Chimes Road Trip 2003! Destination: New England
Lisa Ngai ’05

During Cornell’s fall break (October 11-14), the current Chimesmasters traveled to a variety of bell instruments in New England. We enjoyed the experience of hearing and playing bells other than our own, as well as the chance to bond and see some wonderful overhead views of Boston.

Our first visit was Saturday evening to the Winchester Unitarian Church (in Winchester, MA), where they have a 21-bell chime. We were excited for this visit because there are only two chimes in North America with 21 bells other than the Cornell Chimes. We were joined in Winchester by alumni Kristin Overgaard Bond ’85 and her daughter, Bob Feldman ’66, ’75 and his wife, Melody Hung ’03, Rich Johnson ’80, and Elaina Stergaides ’93 and her husband. (Bob, Rich, and Melody also joined us on some of our other visits during the trip). The range of bells is similar to what we have at Cornell, however they have a low C# bell instead of the high A. It was neat to play a lot of our music on the Winchester chime (even duets), although a couple of chimesmasters did run into trouble with the Firebird Finale when they forgot the song contains a high A. Also, the playing stand levers for accidentals are raised rather than lowered, and there are no foot levers. Our host, Ted Johnson, said that our visit inspired some new ideas for their program.

The next morning we observed the change ringing at Boston’s Old North Church, which contains the first set of bells brought to America. The ringing is done by members of the MIT Guild of Bellringers. We were given a chance to try ringing the bells, with assistance of course. Change ringing is completely different from playing a chime. It was difficult getting used to the delay between when you pull the rope and when the bell sounds. Because of this delay, it is impossible to play tunes on these bells, which is why change ringers follow mathematical patterns. We were allowed to

Current and alumni Chimesmasters in the belfry-chamber of the Old North Church, Boston, MA. Above them (not shown) are replicas of the famous lanterns that were lit “one if by land, two if by sea,” which signaled Paul Revere to make his famous ride, alerting citizens that the British were coming.
climb up to the steeple of the church (where the lanterns were hung in the famous Paul Revere story). Some of the bellringers invited us to join them for lunch, and then offered to take us over to MIT and teach us some change ringing patterns using handbells. Our primary instructor, Don Morrison, was very patient, and after much laughter and frustration, we finally mastered the most basic pattern, the Plain Hunt.

Although we enjoyed our brief introduction to change ringing, we were eager to get back to making music with bells. Bright and early Monday morning we headed back into Boston, first to the Christian Science Mother Church and then to the Arlington Street Church. Both of these sets of bells are played differently than a traditional chime. The Christian Science Church has 18 bells and is played similarly to a carillon (sitting down instead of standing). The playing stand is located in a small room directly under the bells and there are windows all around, so it feels less secluded from the outside world than when playing inside of McGraw Tower. Our host, Judy Huenneke also gave us a quick glance at the inside of the church, which is absolutely magnificent.

The Arlington Street Church has 16 bells. Instead of a typical playing stand, the bell clappers are attached to ropes that run along the side of the wall. Pulling a rope away from the wall produces a sound. We found that this takes quite a bit of physical effort and makes it harder to play quickly and musically. Our hosts were Woody and Jeff who were very welcoming and even had food and drinks available for us. They are very resourceful and do all the repairs to the instrument themselves, using whatever makeshift materials happen to be on hand.

Our final visit was to Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut where they have a 49-bell carillon. For many of us, it was the first time we had seen a carillon. Although the carillon had all of the same notes (and more) than our chime, we found it somewhat difficult to get used to the smaller levers. Also, even though it seems that using your foot to play would be easier when you are sitting down, we found that we just weren’t accustomed to doing so, and tended to only use our hands. Our host, David Maker, played some beautiful carillon pieces for us. He also demonstrated his adaptation of change ringing for the carillon. Using a numbered and color-coded chart with colored bands around the levers, he has developed a system that allows even non-musicians to experience bell ringing.

Overall, the trip was a wonderful experience. We learned first-hand that each bell instrument is unique, even if the number of bells is the same. We also discovered that while we like our own chime the best, there are a variety of opportunities for continuing to play bells beyond Ithaca.

