



Ringing beautiful, serene and energetic music with handbells



About the Artists

Pam Ion, Director



As the director, arranger and a ringer in Alpha 4, Pam initiated the formation of Alpha 4 in June of 2001 following a concert and workshop led by Christine Anderson. Her first musical instrument, wooden spoons on pots and pan lids, began at the early age of three. A true percussionist, Pam also plays bugle, guitar, and handbells, and is learning to play the piano, baritone, cello and French horn. As the first drummer for the Young Americans, she has played timpani and percussion for Gilbert & Sullivan as well as the Ohio State Orchestra, and continues to play percussion in her Church Orchestra. Although she never had formal music lessons until now, she is very musically inclined, and has directed several Children's Choirs, both youth and adult vocal choirs and handbells, and has directed and sang duets, trios and in various vocal ensembles. She is also an actress on occasion, but acting is a story in itself. A

Jack-of-All-Trades and master of many, Pam has worn numerous hats over the years: radio broadcaster, journalist, military and civilian nurse, deacon, special educator, caterer, baker, chef, and author while earning a Bachelor degree in Communicative Journalism, obtaining her California Licensed Practical Nurse Certification, and completing a Master's degree in Special Education, but 'mom' and 'wife' are her favorite hats. Not fully satisfied, she has set yet another goal, Director Certification. As the published author of 'Be a Doer, Not a Viewer' with Vantage Press, she is presently working on her second book. After serving her country for over a decade in the United States Navy, Pam and her husband, Chris, her knight in shining armor, moved to Maryland with their two daughters, Kristen and Amber, who are music majors in college. Both daughters sing, ring handbells, and play guitar, piano, all percussion instruments and a few other musical instruments. The Ion family has lived in Gaithersburg for nearly 19 years, and will one day retire to a log home.

Laura Staley, Ringer



Laura Staley was born in Kansas City, MO and then grew up in Maracaibo, Venezuela, Miami, FL, Chicago, IL and Rochester, NY. As a child, Laura took piano lessons and enjoyed them, and was part of the school band where she played mallet instruments - xylophone, marimba and bells. After graduating from college, a job moved her to Rockville, MD where she met and married the man of her dreams, Larry Staley. In 1987, she showed up to an organizational meeting for a new handbell group at church and heard a giant, "Click" in her head - she had found her musical niche. Since then, she has played in a variety of handbell settings: with handbell choirs, in duets and trios, and as a solo ringer. Laura and Larry enjoy performing Larry's arrangements of hymns and patriotic songs with handbells, voice and piano parts. Alpha 4 convinced her that she could do anything she set her mind to on the handbells while providing her with fun and laughter and fresh challenges year round. Laura loves to

teach. Professionally, she is a software trainer. She teaches marriage enrichment classes with Larry and helps coordinate a small-group ministry in her church.

Kathy Stauffer, Ringer



Born in Ohio and raised in Toronto, Kathy Stauffer's music career began with piano lessons at the age of eight. Not totally satisfied with just playing the piano, Kathy went on to play viola in her high school orchestra, and has recently verbalized an interest in playing the viola again. Each time Kathy watched the Sanctuary Handbells play, she would think to herself, "I would love to play those magnificent bells one day," but never had the courage to ask. Secretly, she prayed for the courage and opportunity to ring handbells, and when a space became available for an additional ringer, Kathy summoned up the courage and asked if she could be the new ringer. That was eight years ago, and she's never looked back, fulfilling her secret dream of ringing handbells. Courage should be her middle name. As the

Music and Worship Service Assistant at her church in Gaithersburg, Kathy is totally engulfed in ringing handbells. When Alpha 4 was forming in 2001 and with absolutely no hesitation, Kathy leaped on board and is now known as the steam engine in the group that loves to go full speed ahead. Alive, alert, awake and enthusiastic, Kathy enjoys sewing, cross-stitch, needlepoint, decorating, playing with her three grandsons, and anything to do with the computer. Kathy resides in Darnestown with her husband and best friend, Doug, and one daughter. They also have two married daughters, one living in Brunswick and one living in Laurel.



Kristine Farrell, Ringer



Kristy was born and raised in York, PA and wanted to be a musician from the first time she saw her brother perform in a concert band when she was five years old. She began her musical life playing clarinet and even majored in music for a brief stint in college. Following her graduation from Boston University, Kristy moved to Gaithersburg, became a graphic/web designer and joined her brother's church, which happened to have handbells. After watching the handbells for a couple years and playing with the church orchestra, Kristy was asked to join the church handbell group as a substitute. A love of handbells was born and she was thrilled to hear that a four-in-hand bell group was forming in the church. Kristine is a co-founder of Roadchix.com, which chronicles the adventures of her and her friend as they travel to one state each year to thoroughly explore the roadside attractions, factory tours, historic homes and unique sites that each state offers. She recently embarked on two new journeys in life to fix up her new house, and find a new career path. Alpha 4 christened her marriage by ringing her down the aisle, and she's been happily married to Kevin ever since.

Nita Roff, Ringer



Born and raised in Statesville, North Carolina, Nita says, "Bells are music to my soul." Whether singing, playing the piano or ringing handbells, music continues to be an important part of her life. She began ringing handbells and acting in church plays as an early teenager and continues to do both. As a member of Gaithersburg First Baptist Church, she is most comfortable playing the upper third and fourth octaves in the Sanctuary Handbell Choir. When she's not playing handbells, she's singing in either the Sanctuary Choir or with the National Christian Choir where she also serves as the Robe Chairman. While at the University of North Carolina, she met and married Tom. It was Tom's job that led them to Maryland where they reside in Gaithersburg with their two teenage daughters, Sheryl and Alyssa, both high school students who also ring handbells. Not only is she a full-time 'mom', but she also is a Compliance Specialist. Her second home away from home is her church where she serves as an active Deacon, Sanctuary Choir President, Music Makers Children's Choir Director, and Kindergarten Sunday School Director. Her faith in God and love of music, along with two energetic daughters, keep her very busy. It's no wonder she's been playing handbells for 20 years. For Nita, ringing handbells is a peaceful, tranquil and fun break from her daily duties and activities. She says, "Thank you God for bells and for Alpha 4."



