Handbell choir to chime

By Teresa Regaisky
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Listen for the chimes of 63 bells when the OSU Handbell Choir performs in Weigel Hall Auditorium tonight at 8.

The 13-member choir, under direction of William Griffin, a part-time faculty member in the school of music, makes music by ringing a set of graduated bells which range in size from two to 24 inches wide.

"Each bell is independent, but there is a tremendous amount of interdependence on each other to create a melody," Griffin said.

The bells, made of 80 percent copper and 20 percent tin, are arranged on long tables and are placed on foam padding. White gloves are also worn by each player to protect the bells.

Griffin said the bells have the same range as an organ with five octaves.

Griffin said the choir is composed of students in the miscellaneous ensemble class offered through the school of music. Students get credit for taking the class, but most of them are in it for fun, he said.

Griffin said although some members of the ensemble do not know how to read music, they need to know when to play their particular part.

Playing the bells also takes a lot of coordination and timing. Tammy Stoker, a continuing education student from Albeine, Texas, minoring in music, said learning to play the bells is not difficult.

"But it does take a lot of coordination because you're playing individually, but with a lot of other people," she said. "I felt like a klutz for the first five weeks, but they kept telling me I was coming along fine."

Admission to the concert, which will include a performance by the University Chorus, is free.