Top 10 Guestbook Entries from 2002

10. Help! I dropped my sunglasses!
9. Staircase is left hand spiral; bad guys will be favored in battle!
8. Phyl Dittman let me play a song—once! (class of ’42 alum)
7. Worse than the NYC subway steps.
6. It wasn’t this far 30 years ago.
5. Chocolate tastes better at high altitude.
4. Clocktabulous!
3. Where is the crayon carnival?
2. E-L-E-V-T-O-R (Cornell PhD student)
1. It’s a lot easier to carry a camera up here instead of a tuba.

From left to right: Eric Hayes ’05, Karen Kamprath ’05, and Taras Czebiniak ’06 try the Trinity College 49-bell carillon.
Chimes Play Concert for the Inauguration of Cornell President Jeffrey Sean Lehman
Allegra Schafer ’99

I don’t think I have ever been as nervous in the McGraw Tower (except maybe as a compet) as I was standing before the playing stand on October 16, about to play the Alma Mater for Jeffrey Lehman’s inauguration as the eleventh President of Cornell. It is still a challenge to play on the new stand, almost as if I had forgotten a native language I had once known, and the significance and honor of participating in such an historic Cornell moment sunk through, as I stood poised to play.

Through a personal connection to the Lehman family, I had met Jeff prior to his selection as President. He is truly remarkable in his intelligence, humor, and his love for his Alma Mater. We spoke about the Cornell Chimes, and he even wanted to know if I had the inside scoop on the pumpkin. Later, after he was selected to lead our university, I told him that the Chimesmasters would love to play his favorite songs for his inauguration. So, it was he and his wife, Kathy Okun who requested Cornell songs, how appropriate for Cornell’s first alumnus president.

Collaborating with the inaugural planning committee, the Chimesmasters put together the program below to accompany the inaugural procession.

Alma Mater (solo)
Cornell Victorious
Hornpipe from Handel’s Water Music
Alumni Song
Give My Regards to Davy
The Prince of Denmark March by Clarke
Song of the Classes
Grand March from Verdi’s Aida
My Old Cornell (Take Me Back to the Old Days)
Sonata by R. H. Lee ‘41
The Hill
4th Mvt. of Eine Kleine Nachtmusik by Mozart
Alma Mater (duets)

My mom, brother, and grandfather (Cornell class of 1942) came up for the event, and Mom remarked that the crowd on the ground commented on how nice the Chimes were, ringing out during the procession.

Marisa has become so attuned to the Chimes and Chimesmasters that she was able to catch us via telephone towards the end of our concert, just before we started the Alma Mater duets, the closing of the concert. The procession, out of sight to us as we could not access the belfry due to security surrounding keynote guests, was still

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Betty Allen ‘43 writes, “Just thought I’d let you know I survived ‘dear’ Isabel. I was without telephone for three days and without power for five, but lost no trees and no serious damage to the house. Truly blessed, as many parts of the Peninsula are disaster areas. It’s going to take a long time to clean up this mess!” Betty continues to be busy with another clean up task of her own. “By the end of November I will have sold my house and moved into a retirement community...Right now I’m quite busy clearing out the clutter of 40-plus years. What a job that is! Best to all!”

Dick Haggard ‘58, ‘65 and his wife Connie ‘58 have more relaxing plans this month, heading south to hear the steel drums of the Caribbean via clipper ship. “A different type of bell, but certainly pleasant to listen to when well tuned, and well played!”

Congratulations to Amy Winkle ‘98 who was married in Maine on September 20th to Tor Glendinning! Congratulations also to new homeowner Allegra Schafer ‘99 who purchased her first home this August. We are glad to hear that Allegra, Grace Jean ‘00, and others, christened the new home with a Halloween party, continuing the Chimes tradition!

Speaking of Grace Jean ‘00, if her name looks familiar, maybe it’s because you’ve seen her byline in the Washington Post, where she’s been freelancing since March. Grace is covering musical performances in the D.C. area from the Marine Band to the National Youth Symphony Orchestra. Whatever the genre, Grace’s writing is equally as musical. It must have been her college cross-training, playing flute and bells while studying for her English degree!