About Alpha 4

Alpha 4 is a four-in-hand handbell group from Gaithersburg, Maryland that demonstrates the interlocking handbell technique. Interlocking the bells allows each member to play with two to three bells in each hand, meaning that each person is holding and ringing anywhere from four to six bells at any given time. This energetic group includes Kristy Farrell, Nita Roff, Laura Staley, Kathy Stauffer and Pam Ion, who is the group's director and arranger.

Formed in 2001, Alpha 4 meets weekly year round and is made up of dedicated and versatile ringers who are also faithful prayer warriors and the best of friends.

Alpha 4 enjoys trying new and different techniques. In addition to ringing interlocking handbells, members also play what is referred to as "on the table" ensemble ringing. This means that the four ringers share and play several octaves of bells during one musical selection. The members alternate and also ring duets, trios, and solos.

Alpha 4 has performed for the Presidential Christmas Pageant of Peace, several Historical Societies, weddings, senior-living facilities, nursing homes, programs in area shopping malls and various church worship services. They are presently working on a demo CD which will be used for potential wedding clients.

Their repertoire includes classical, seasonal, patriotic and folk tunes, hymns, medleys, and both sacred and secular music. They often bring in a variety of percussion instruments to add a different dimension in their ringing.

Additionally, the Alpha 4 Duo is a subset of Alpha 4 and consists of Pam Ion and Kristy Farrell who perform when a smaller group is needed.

Alpha 4 is a member of the American Guild of English Handbell Ringers.

For scheduling, contact Laura Staley, Marketing Director, by e-mail at laura@alpha4handbells.org or leave a message on the Alpha 4 phone 301-926-0790.



Performances 2002-2007

March 2007, Frederick, Maryland
Bell & History Days
Schifferstadt Museum

December 2006, Urbana, Maryland
Alpha 4 Duo
NIH Oral and Infection Department

December 2006, Frederick, Maryland
Alpha 4 Duo - Frederick Library

December 2006, Frederick, Maryland
First Saturday Gallery Walk
Market and Patrick Streets

December 2006, Urbana, Maryland
Urbana Library

November 2006, Clarksburg, Maryland
Greenridge Baptist Church Worship Service

August 2006, Gaithersburg, Maryland
First Baptist Church Worship Service

May 2006, Gaithersburg, Maryland
Stauffer/Jackson Wedding Music
First Baptist Church, Gaithersburg

April 2006 Frederick, Maryland
Bell & History Days
Schifferstadt Museum

March 2006 Richmond, Virginia
Alpha 4 Duo
James River Ringer's Festival

January 2006 Gaithersburg, Maryland
'He That Cometh In Peace' Premiere
First Baptist Church of Gaithersburg

December 2005 Frederick, Maryland
First Saturday Gallery Walk
Historical Society of Frederick County

December 2005 Frederick, Maryland
Alpha 4 Duo - Museums By Candlelight
Mt. Olivet Cemetery Chapel

December 2005 Bethesda, Maryland
Alpha 4 Duo - National Institute of Health
Holiday party

December 2005 Washington, DC
Presidential Christmas Pageant of Peace
Ellipse across from the White House

December 2005 Gaithersburg, Maryland
First Baptist Church of Gaithersburg
Christmas Concert

April 2005 Dickerson, Maryland
Forest Grove UMC
Worship Service Music

November 2004 York, Pennsylvania
Staley/Farrell Wedding
Wedding Service Music

February 2003 Gaithersburg, Maryland
Asbury Methodist Village
Wilson Health Care Center

October 2003 Gaithersburg, Maryland
Asbury Methodist Village
Wilson Health Care Center

May 2002 Gaithersburg, Maryland
Lakeforest Mall
Patriotic Music Performance



Quotes

“I wanted to tell you how much the visitors enjoyed your performance! You all have made the 2005 Christmas Pageant of Peace music program a successful one!”

Ranger Jenny Feeney, President's Park, White House Liaison

“Just a note to say thank you to everyone who participated in Bell and History Days, including the Saturday morning bell-ringers, Alpha 4, who worked so hard to make the return of Bell and History Days to our community a success.” *Joanne M. Ivancic, Executive Director, Frederick County Landmarks Foundation, Inc.*

“We were delighted to have you at our Holiday Party, and everyone was so impressed with the bell ringing. You and Kristy really made the party special. Thank you so much for taking time away from your job and busy schedule to share your fabulous talents with us.” *Sharon Wahl, NIH Lab Chief of Oral Infection and Immunity Branch*

“Forest Grove United Methodist Church was blessed by the presence and performance of Alpha 4. This was a wonderful new experience for the Forest Grove congregation. The ringers brought a new dimension to our worship that prompted several people within our congregation to begin considering starting a small bell choir at Forest Grove. We are excited about this new movement of the Spirit in our midst! Please accept my heartfelt thanks for the gift that the ringers brought to us in their music. The joy they have in their ministry is apparent to all that see and hear them. What a wonderful way to spread God's love through the graces and talents we are given! May God continue to bless these wonderful musicians in their ministry! We were blessed beyond measure by their presence in our community. Wow! What a wonderful menu of choices.” *Pastor Bill Maisch, Forest Grove UMC*

