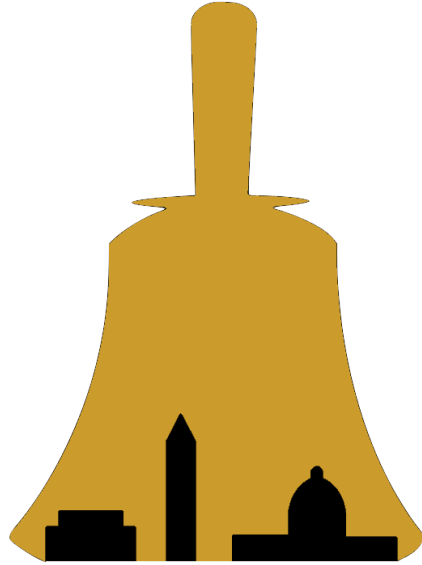


Virginia Bronze



Ringer Handbook

2023-2024 Season

P.O. Box 565
Oakton, VA 22124
www.vabronze.org

Welcome

This handbook is designed to provide you with general information about our organization, our operations and expectations of you as a ringing member of Virginia Bronze (VAB). Membership is a commitment of time and talent. As a ringer, you will be expected to challenge yourself to a higher level of technical ringing proficiency as you work with a team of other dedicated members.

Based in Northern Virginia, we are a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization with no affiliation to a group, church, or other organization. Full- and part-time ringers live in the greater Northern Virginia, Maryland and the District of Columbia. In 2006, Virginia Bronze began with a few musicians seeking opportunities to ring challenging and diverse music, bringing a new sound to the Northern Virginia arts community. Since its first performance, VAB has gained local and national recognition as a premier handbell ensemble. VAB has performed with the *Cathedral Choral Society*, *Gay Men's Chorus of Washington, DC*, *Washington Chorus*, *Strathmore Children's Chorus* and *Alexandria Symphony*, and at venues such as the Kennedy Center, Lisner Auditorium, and the Music Center at Strathmore. We have participated in First Night Alexandria, as artist-in-residence at the George Washington Masonic National Memorial, and the American Guild of Organists National Convention. VAB is well known in the national handbell community and was invited by the Handbell Musicians of America (HMA) to perform at its Pinnacle festival in Nashville, TN in 2010 and as a feature concert at the HMA National Seminar in 2019 in St. Louis, MO.

Mission of VAB

The mission of Virginia Bronze is to advance the art of handbell ringing through a community-based ensemble in Northern Virginia. The specific goals of Virginia Bronze are:

- To create and nurture a performance-oriented, community-based opportunity for advanced handbell ringers to improve their skills and explore new realms in handbell music;

- To inspire creativity related to new handbell music;
- To showcase a unique instrument as an outreach service; and,
- To provide assistance for educating learners of all ages about the art of handbell ringing.

Identity Statement

VAB is an advanced community ensemble based in Northern Virginia that strives to give high quality performances and promotes the art of handbell ringing in the DMV through workshops, festivals, and other ringing events. VAB rings two concert cycles per year, in December and the spring, with additional performances by Resonances, our small group ensemble. The organization recruits musicians seeking the challenge of performing advanced handbell repertoire. All ringers are expected to grow and maintain their skills as handbell musicians. Selection of repertoire for each concert cycle is based on themes selected by the Music Director, and can include core repertoire repeated each concert cycle. Performing the level of music selected for VAB requires skill and preparation outside of rehearsal. Additional opportunities for ringers looking for a more challenging and intense performance may be offered through small ensemble pieces performed as part of standard concert programming.

Organization

VAB is run by an Executive Committee defined in the organization's bylaws as the Board, General Manager, and Music Director. All members are encouraged to become familiar with the bylaws that include procedural information about the organization's standard practices and administration. A copy of the bylaws is available for viewing from the Secretary or from an electronic version that can be obtained on the "VAB General" Google Drive once a ringer is accepted as a member.

The organization has five elected officers that serve as the Board: President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary and Ringer Officer. All officers serve two-year terms

except the Ringer Officer who serves a one-year term. Terms are staggered to avoid a full turnover of the board at any one time. Minutes of all approved general membership and board meetings are also available to members.