Still studying, is Waitz Ngan ‘02 who writes from Stony Brook, NY, “I hope everyone’s well up in beautiful Ithaca! I miss you and everything at Cornell. I started medical school here in August, and am enjoying myself so far...I’ve been looking for a chime or carillon out here, but it doesn’t seem like there’s one. I’m now looking for a digital piano to keep me entertained. Any suggestions on what brand I should get?”

Daniel Zlatin ’79, ’80 is also playing piano, performing a recital and benefit for the United Way of Ottawa-Carleton. Recital works included pieces from Bach, Schubert, Rachmaninoff, and Khachaturian...sounds like some chimes favorites to me!

In October the Chimesmasters visited a chime in Winchester, Massachusetts where they were joined by alumni Chimesmasters Kristin Overgaard Bond ‘85, Bob Feldman ’66, ’75, Melody Hung ’03, Rich Johnson ‘80, and Elaina Stergiades ’93. Also in the Boston area, but unable to join us is Laura Brewer GR ‘91, ‘94 who writes “My family (me, my husband Neil Gershenfeld, and our 7-year-old twins Grace and Eli) just moved back into our house in Somerville, MA, following a year-long renovation. I’ve been busy with that, plus raising the kids and volunteering at their school. No chimes in my life recently, but now that the kids are practically grown up I hope to make more time for playing piano, singing, and attending concerts. I have SUCH wonderful memories of my brief stint as a Chimesmaster.” We recently learned that Tziporah (Sherry) Cohen ‘89 is also in that area. “Hi, no bell related news, but I am still in Boston with my husband, Jay, and 2-year-old son, Max. I am working part-time as a psycho-oncologist, providing mental health care to people with cancer, and am home with Max the rest of the time. Life is busy but fun!”

The Chimesmasters always welcome alumni returning to campus and to play the bells! We’ve been thrilled that so many alumni have visited in the past few months, including the Chimes Advisory Council members in September, several visits and new arrangements from Erwin Chan ’00, and other alumni, including Elaina Stergiades ’93, Lauren Marino ‘02, and Bob Feldman ’66, ’75. We had a great group for Reunion 2003, welcoming back Dick Haggard ’58, ’65, Grace Jean ‘00, Keith Jenkins ‘93, Rich Johnson ‘80, Lauren Marino ‘02, Lane McClelland ’70, ’73, ’74, Frank Russell, ’58, ’60, Allegra Schafer ’99, Kristen Simpson ’98, Chuck Swanson ‘49, George Ubogy ‘58, and Daniel Zlatin ’79, ’80. Please, come visit, anytime!

Stay connected with alumni throughout the year...

Join the chimes alumni email list-serve! A list-serve is basically just a “list” of people’s email addresses (in this case chimesmasters’ email addresses). When a message is sent to the address of the listserve (chimes-alum-l @cornell.edu), the message is sent to all the people subscribed to the list. When a reply to a message is sent to the listserve, the response is sent back to the entire group.

This is a wonderful way to stay connected to the Chimes community as people can read discussions among chimesmasters and need only join in if they wish.

If you are interested in subscribing, or have additional questions about this list, email current Chimesmaster Alan Erickson, at are4@cornell.edu.
Musings on Arrangements
George Ubogy ’58

My wife tells me that she can tell when I’m hearing a piece that strikes me as a good candidate for a chimes arrangement: I become visibly more attentive, my fingers may start thrumming, and the clincher is if I reach for some paper, draw five roughly parallel lines, and jot down a few notes. Then she knows that she will be hearing that piece ad nauseum for the next several days, or weeks, until she’s sick of it. But hey, it was for better or worse, wasn’t it?

