

## 40 Years On

The Bay View Week of Handbells celebrates its past and looks forward to its future

by Fred Gramann • Photos by Kim Finison

On August 17, 2017, the Bay View Week of Handbells celebrated four decades of ringing with a gala concert under the batons of Carl Wiltse and myself. Begun in 1978 by the legendary Donald E. Allured as an intensive handbell workshop with a closing concert, it has developed over the years into a bronze-level performance event with four days of intensive rehearsals culminating in a formal concert for upwards of 800 listeners. This being an anniversary year, registration was restricted to alumni. The 105 ringing positions were claimed within 23 minutes of the registration opening on-line!





# AUDITORIUM

What makes this gathering so sought after by handbell musicians? I believe it is a combination of factors, the most important of which is to be found in the mission statement:

*The Bay View Week of Handbells exists to give advanced ringers an opportunity to prepare a concert to be performed at a high professional level.*

To achieve this lofty goal, the expectations and requirements for all attendees are quite demanding, including being prepared to ring a full program of challenging works at the first rehearsal at performance tempo. Ringers must also memorize measures which involve tempo changes to be able to watch the director. Aided by detailed performance notes and helpful practice files, this preparation allows the focus to be on achieving a clean and vibrant musical ensemble.

The event location itself plays no small part, taking place amid some 440 Victorian cottages of the Bay View Association. Located on the picturesque shores of Little Traverse Bay on Lake Michigan, the Chautauqua community transports one back to a bygone era of unlocked front doors, impromptu gatherings in rocking chairs on the wooden porches, and a “friendly neighbor” feel







straight out of a Norman Rockwell painting. There is evidence everywhere of the “Four Pillars” on which Bay View is based: Religion, Recreation, Education, and the Performing Arts. It is truly a unique place.

The performance venue is also a major contributing factor. Instead of the hotel ballroom or school gymnasium typically used for massed events, we make use of the large auditorium stage and orchestra pit of the John M. Hall Auditorium which allows space for five 5-octave choirs, an additional five choirs encompassing D5 to C8 (and higher as needed), plus a full complement of chime instruments and aluminum bass bells, provided by Malmark Bellcraftsmen. A large three-manual pipe organ completes the facilities. The concert is professionally recorded and captured by seven video cameras by Pierpont Productions (<http://pierpontproductions.com>). The resulting DVD is a precious souvenir for the ringers and audience members alike.

The high ringing standard, the superb facilities and stunning location are all key elements, but there is still more. The BVWOH is known for its supportive, family atmosphere among the musicians. Making the musical pilgrimage to Bay View each August is like attending a family reunion. Once experienced, most ringers long to return, and many do with some having attended 25 times or more. Newcomers are important too, and they are welcomed with open arms into the Bay View fold.

While Donald E. Allured initiated the event, a very support-

ive person was there from the outset—Carl Wiltse. He served under Don for many years as the registrar, while also ringing and occasionally contributing his lovely solo voice to the performances. When Don was no longer able to provide leadership due to health concerns, he chose Carl to carry the torch, and that he did with untiring dedication for the next 15 years. Maestro Wiltse nurtured the event with such loving care and creativity that it grew in stature and popularity. The 40th anniversary celebration was bittersweet as, due to health reasons, Carl felt it was his turn to pass the baton on to a new director. He will still be an important presence during the week, conducting one piece on the concert, as well as the traditional closing choral benediction as the ringers join in singing Lutkin’s “The Lord Bless You and Keep You.”

Pondering the future of this unique gathering, I find myself both humbled and honored to have been chosen to step into the leadership role. Having been a ringer at Bay View for a number of years and, most recently, co-director with Carl, I am fully aware of the huge shoes that will need to be filled. In striving to uphold the mission statement, there will be some new policies regarding the 2018 event to be held August 13-17. Thirty out of the 104 ringing positions will be assigned by application in advance of the regular January 1st registration:

- Four “deep pit” ringers for the aluminum 1s and 2s, working under Paul Kingsbury, our bass bell captain.
- 12 position captains who will each coordinate all ringers in their same position (positions 0-11)
- 12 advanced ringers who are new to the event

- One tuition scholarship for a gifted young ringer between the ages of 18 and 30 who is new to the event.

All details and application forms are available on the BVWOH website ([www.weekofhandbells.com](http://www.weekofhandbells.com)), and the submission deadline is November 15. The traditional online registration for all remaining 74 ringing positions will take place online beginning January 1.

Thanks to the Donald E. Allured Original Composition Award, the premiere performance of a new commissioned work is part of the concert every year. The 2018 award was granted to Doug Benton, who has rung numerous times at Bay View and served on occasion as bass bell captain. Entitled “Allure-dia,” his new opus is inspired by Donald Allured’s compositional style and has incorporated the famous “D-E-A” motif for Donald E. Allured, as well as Don’s entire name spelled out in notes. This will certainly be a highlight of the 2018 concert.

I would encourage anyone interested in this event to peruse the BVWOH web site. I will also be glad to answer any questions you may have via email at [music@acparis.org](mailto:music@acparis.org).

For a more detailed history of the BVWOH please see the November/December 2007 edition of *Overtones* (volume 53, No. 6).



Fred Gramann, left, and Carl Wiltse.



### About the Author

*What began for Fred and his wife, Nancy, as a 9-month stint in Paris to study with organists Marie-Claire Alain and Maurice Duruflé evolved into a lifetime musical adventure in the city of light. Director of music at the American Church in Paris for the past 41 years, Fred counts among his handbell highlights being the Honorary Associate Director of the Raleigh Ringers, the director for UK Bronze and most recently the newly appointed director for the Bay View Week of Handbells, succeeding Maestros Donald Allured and Carl Wiltse. This fall Fred will be guest director for festivals in the UK and Scotland, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Handbell Ringers of Great Britain, and will be director for Distinctly Bronze West in 2018.*

### The Donald E. Allured Original Composition Award

By Beth Ann Edwards

This award was established in August 1993 as a gift to director Don Allured by the attendees of the annual Bay View Week of Handbells held in Bay View, Michigan. The intent of the award is solely to commission original handbell music that exemplifies the highest standards, quality, and expectations that Don Allured would demand in an original composition. Each year, participants at the The Bay View Week of Handbells donate to the fund to honor Donald Allured and his contributions to the handbell world. In addition to donations, hand-made quilts and “Fred’s pants” have been auctioned off to raise awareness and boost annual giving. The fund is invested through Handbell Musicians of America, and commissions are funded 100 percent by interest from the principal. Twelve Allured compositions have been premiered and published and are listed below. Almost all have been published by AGEHR and are available for purchase.

- 1995 Margaret Tucker: “Introduction and Passacaglia”
- 1998 Hart Morris: “Antiphonal Alleluias”
- 2000 Cathy Moglebust: “Five Inscriptions”
- 2002 Carl Wiltse: “Creator of the Light”
- 2005 Tim Waugh: “LondeLirinen” (Commissioned and dedicated to the youth of the AGEHR 50th Anniversary Education Outreach Project)
- 2007 Donald Allured: “epilogue”
- 2009 Michael Helman: “Trilogy”
- 2011 Michael Joy: “Pavane and Galliard”
- 2013 Catherine McMichael: “Odyssey”
- 2015 Nancy Hascall (posthumous)
- 2016 Matthew Compton: “Divenir” (Commissioned for the Youth Component and premiered at the 2016 International Handbell Festival in Vancouver, Canada)
- 2017 Larry Sue: Coronation and Triumphant Exultation