Musical direction for the organization is set by the Music Director who is contracted by the Board. The Music Director is responsible for the musical direction of all VAB ensembles, determines what music is performed, and how the music is performed. Additionally, as they reflect the ensemble's accomplishment of the Music Director's vision, the Music Director has the final say on whether a VAB recording - either audio or video - shall be shared publicly (including postings on social media).

VAB's ringers are the organization's most important asset. They help fulfill its mission and identity through ringers that:

- Continually demonstrate strong musically ability;
- Spend time outside of rehearsal reviewing and preparing music as necessary;
- Contribute to the mission and business of the organization;
- Maintain mutual and equal respect for all other members of the group;
- Are present and on time for all rehearsals and performances;
- Maintain good financial standing with regard to payment of dues and any other financial obligations; and,
- Abide by the policies and other governances set forth in the **Code of Conduct** and bylaws.

Membership Expectations

Auditions

All ringers and prospective ringers are required to audition annually. Ringers will be invited to join the ensemble if they meet audition criteria established by the Music Director and the Board. Auditions may be held during a regularly scheduled rehearsal or on a specified date as determined by the Music Director and Board.

Members of the ensemble are evaluated during all rehearsals and performances. When appropriate, feedback based on these evaluations will be communicated to individual ringers by the Music Director and/or Board.

Dues

Being a member of VAB requires the payment of annual dues (currently \$200) within three weeks of the first rehearsal. A member may work out a payment plan with the Treasurer. VAB also has a scholarship fund available to members needing financial assistance regarding dues. Contact the Treasurer for more information or if you would like to apply for the scholarship.

Organizational Support

Every member is expected to contribute to VAB beyond ringing. Each member brings skills and interests that can help support the organization, whether it is serving in a leadership role on the Executive Committee or in an administrative capacity such as marketing, fundraising, production management, etc.

VAB relies on donations and fundraising events for a large portion of our income. To ensure financial success each year, it is important that all members help in this area. Suggestions include, but are not limited to, soliciting donors, taking advantage of corporate matches when making personal donations or finding corporate sponsors or advertisers.

Comradery

It is important that members work collaboratively, keeping in mind that the overall musical result is more important than the individual. Maintaining flexibility during rehearsals, openness to constructive criticism, and a positive attitude are important for the success of the ensemble.

During rehearsals members must be focused and respectful when the Music Director provides direction. While the directions may not apply to you directly, they may apply to those around you who do need to hear the directions without other distractions.

Revocation of Membership

VAB membership may be revoked if a member:

- Is unresponsive to feedback or direction;
- Fails to meet expectations;
- Violates membership policies; or,
- Has excessive schedule conflicts preventing a ringer from attending rehearsals and/or performances.

Attendance

Members are expected to attend all VAB rehearsals and comply with the organization's attendance policy:

- Ringers are expected to attend all rehearsals, retreats, performances, and events and arrive on time.
- For all absences and known late arrivals members are required to notify the Music Director and Ringer Officer in writing by established protocol (e.g. Google Form), email or text *as soon as the absence is known*. The notice must include date(s) absent and reason.
- Any ringer with more than 2 excused absences as defined in the Code of Conduct in a concert cycle or any unexcused absence as defined in the Code of Conduct will be placed on probation for the remainder of the ringing year.
- Attendance is mandatory at the final rehearsal prior to a performance as indicated on the schedule for the ringing year as well as at all scheduled performances. Absence from mandatory rehearsals that was not identified by the member at auditions will be considered unexcused. Members who are unable to participate in any one of the performances or the final rehearsal prior to a performance may be asked not to ring for that concert cycle.

Attendance for the full duration of all rehearsals and performances is mandatory unless a prior agreement has been approved by the Music Director and the Board. While no rehearsals should be missed, missing more than two during a regular concert season jeopardizes the group's cohesion and the quality of its performance.

Virginia Bronze hosts events throughout the year and assistance from membership is necessary to make these events a success. While attendance at events not listed in bold is not mandatory, it is expected that members will help out at most, if not all, VAB hosted events on the calendar. Ways to help include setting up, donating food or auction items, cleaning up, teaching a class, standing in as an additional ringer, helping with registration, etc. Typically, your assistance will not be required for the entire day. Sign up sheets for help at events will be posted as early as possible to allow members to plan. The attendance policy does not apply to events that are not listed in bold.