Generally, what draws me is not so much “how good will this sound on the bells” (which probably should be the major consideration) but music that lifts me off my feet. (Occasionally, as with “Lift Every Voice” or the “Hallelujah Chorus” in its entirety, it was to fill in a void in the music archive). I recall the wife of an art collector telling me once that her husband and his ilk look at art differently than the rest of us: not how beautiful that is but rather how can I acquire it. Creating a musical transcription also changes the mindset, from passive audience member to collaborator and translator. I start to own the music and, in turn, it incessantly runs my brain for a while.

I made my first arrangement for the chimes 47 years ago because it was a mandatory part of the chimesmaster competition. Frankly, some of my early efforts were not very good and I would not be unhappy to see them ditched. But as the instrument expanded and improved, and I began to appreciate its potential as well as the sophistication of others’ musical arrangements, I became more ambitious. To give one small example, the levers used to be unable to recover promptly in my day; so repeating a note quickly was not an option. This is no longer true. The chimesmasters have gotten better technically, decade by decade and seem to be able to play anything I can throw at them.

Because I usually pick a musical theme that I love, my style is generally to open with the unadorned melody, when it repeats, add a single counterpoint voice, and bring in triads or other standard harmonizations after that. Listening to a GCNA carillon recital at Princeton five or six years ago, I realized that what sounded best was having the melody in the lower, sonorous bells with the accompaniment above. This goes against my piano background, with melody on top. It also goes against my chimes experience, body weight on the right foot, left foot on the pedals. But I am training myself to give the melody to the left hand (lower notes) more often, and trust that the chimesmasters, and their right feet, can handle it. My other idiosyncrasy comes when the melody goes too high and I have to jerk it down an octave: before the leap, I put the prior several notes into parallel octaves, so the ear hears the lower notes as continuous and focuses less on the downward jump at the top when it does occur. (I know this description is murky, but I can’t explain it too well). French cubist painters used to have visual paradoxes in their canvases, which they called “trompe d’oeil” -fool the eye. This could be called “trompe l’oreille” -fool the ear, but maybe I am just fooling myself.

Why bother? This all takes me a good amount of time and it strains marital peace, particularly if I don’t have the sheet music and I am taking down the melody off of a CD or, in the case of music from the movies, a VCR, jotting down a few notes at a time and probably “wearing a groove” in the track. And, with limited storage space and the flood of music the chimesmasters have to choose from, there is no guarantee that the result will even be accepted into the chimes music files. I wonder what the overall acceptance ratio is? And is it diplomatically possible to turn down a contribution from an active chimesmaster? Here are the pluses: First, I get to know the music with an intimacy that I would not have otherwise. On occasion, I even discover something in the melody, like a bit of syncopation in “The Moldau”, or an unusually lovely harmonization by the composer that I had missed. Second, I get the occasional stroke: a complimentary mention of an arrangement of “Summertime” in an old Chimes Newsletter or a recent e-compliment from Cathy acknowledging receipt of a mailing and letting me know how good she thought it sounded. And having just heard J-LoMo (Jennifer Lory-Moran) play some of “my” stuff with musicality and grace was a rush. Lastly, if it gets accepted, I like to believe that I have added something of beauty to life at Cornell.

Does this music stand look familiar? It is on the playing stand of the 21-bell Meneely chime in Winchester Unitarian Church, Winchester, MA.
in progress, and we were able to extend the concert. In true chimesmaster fashion, we quickly whipped music out of the files and added in the following songs:

- Don't Send My Boy to Harvard
- Jennie McGraw Rag
- Brandenburg Concerto by Bach
- Canzona #2 by Gabriël

Head Chimesmaster Cathy Jordan had had the foresight to have just two chimesmasters sign up for the Alma Mater duets to avoid, in her words, “music flying, people tripping, etc.” Everything went very smoothly. I love the tower visitors and the interactions, curiosity, and sharing, but this time it was just we Chimesmasters at the “Top of the Tower,” and it was nice.

A few of us headed over to Barton Hall after the concert in the hopes of watching the Inauguration Ceremony. The event was so popular, between alumni, visitors, and students, that Barton was filled to capacity and we were not permitted to enter. In an age where we are considering CD recording equipment for the bells, and we have a Global Positioning Satellite system and fiber optics in our tower, it was no surprise that the impressively organized inaugural planners enabled a live feed of the ceremony to several other locations on campus.

