

# THE WCR LEARNING COMMUNITY

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Eileen, 7, is the youngest member of the Bells of Shaughnessy Handbell choir. Her mother, Shan Shan Chen is the leader of the choir in Vancouver, B.C. Photo by Jason Lang, *The Vancouver Courier*

## The sound of bells

Adapted from *The Vancouver Courier*

Level 1

You can make music many ways. The handbell is an old way to make music. In the 1600s, two brothers made handbells in England. People today use them, too.

### How handbells work

A handbell has a leather or plastic handle. You hold the handle in your hand. There is a **clapper** inside the bell. Then you move your wrist. This makes the clapper hit the bell.

## Ringing the bells

A person in a handbell choir uses both hands to ring different bells. Each bell makes a different sound, like the keys on a piano.

For example, one bell makes a C sound. Another bell makes a D sound. The name of the note is on the handle.

## Different sizes, different sounds

Some bells are big. These bells make low sounds. One handbell is very heavy. Two hands must lift it. Other handbells are the size of cellphones. These little bells are for high notes.

## Handbells in B.C.

Burnaby, Prince George, Kamloops, Abbotsford and Victoria are some of the cities in B.C. with handbell choirs.



A handbell showing the handle and clapper (inside)  
Photo: Wikimedia

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A Vancouver handbell choir travels to Asia sometimes. This choir is called the Bells of Shaughnessy. They raise money for charity with their trips.



Handbell choir performing  
Photo By Joe\_Focus (Joe), Flickr

### **The Bells of Shaughnessy**

Shan Shan Chen leads the choir. The choir has 14 young members. Chen's daughter, Eileen Tian, is in the choir. Eileen, seven, stands on a chair to reach the handbell table. She is the youngest member. She rings a small bell.

### **Chen's choir teaches**

Chen says her choir teaches **teamwork**. The choir teaches how to **focus**. Chen says, "Nobody is a hero in this group. Every part is important."

### **The handbells of the choir**

The choir uses 49 handbells. In a concert, each member must ring three to four of the bells. Sometimes two bells are in each hand. But only one bell is played at a time.

### **A tour**

Chen's choir went to Shanghai in China in March 2013. The choir learned a special piece of music. It is called "Butterfly Lovers". The young people were the first group to play this piece with handbells. Chen said, "I think the whole Chinese population knows this piece."

### **Vocabulary:**

- **clapper:** the moving part inside a bell which makes the sound (see photo above)
- **teamwork:** working well with other people to do a project or job
- **focus:** to pay very close attention to something

### **Links:**

The Bells of Shaughnessy handbell choir tour in 2009:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k7zBKW4Px1E>

"Butterfly Lovers" violin concerto:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DK3jRo6aTbQ>

Advanced handbell concert in Edmonton:

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uD\\_13jv4vFg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uD_13jv4vFg)