

# *New England Ringers Backgrounder*

## *New England's Premier Handbell Ensemble*

The New England Ringers is a fifteen-member handbell ensemble of highly energetic musicians playing the most advanced handbell literature. NER amazes listeners of all ages with a blend of lively and beautiful musical moods and styles. The performances include classical transcriptions, arrangements of familiar favorites, and original compositions. These performances also include a touch of entertaining humor, as well as an artful visual presentation of this unique instrument.

One of the major goals of the ensemble is to introduce to audiences the incredible music that can be made on this impressive instrument. The group strives to achieve a level of musicianship that is bringing handbells greater recognition and acceptance in the world of musical performance.

Another major goal of the organization is to bring a greater level of musicianship to handbell ringers all around New England. Through workshops with members of the ensembles, NER is spreading the art of handbell ringing to anyone who wants to learn more about the instrument.

NER members descend on Tewksbury, MA nearly every week from throughout New England to rehearse. Some ringers (the truly bell-crazy ones) travel more than two hours each way to rehearsals. These marathon rehearsals last around four hours, and are powered by plenty of coffee and chocolate. Between regular rehearsals in Tewksbury, ringers rehearse individually and in sectionals throughout the region. Current members come from Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

## *New England Ringers History*

New England Ringers was founded by some of the region's most talented ringers in 2000 for the purpose of attending and ringing at the National Directors Seminar of the American Guild of English Handbell Ringers in Buffalo, New York. Following that event, the ensemble continued with the mission of performing challenging music at its highest level. Membership is offered to qualified and interested ringers by invitation or by audition.

NER is currently celebrating its twelfth year ringing together as an ensemble. In addition to performing a piece written specifically for the ensemble during the Spring 2010 season, the ensemble recorded an album at the WGBH studios containing that song as well as favorites from previous seasons.

NER rings on a core instrument of six and one half octaves of Schulmerich handbells, and seven octaves of Malmark Choirchimes. The original five octave set of handbells was received as a gift from an anonymous donor in February 2004.