“Beloved Chimes, Beloved Cornell.”

Cornell is such an extraordinarily special place; that weekend, there were several discussions about how the deepest appreciation of Ezra’s gift to us develops after graduation. There is nothing quite like a Cornellian, and there is simply nothing like the Cornell Chimes. The Chimes reconnect Cornellians to their days on “The Hill.” Jeff’s father Leonard (Cornell class of 1949), had never before been up the tower, and so Jeff’s parents, siblings, younger son, niece, and nephew very much enjoyed the tower tour that we took on Friday morning. Everyone tried a bell at the top, and downstairs, I watched in amazement as Jeff’s son, Benjie began to work out the Alma Mater on the practice stand - chords with left foot included!

My grandfather, soaking up all the Inauguration had to offer, Marisa and David in constant motion, working in synch with many, many other wonderful Cornell employees and volunteers, the yummy Cornell apple cider, lunch at Collegetown Bagels, Ithaca with its beautiful fall colors, the splendor of Cayuga Lake, the magnificence of the bells... To borrow from Toni Morrison and President Lehman’s inaugural speech, “Beloved Chimes, Beloved Cornell.”

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**Cornell Time Stands Still, For Now**

ITHACA, N.Y. - Some people say that summer days in Ithaca are so lovely it seems that time stands still. According to the famous clock in Cornell University’s McGraw Tower, it has.

The hands on the four clock faces that loom far above Cayuga’s waters over the campus and city have been frozen at 7:46 since last weekend. While the exact cause has not been determined, Cornell officials speculate that some of the clock’s components were damaged during a series of heavy storms that swept through the area.

The Cornell Chimes have rung over campus, marking the hours, for more than 130 years. The original set of nine bells first rang out at the university’s opening ceremonies Oct. 7, 1868. Student chimesmasters perform daily concerts during the school year, making it one of the most frequently played chimes in the world. In 1997, the tower garnered national media attention when late-night pranksters adorned the tower’s spire with what turned out to be a hollowed-out pumpkin.

The chimes were refurbished and enlarged to 21 bells during a renovation of the McGraw Tower in 1998-1999, making them one of the largest chimes in North America. At that time, the tower’s century-old clock mechanism was replaced with a high-tech timepiece that relies on a satellite link to keep the most accurate time available.

The satellite link is still operational, and the clock still chimes every hour, explained Marisa LaFalce, projects coordinator in the division of Student and Academic Services. What’s not working are the mechanisms that move the hands forward, causing time to stand still.

And the chimesmasters still climb the 161 tower stairs every day to perform music that ranges from Cornell’s alma mater to Broadway and rock tunes. Each day begins at, yes, 7:45 a.m. with the playing of “Cornell Changes,” known affectionately as the “Jennie McGraw Rag” in honor of the donor of the original bells, which has heralded every morning concert since 1869. The tradition of playing it each morning was originally dictated by President A. D. White.

LaFalce says university officials expect the clock to be repaired before the new students arrive on campus on August 22.

The above press release was written and released by the Cornell University News Service on August 14, 2003.
A couple days ago, a funny thing happened. It was 1:00 pm and the clock didn’t strike. And it struck 9:00 instead of 8:00 the next morning. Our tower thought it was January 9th, 2001, 1:38 pm when it was really November 7, 2003, 12:37 pm. It was nuts! And why did this happen? Solar flares? Rogue satellites? The ghost of James O’Neill, Cornell’s first chimesmaster? Fortunately, although the mystery is unresolved...it was quickly repaired.