Leave of Absence

A leave of absence from the ensemble for a period of up to one year may be requested in writing by a member. A decision on whether to grant the leave is made by the Music Director. The terms will be written and signed by the agreeing parties and kept on record with the Secretary. Handbell ensembles require continuity and stability regarding ringing positions and it cannot be guaranteed that there will be a position available when the ringer returns from the leave of absence. The ringer will be worked back into the group as determined by the Music Director.

Communication with Members

VAB communication with members is handled in person at rehearsal or through Slack and email. All members are responsible for checking email and Slack and responding where necessary, within 48 hours.

Concert Attire

Every member is provided a black VAB polo shirt to be worn at various events as determined by the Music Director. Attire for each concert can vary and is determined by the Music Director.

Members are expected to acquire and maintain the typical concert attire for the 2023/2024 season. Options include:

- Black closed-toed shoes
- Black socks
- Black dress pants
- Black belt
- Black button-down dress shirt
- Floor length black skirt
- Black dress top/blouse with sleeves below the elbow
- A long black dress meeting the above requirements is also permissible
- VAB approved tie
- No jewelry or accessories that interfere with ringing or damping

Marketing and Promotion

All members of the ensemble are expected to promote performances. Each ringer should look for opportunities to perform or provide community outreach. Potential opportunities should be shared with a member of the Executive Committee.

All members who use social media are asked to like and share events that VAB posts to aid in promotion of VAB events. Members are encouraged to send concert and event information to friends and family.

COVID Policy (May be subject to change)

VAB considers the most current Center for Disease Control guidelines for establishing COVID protocols - including practices established for isolation periods, masks, and all other COVID precautions - for rehearsals. The board reserves the right to adjust this policy based on current circumstances and/or higher transmissions rates.

VAB requires all members wear a face mask at the two rehearsals prior to a performance, and asks members to avoid situations outside of rehearsal where they

could be exposed to COVID during those two weeks. Masks are not required at a performance unless the venue requires them.

Ringing members testing positive within 10 days of a performance are not eligible to perform. When this happens, the Music Director will determine concert status and whether the ringer's position can be filled with a substitute. If there is a positive case in the ensemble within 10 days of a performance, testing is required for all members 24 hours before rehearsals and 24 hours before the performance. Members are required to share a positive test result with the Music Director and Ringer Officer as soon as possible.

All VAB ringing members are required, upon acceptance into the ensemble, to agree to and sign a Code of Conduct.

Virginia Bronze Code of Conduct for the 2023-2024 Season

Overall participation

1. Be a team player.
2. Be helpful, encouraging, and respectful to all fellow ensemble members and directors.
3. Play any position as assigned by the director, unless medical/physical concerns prevent such assignment.
4. Play all music as selected and orchestrated by the director.
5. Support Virginia Bronze in at least one administrative capacity (marketing, fundraising, concert preparation, etc.)
6. Ringers are expected to ring in the position assigned to them by the Director. Ringers may not alter assigned positions without the advance input and agreement of the director.
7. Email is the primary communication method for the ensemble, please be sure to provide an email address that you check daily and reply within 48 hours when your response is solicited.

Concert Cycle

A concert cycle is defined as pertaining to a group of performances for a specific repertoire. There will be more than one concert cycle per ringing year.

