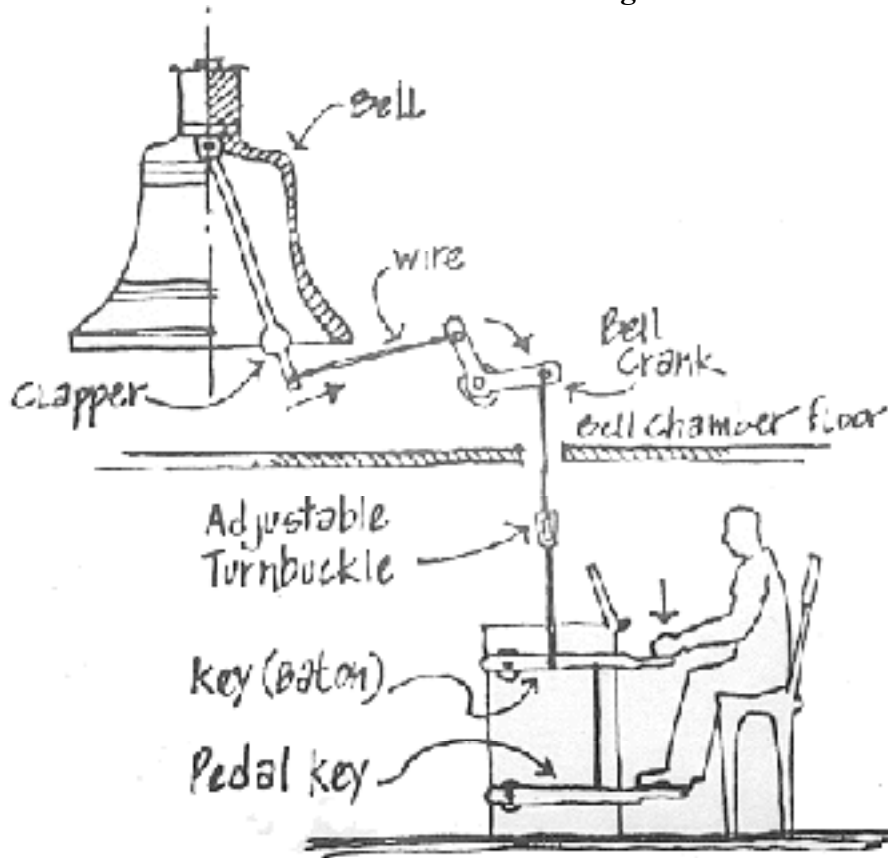


Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church

Carillon Facts and Figures



Simplified Drawing of Carillon Playing Action

A carillon is a musical instrument composed of at least 23 bells tuned in chromatic sequence. It is played from a console that resembles a simple organ, with batons (for the hands) and pedals (for the feet). These keys move the clappers (metal balls) that strike and sound the bells, which remain stationary. This set-up allows the carillonneur to play with great dynamic expression.

The art of carillon playing originated nearly 500 years ago in the area of Europe that now comprises the Netherlands, Belgium, and northern France. It is there that the greatest concentration of carillons can still be found, with close to 400 instruments in use. Although the first carillon in North America was installed at Notre Dame University in 1856, most instruments on this side of the Atlantic were not built until the late 1920s and early 1930s. In the Philadelphia area, carillons may be heard at Valley Forge Memorial Chapel, St. Thomas Church (Whitemarsh), Holy Trinity Church (Philadelphia), Germantown Methodist Church, Longwood Gardens, and Princeton University. The heaviest carillon in the world is in the tower of The Riverside Church in New York City

(74 bells). The largest carillon in the world is Kirk-in-the-Hills Presbyterian, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, with 77 bells. The Church of the Redeemer has a small set of bells (called a Chime) and St. Luke's Methodist Church has an electronic carillon. Our carillon is a four-octave, 49 bell instrument with a total weight of more than 30,000 pounds. The largest bell is the same size as the Liberty Bell and weighs just under 2000 pounds; the smallest bell weighs about 14 pounds. It is equipped with a mechanical console and a remote electric console. A practice console is located in the Fine Arts Center.

Playing the Carillon



Many people imagine that the carillon is an electronically controlled or automatic device, perhaps because of the clockwork and chiming mechanism attached to most instruments. While our carillon may be electronically controlled, it is also able to be powered by the force of the performer's hands and feet.

The bells are fixed in a steel frame and do not swing; only the clappers, or tongues, of the bells move. They are attached by means of a series of stainless steel wires and levers to the keys and pedals of the clavier. The heavier clappers of the lowest octave and a half can be operated also by means of foot pedals similar to those of the organ. The playing console consists of a double row of oak keys, or 'batons,' plus

a pedal board. The console is located in the church tower, in the bell chamber, but housed in a climate controlled cabin. The carillonneur plays the instrument by depressing these batons with loosely clenched fists. The batons are in standard keyboard arrangement, with the lower row corresponding to the white keys and the upper row to the black.

Our carillon is also able to be played through a portable electronic keyboard. This control makes possible automatic playback of the carillon, striking the hour, tolling at funerals and memorial services, and pealing at joyous occasions and holidays.