The hour bell incident is silly and small, but it made me think yet again of what a landmark and a force of continuity McGraw Tower and our 21 bells are for Cornell University. Students nap outside to the bells, knowing they’ll recognize 4:00 pm when it rings. They rush to class, muttering, “Oh no!” when they hear the Alma Mater begin and they’re more than 2 minutes walk from their 1:25 pm class. They count on the Chimes to ring three times a day to wake them up, entertain them, provide amusement and education for visiting friends, relatives, school groups and trustees, and they request pieces that make them happy. And likewise, they don’t like it when the tower doesn’t do what is expected. There’s music at 10:30 pm - not fair! The Chimes played “Let it Snow” in October and then it snowed for real - not fair! My aunt is visiting and there are no concerts that weekend - not fair! Sometimes I wish our wonderful hobby wasn’t as large a part of campus life. But then again, this semester, we’ve celebrated anniversaries and wedding proposals, the Inauguration of Cornell’s eleventh president, Jeffrey Lehman. We’ve welcomed back old friends at Homecoming and for Chimes Advisory Council, and we’ve welcomed new students and their families during Orientation and Family Weekend. We’ve celebrated the birthdays of friends, faculty, students, visitors, composers, countries and branches of the military. Being part of the oldest and most audible musical tradition on campus is one of the most exciting pursuits we’ve all encountered.

This semester, four years after I first climbed the tower for the Chimes Rededication Open House, being a chimesmaster means more to me than before. As a “grumpy grad student,” as the younger chimesmasters like to tease, I feel like I’ve been given a second chance to enjoy Cornell. And as Head Chimesmaster for my second year in a row, I’ve gotten a second chance to make the most of that as well. And, now more than ever, I feel like the Chimes has the support of an enormous group of people. And so I’d like to close this reflection with some Thank-Yous… I’d like to thank Alan Erickson and Rich Johnson for their hard work developing a proposal for a CD recorder to use in the tower. I’d like to thank Chimes Librarian Eric Hayes for his hard work organizing and updating our music files and database. I’d like to thank Lisa Ngai and Bob Feldman for planning an action-packed, fun-filled road trip to New England. I’d like to thank the current chimesmasters for their spirit and kindness, making us an incredibly cohesive and supportive group. And I’d like to thank the Chimes Advisory Council for all their support, advice, and friendship. It’s amazing to be part of not only a tradition with strong roots, but a tradition that is growing and expanding.

The Cornell Chimes would like to thank our alumni and friends that have generously supported the Chimes program over the past year (fiscal year July 2002-June 2003).

Elizabeth Finley Allen ’45
Anonymous friend
Barbara L. Bessey ’69
Kristen Overgaard Bond ’85
Joseph M. Conte ’82
Carolyn W. Corson ’65
David W. Corson ’65
Sharon Danes
Eleanor C. Douglas
Marcy Duboff ’84
Alan R. Erickson ’03
Susan and Wes Erickson
Elizabeth C. Everett ’97
Robert L. Feldman ’66, ’75
David R. Fister ’75
George A. Frediani
Barbara Allen Grambow ’56
Richard C. Grambow GR ’57
Grace V. Jean ’00
Joanne Engelhardt Johnston ’71
Janet S. Kniseley
Gary Labat
Fay McClelland ’44
Lane I. McClelland ’70, ’73, ’74
Phyllis Dittman McClelland ’43
Anne Gordon McLaughlin
Ed McLaughlin
Robert A. Milligan
Gregory J. Milmoe ’69
Susan Deitz Milmoe ’71
Amy L. Karlen Neuman ’93
Carolyn Chauncey Neuman ’64
John L. Neuman ’62
Scott J. Neuman ’93, ’99
Esther M. & Mladen Novakovic
Lisa M. Olafson ’95
Franklin T. Russell Jr. ’58, ’60
Sue A. Schnar
William J. Sibal ’64
Harold S. Simon ’70
Kristen C. Simpson ’98
Lind A. & Mark W. ’87, ’90 Stephenson
Arthur T. Taft ’75, ’76
Leaf Turner ’63
Ellen and Steven R. Zutz
The Cornell Chimes: Far Above Cayuga’s Waters

Released in May 2003, this is the newest compact disk in the Cornell Chimes collection and the first full-length recording since the bells were tuned in 1999. Featuring Cornell songs, classical favorites, Chimesmaster original compositions, and more!

Available at the Cornell Store and by mail order at 1-800-624-4080. For additional information visit: www.chimes.cornell.edu.