

Hear the Bells

Music and lesson by Heather Nail, 2020

Focus: Pitched percussion arrangement, vocal or instrumental ostinato, exploration of found sound

Level: Grade 3-5

Materials: Pitched percussion instruments, optional found or non-pitched percussion instruments, hand bells or hand chimes.

Process:

1. Sing song for students, either live or using a recording. *Use the alternative words ("celebrate today") if it isn't Christmas time or your school doesn't "do" Christmas.* Discuss bells and their ability to communicate in a pre-technology world. Include local churches/bells if possible. Show videos that display and demonstrate various bells (ie: **Explore York Minster** -<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UFkyQkl2y80>)

2. Teach song by rote and introduce the bass ostinato through mirrored body percussion. Transfer to the pitched percussion instruments. Challenge students to play this part while singing.

3. If you've got access to hand bells or hand chimes, use them on this bass part!

4. Teach other parts (snap after "say" and "day" for the octave F's on the glockenspiels, Cluster in F pentatonic (no E or B) on the "Ding dong ding dong" metallophone part), and add these to the arrangement. Hand bells or hand chimes in F pentatonic will also be great on the ding dong part!

5. Time to focus on singing! Use the bass part as a vocal ostinato. Half of the students sing the ostinato while the other half sing the melody; switch. Another singing idea – sing the melody in canon, 4 beats apart, in up to 4 parts. Can your students sing in 5 parts – 4 part canon WITH the ostinato?

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H. Nail, 2020



Voice/SX/AX

SG/AG

SM/AM

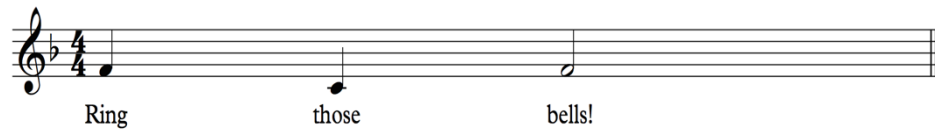
BX/BM/CBB

Hear the bells a - ring - ing, joy - ful - ly they say;

(Ring those bells!)

"Ding, dong, ding dong, it is Christ - mas day!"
(cel - e - brate to - day!)

Vocal or
instrumental
ostinato

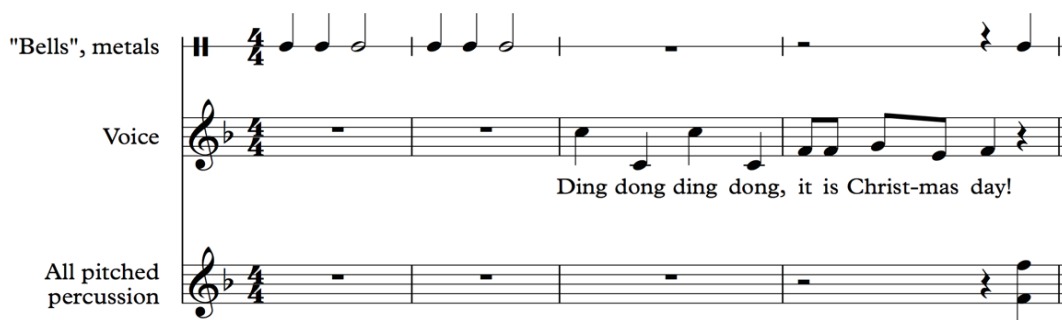


6. Non-singing alternative: Students listen to a recording of the melody. Encourage students to sing it inside their head. Try learning each phrase slowly and separate from the other phrases, then put it all together slowly. Use visuals to assist students in learning the notes of the melody. (Reminder: students will need B flats on their instrument for this to work!)
7. No instrument/distance learning alternative: Student explore found sound in their environment. What items will sound most like a bell? Metal and/or water glasses might be the best option. After finding two different bell sounds, students can play the rhythm of the ostinato ("ring those bells") while they sing the melody. Allow students to choose how they want to play on their 2 "bells".
8. Another possibility with found bell sound – in a small group, students use the rhythm of the song to improvise using their various found sound.

Possible final form:

Sing song, add pitched percussion arrangement, sing with vocal ostinato, found percussion "bell" improvised section, sing/play in canon, coda.

Hear the Bells - CODA



"Bells", metals

Voice

All pitched percussion

Ding dong ding dong, it is Christ-mas day!