

Virtual Handbell Creation in New England

By Jonathan Reuning-Scherer

(Editor's Note: In response to the *Care to Share* – call for articles, I received an email from Jonathan Reuning-Scherer*, who sent a virtual bell 'event' he was involved in with a colleague. I asked Jonathan to send more information about the technical side of the recording. Here it is.)

Hope you and yours are all well. Thanks for taking an interest in these projects!

We set up two video cameras – one stationary that picked up all the bell tables, one that we moved for each take. We did 6 takes total – two parts per take (it usually would have been played by 12 ringers). We tried to keep the lighting relatively constant. For mics, we used two Neumann condenser mics and recorded directly into Logic Pro running on a MacBook Pro.

To get things to line up, I first recorded the bell piece on piano with a metronome to make sure we were exactly together. We then listened to the recording of the piano wearing earpods (you'll see we each wore one). I played the piano recording on my phone while the cameras were recording.

We used Logic Pro to process all the audio (so we layered the 6 audio tracks, mixed based on distance, used a low frequency filter to cut out the sound of passing busses. We used Final Cut Pro (also Mac OS based program) to mix the 12 video feeds. We used various effects to try to match the sound of the piece. There was (obviously) some extra footage we used to add a bit of humor.

If you're interested, here is our first bell piece that we did in Lent – a setting of 'Ah Holy Jesus'. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hvgl5Oqwou0>

For this, we used the same equipment but did a lot of overlaying of the same video, changing the opacity, to create the effect of multiple versions of ourselves.

(Editor's Note: 'Beach Spring Stomp' is available [Here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BUUQTrCJyBE&fbclid=IwAR23HcP7IO_PhIBvyRf9qzXIQwSDnxEmkTYcxKr48GDLveWzRmgSSpK_BcA) – or insert this address in your browser https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BUUQTrCJyBE&fbclid=IwAR23HcP7IO_PhIBvyRf9qzXIQwSDnxEmkTYcxKr48GDLveWzRmgSSpK_BcA)

This might sound complicated, but it would be quite possible to get almost the same results using one phone playing a very exact recording, and one ipad recording the results. Folks could use iMovie to mix the video (which is free). Folks might decide to mix the audio separately in GarageBand (also free). For Windows users, there are various other free audio/video editing programs available.

I'm hoping next week to create our first actual virtual bell ensemble with my members recording at home with tone chimes. If it works out, I'll send you the results!

* I'm a church director at and longtime handbell director at Emanuel Lutheran in Hartford.