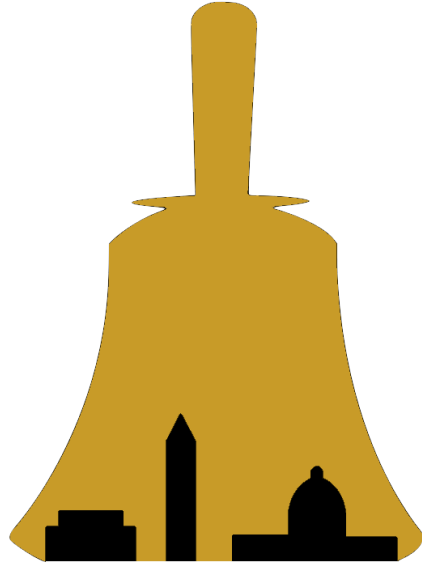


Virginia Bronze



Ringer Handbook

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

Welcome

This handbook is designed to provide ringers 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 region. In 2006, VAB 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*, *Washington Master Chorale* 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 support and grow the music and handbell community of Northern Virginia.

Vision Statement

Virginia Bronze promotes and showcases handbell ringing in Northern Virginia through programs that:

- Entertain audiences with advanced handbell performances
- Inspire individuals to learn the art of handbell ringing
- Motivate composers to create new and innovative handbell music
- Support the performing arts community through collaborative efforts

Identity Statement

VAB is an ensemble of musicians based in Northern Virginia who are committed to the advancement of handbell musicianship and repertoire at the highest levels through the presentation of challenging, diverse, new and innovative music that showcases the breadth of handbells, new music that incorporates the instrument, and works of new arrangers and composers of that music. The organization recruits musicians seeking to serve as ambassadors of the art of handbells through professional level performances, workshops, festivals and other ringing events. All ringers are expected to grow and maintain their skills as handbell musicians. 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 Officers, General Manager, Music Director and any At-Large Members appointed by the Officers. All ringers 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: 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 Officers at any one time. Minutes of all approved general membership and Executive Committee meetings are also available to members.

Musical direction for the organization is set by the Music Director who is contracted by the Officers. 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:

- Continually demonstrating strong musical ability;
- Spending time outside of rehearsal reviewing and preparing music as necessary;
- Contributing to the mission and business of the organization;
- Maintaining mutual and equal respect for all other members of the group;
- Arriving on time for all rehearsals and performances;
- Maintaining good financial standing with regard to payment of dues and any other financial obligations; and,
- Abiding 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 to become a VAB member. Ringers will be invited to join the ensemble if they meet audition criteria established by the Music Director and the Officers. Auditions may be held on a rolling basis as determined by the Music Director and Officers. If someone has been a member of the Ensemble within the last two fiscal years, they do not have to re-audition.

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

Dues

Being a member of VAB requires 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 has a scholarship fund available to members needing financial assistance regarding dues. Contact the Treasurer for more information.

Organizational Support

Every member is expected to contribute to VAB beyond ringing. Each member brings skills and interests that can 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 ringers 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 ringers 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

Ringers 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 or late arrival 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 not identified by the member at auditions will be considered unexcused. Members 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 Officers. 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 on the VAB annual calendar approved by the board is not mandatory, it is expected that members will help out at most, if not all, VAB hosted events. 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 assistance at these events is not required for the entire day. Sign up sheets for help at events will be posted as early as possible to allow members to plan their participation. The attendance policy does not apply to events on the VAB calendar that are not listed in bold.

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

VAB provides every ringer a black polo shirt to be worn at various events as determined by the Music Director.

Ringers are expected to acquire and maintain concert attire from the list below:

- 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 and 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.

Illness Policy

If you are unable to attend rehearsal due to an illness, please follow established protocol for absence notification. If you suspect that you have been exposed to a potentially contagious illness, you should mask at rehearsal and/or a performance. The board reserves the right to adjust this policy based on current circumstances. This applies year round, for any illness.