Menezes  
Jenna Mertz  
Irene Metzger  
Nicole Neroulias Gupte  
Carolyn Neuman

John Neuman  
Michelle Nino  
Judy Ogden  
Karen Ortega  
Martha Pavelek  
Christine Piatko  
Morena Rong  
Franklin Russell  
Gretchen Ryan  
Nancy Sexton  
Jennifer Shloming  
Scott Silverstein  
Kristen Simpson  
Paul Tessier

Jennifer Turney  
Alex Van Den Hende  
Ann Van Gorden  
Charles Van Gorden  
Niels Van Hoesel  
Concordia Van Hoesel  
Mary Virre  
Howard Wang  
Martha Wang  
Bryan Weintraub  
Michael Winters

# A Farewell to the Night Protector of the Tower

Karli Buday, Kyle Schillace - Campus Activities

For 23 years, Rich Curtiss, a Cornell University Police patrol officer, stood watch over McGraw Tower. Retiring on December 31, 2024, he leaves a legacy of dedication, discovery, and care for Cornell's iconic clocktower.

Curtiss' 4,800+ evening climbs ensured the tower's safety and security. Along the way, he uncovered hidden treasures, including a 1918 inscription in the practice room reading, "The war is over"—a poignant reminder of history.

## Highlights of His Watch:

- **Feathered Friends:** He documented a family of tree sparrows raising chicks for three consecutive years on the 7th floor.
- **Pumpkin Fixer:** He repaired a clock-face pumpkin silhouette on Halloween when its cardboard "teeth" fell out.
- **Clock Detective:** He resolved lighting issues on the iconic clock face late at night when there were defects.
- **Tower Trekker:** He climbed an estimated 98 miles of tower stairs—18 times the height of Mount Everest!
- **Final Melody:** He played the "Cornell Alma Mater" on the Chimes during his last week on duty, a tune he taught himself and played during a concert with Head Chimesmaster Aidan and Chimesmaster Shirley.

Rich Curtiss didn't just protect McGraw Tower; he safeguarded a piece of Cornell's soul.

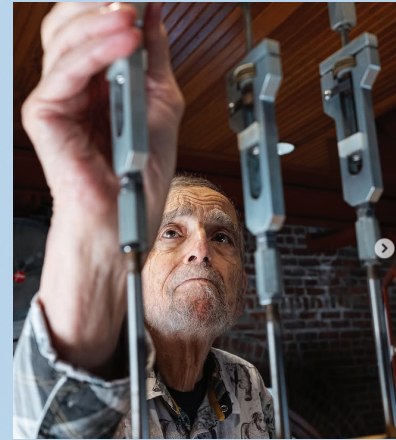
*To Officer Curtiss: thank you for your years of devoted service!*



Officer Rich Curtiss plays the "Cornell Alma Mater."

# Alumnus Chimesmaster Mike Mage '55 Visits Campus and Plays Love Songs

Laura Gallup, Jacob Mroczek - Communications & Marketing, Student & Campus Life



Mike Mage '55 at the playing stand.

"I can hear the notes, they sing to me," said Mike Mage '55.

During his undergraduate years at Cornell, Mike was a chimesmaster—and he's never given up on his passion.

At his home in Maryland, he keeps up his playing skills

using a DIY setup made of Marsala wine bottles and a repurposed wine rack. Several times a week, Mike walks up and down the stairs of his two-story home to prepare his body for the winding, nine-story climb up McGraw Tower.

Like many alumni in September, he and his wife, Rose Mage '56, make the trip back to the Hill. Each time the pair journeys to campus, they make sure Mike has time to play a few Chimes concerts, often accompanied by current students or alumni.

On a recent visit he played love songs that echoed throughout the campus, while Rose listened from below. The pair met at a square dance on campus while both were students and she's been his number one fan ever since.