Attendance Policy

1. Ringers are expected to attend all rehearsal sessions and arrive on time.
2. For all absences and known late arrivals you shall notify the Director and Ringer Officer in writing by established protocol (e.g. Google Form), email or text *as soon as the absence is known*. The notice must include date(s) absent and reason.
3. Any ringer with more than 2 excused absences in a concert cycle, or any unexcused absences will be placed on probation for the remainder of the ringing year per Section 3.3 of the Bylaws. Excused absences are illness, work commitment, and family emergency. All other absences are considered unexcused.
4. Planned absences for the upcoming ringing year communicated to the MD and Ringer Officer before or at the time of audition will be considered excused absences.
5. Rehearsals at retreats are included in the attendance policy. See the ringing year schedule for rehearsals for each retreat.
6. Attendance is mandatory at all scheduled performances as well as at the final rehearsal prior to a performance. Mandatory rehearsals are indicated on the schedule for the ringing year and absences will be considered unexcused. Members who are unable to participate in any one of the performances or the final rehearsal prior to a performance may be asked not to ring for that concert cycle.
7. In a situation where a substitute ringer is required for a concert, the Music Director will make the determination whether and how to fill that position. When the absence is known in advance, the ringer may be requested to find a sub, in consultation with the Music Director. The ringer shall copy the Music Director and the Ringer Officer on all communications with the substitute. In the case of an emergency, the Music Director and Ringer Officer will coordinate identifying and communicating with a substitute.
8. Substitutes are not required for missed rehearsals.
9. Multiple late arrivals will count as absences. Two excused late arrivals will be counted as one excused absence. Two unexcused late arrivals will be counted as an unexcused absence.

Rehearsals

1. Prepare in advance for rehearsals (review director's notes, mark music, identify questions or problem passages, work with neighboring ringers to identify bell changes, keep track of duplicate bells needed, etc.).
2. Help with setup and tear down in the rehearsal space. A sign up form is available for this purpose. Members signed up for set up should arrive by 6:30 pm. Other members may arrive by 7:00 for rehearsal and stay through tear down.
3. Non-essential conversations should be reserved for before/after rehearsal and during breaks to not disrupt rehearsal time. If you feel you have opinions or suggestions for the director(s), speak with them privately when the group is not actively rehearsing.
4. Cell phone usage is not allowed during rehearsal. Cell phone usage is allowed before and after rehearsal and during breaks. All cell phones should be set to silent/vibrate for the duration of the rehearsal.

Performances

1. Help with setup and tear down of the concert space.
2. Be an ambassador for Virginia Bronze and the handbell community in general during all performances and community events.

Financial Obligations

1. Purchase and maintain the appropriate attire for Virginia Bronze performances and activities.
2. Pay dues as determined by the Executive Committee.

Virginia Bronze 2023-2024 Season Important Dates

As of 5/3/2023, dates subject to change with appropriate notice

Bold=attendance is mandatory. Your help is expected for the other events*

July

23 Sun Ringing Under the Influence
VFW #9274, 7118 Shreve Rd
Falls Church, VA
1:00 - 4:00PM

August

22 Tues Auditions
7:00 - 9:00 PM
Bush Hill Presbyterian Church

September

5 Tues **First rehearsal**
7:00 - 9:30 PM
Bush Hill Presbyterian Church

8-10 Fri-Sun **Fall retreat**
(7:00 PM Friday to 12:00 PM Sunday)
Northern VA 4-H Conference Center
600 4H Center Dr, Front Royal, VA 22630
(equivalent of 3 rehearsals)

30 Sat Beginning Ringers Workshop
8:00 AM - 5:00 PM
St. Matthew's UMC, Annandale, VA

November

28 Tues **Required rehearsal before concerts**

December

2	Sat	Concert Hold Date
3	Sun	George Washington Masonic National Memorial, Alexandria, VA Concert: 4:00 PM
5	Tues	Required rehearsal before concerts
9	Sat	Concert Hold Date
10	Sun	Concert Hold Date

January

9	Tues	Rehearsals begin
20	Sat	Winter Ringer Meeting and Retreat 8:30 AM - 5:00 PM Bush Hill Presbyterian Church (equivalent of 2 rehearsals)

April

13	Sat	VAB Ring In Spring Festival Herndon UMC Gymnasium
23	Tues	Required rehearsal before Showcase
27	Sat	Full Workshop hosted by VAB 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM Handbell Showcase 5:00 PM - 9:00 PM Herndon UMC
30	Tues	Required rehearsal before concerts

May

4	Sat	Concert Hold Date
5	Sun	Westminster Presbyterian 2701 Cameron Mills Rd, Alexandria, VA Concert: 4:00 PM
14	Tues	Required rehearsal before concerts
18	Sat	Concert Hold Date
19	Sun	Concert Hold Date

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