

Level  
3+

THE CYNTHIA DOBRINSKI  
HANDBELL SERIES

HOPE Publishing  
Company

Since 1892

*I Heard the  
Bells on  
Christmas Day*

*Arranged for 3-5 octave handbells by  
Cynthia Dobrinski*



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# HOPF Publishing

This setting of "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day" utilizes elements of text painting to musically describe Longfellow's four stanzas. Typical bell patterns are heard in the introduction and later in the transition to verse two. Rolling movement in the melody is heard on the words "rolled along the unbroken song". Verse three is the most picturesque and dramatic. A minor key and tempo changes are used to portray the despair of the reality that there is no peace on earth. The chord on "hate" is strident and clashing dissonant. Mockery is depicted with the bass martellatos laughing up the scale on "mocks the song". In this stanza "peace on earth" sounds anything but serene. In the transition to the final stanza the bells persist in ringing the good news, first slowly in a minor carol, then gradually faster and louder as more and more bells peal and toll and join in the joyful affirmation that there is a greater reality, that God will prevail. The triumphant final verse looks forward to the day when the Prince of Peace will reign and all the tower bells wildly celebrate their joy.

1. I heard the bells on Christmas day  
Their old familiar carols play,  
And wild and sweet the words repeat  
Of peace on earth good will to men.
2. I thought how, as the day had come,  
The belfries of all Christendom  
Had roll'd along th'un broken song  
Of peace on earth good will to men.
3. And in despair I bow'd my head:  
"There is no peace on earth," I said,  
"For hate is strong and mocks the song  
Of peace on earth good will to men."
4. Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:  
"God is not dead, nor doth he sleep;  
The wrong shall fail, the right prevail,  
With peace on earth good will to men."

Henry W. Longfellow, 1863



Commissioned for the Council Oak Bells of First United Methodist Church of Round Rock, Texas  
Carla David, Director

# I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day

Handbells used: 3 octaves (35 bells);  
4 octaves (40 bells);  
5 octaves (56 bells)

optional

D7, Eb7, E7, F7, F#7, G7 not used in 4 octave version.

optional

Three octave choirs should omit notes enclosed in ( ) and in < >.  
Four octave choirs should omit notes enclosed in [ ] and in < >.  
Five octave choirs play all notes.

J. BAPTISTE CALKIN

Arranged by CYNTHIA DOBRINSKI (ASCAP)

Gently (  $\text{♩} = c. 92$  )

1 2 3

*p* LV LV LV

4 5 6 7

*mf* LV *rit.* *a tempo*

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Musical notation for measures 8 through 11. The score is in 2/4 time. The right hand features a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, while the left hand provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and single notes. A large watermark for 'HOPE Publishing Company' is overlaid on the page.

Musical notation for measures 12 through 15. The right hand continues the melodic line. The left hand includes dynamic markings 'LV' (piano) and 'rit.' (ritardando). The tempo changes from 2/4 to 4/4 at measure 13.

Musical notation for measures 16 through 19. The right hand features a melodic line with a dynamic marking of 'f' (forte) at measure 16. The left hand provides a steady accompaniment. The tempo is marked 'a tempo'.

Musical notation for measures 20 through 22. The right hand continues the melodic line with chords. The left hand provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and single notes.



23 24 25

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LV

Detailed description: This system contains measures 23, 24, and 25. Measure 23 is in 2/4 time with a treble clef and a bass clef. Measures 24 and 25 are in 4/4 time. The music features chords and melodic lines in both hands. A large watermark 'HOPE Publishing Company Since 1892' is overlaid across the page.

26 27 28

LV

LV rit.

*p*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 26, 27, and 28. Measure 26 is in 2/4 time. Measures 27 and 28 are in 4/4 time. The music continues with chords and melodic lines. Performance markings include 'LV', 'LV rit.', and a dynamic marking of '*p*'.

Freely dramatic (♩ = c. 78)

29 30 31 32

*f* rit. *p*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 29, 30, 31, and 32. The tempo is marked 'Freely dramatic (♩ = c. 78)'. Measure 29 is in 2/4 time. Measures 30, 31, and 32 are in 4/4 time. The music features chords and melodic lines. Performance markings include '*f*', 'rit.', and '*p*'.

♩ = c. 92

♩ = c. 120

33 34 35

*f* molto accel.

Detailed description: This system contains measures 33, 34, and 35. Measure 33 is in 2/4 time with a tempo marking of '♩ = c. 92'. Measures 34 and 35 are in 4/4 time with a tempo marking of '♩ = c. 120'. The music features chords and melodic lines. Performance markings include '*f*' and 'molto accel.'.

Sk  $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 88$

*molto rit.*  
*ff*  
LV  
*p*

*pp*  
*accel. poco a poco*

R  
LV  
LV

$\text{♩} = \text{c. } 180$

LV  
LV  
*f* LV  
Sw ↓  
Sw ↑



53 54 55 56

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57 58 59 60

Vigorously (♩ = c. 92-102)

rit. molto rit. ff

LV LV

61 62 63

LV LV

64 65 66

Sk LV

\*5 octave choirs double melody an octave higher.  
I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day

LV  
67 68 69 70

Sw ↓ ↑ Sw ↓ ↑ Sw ↓ ↑

71 72

Sw ↓ ↑ Sw ↓ ↑

73 74 75 76 77

\* rit. molto rit. Sw ↓ ↑ Sw ↓ ↑ Sw ↓ ↑

\*Ritard so that the bells will have come almost to a complete stop by m. 75. Swing very slowly and let the sound die away.

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Price Code: G



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