

## Handbells and Handchimes in Romania

Transylvania – land of mystery, vampires, horse-drawn carts, shepherds, castles, the Carpathian Mountains, and a fabulous handchime choir. Well – maybe the vampires are more fiction than fact (thanks to Bram Stoker), but Vlad Tepeș was a real person (also known as Vlad III Dracula). But what about that handchime choir?



Castles

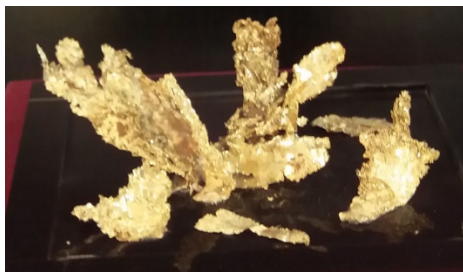


Cows



& (Donkey) Carts

Brad is a small town in the southwest corner of Transylvania. This obscure town hosts the only museum of gold in Europe. Founded 100 years ago, the collection of over 2,000 exhibits is gathered from all around the world. The native gold has some spectacular shapes: animals, leaves, snakes, bird wings and even one in the shape of a lizard (0.7 grams of gold – valued at 3 million Euros!). But what about that handchime choir?



Criscior is a tiny village only a few kilometers from Brad. In this tiny village is an orphanage called Casa Emanuel which is a model for the care and protection of orphans in Romania. It provides educational and emotional support in a family atmosphere for the children who call Casa Emanuel home. Teams from the US have visited for over 20 years to play with the children, provide Vacation Bible School and to make music with the handchimes.



Some of our friends from Casa Emanuel (fun times with ice cream and a castle tour)

Through the generosity of Malmark, Schulmerich, Jeffers, Volkwein's, Area 2 (HMA) and many individuals, 5 octaves of handchimes have been ringing constantly since 2001. Marilyn Shenenberger was the driving force behind this endeavor and is beloved by all of the children - especially the ringers.

As a perfect complement to the arrival of the handchimes, an outstanding young director settled in Brad to teach music at the local high school in 2005. Ciprian (Cip – pronounced Chip) earned his Master’s Degree in Choral and Orchestral Conducting. Sadly, he has neither a choir nor orchestra, BUT he has developed an outstanding and very musical handchime ensemble. During Marilyn’s visits, the ringers were quick learners when they had the opportunity to ring handbells.

Area 2 has been supporting Cip’s work for many years. In 2015, it began collecting donations for handbells for the Brad Ringers and also submitted a grant proposal to Schulmerich. In the spring of 2016 we received an enthusiastic call from Schulmerich in support of the Romanian project. Through the combined support of Schulmerich, Area 2 and Southminster Presbyterian Church (in Pittsburgh), 3 octaves of handbells were to become a reality in Romania.

The Southminster ringers made plans to begin their 2016 Mission Tour by spending three days with the children at Casa Emanuel. The new Schulmerich bells were presented to Cip and his 2 handbell choirs amid much excitement as each bell was unwrapped and rung. The rest of the morning was spent with the Brad Ringers and the Southminster Ringers standing, ringing and learning side-by-side.



It was a little tight around the table with 2 sets of bells, but it was a great day for all!

There is much learning and work ahead as these new ringers experiment with and master their bells. Under Cip’s direction we can be sure that these ringers will bring joy to all who hear them and even more joy to the ringers themselves.



Some of the Brad Ringers



The Brad Ringers and the Southminster Ringers

And how can we help these ringers in the future? There are still many needs as this handbell choir begins a new chapter: polish, gloves, binders, level 2-3 music. We hope to return to Brad in the coming summers to encourage and help the ringers in any way that we can. Perhaps you would be willing to travel and work with these ringers? If you would like to help in some way, please contact Rich Pinkerton at [rich@spchurch.org](mailto:rich@spchurch.org) We look forward to watching the Brad Ringers flourish!

To learn more about Casa Emanuel and the wonderful work that is done there, please go to the International Children's Aid Foundation website: <http://icafkids.org/home>