

Healing Bells

for carillon



Pamela Ruiter-Feenstra & Jet Schouten



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Healing Bells

Ukrainian folk song “Plyve Kacha,”
Pamela Ruiter-Feenstra & Jet Schouten

Bells have long functioned as signals and timekeepers, notifying residents of deaths, commemorations, and celebrations. During the time of the Black Plague, some people believed that bells had powers to ward off the disease. When bells were confiscated by Nazis, melted and repurposed into military equipment during the Holocaust, villagers were haunted by the absent presence or present absence of the bells, which had guided the rhythm of their daily lives.

In 2020, most of us experience social isolation due to COVID-19. The rhythm of our daily lives is skewed. Amidst global suffering, many people long for the beauty found in live music, which signals a certain normalcy and offers the healing power of music.

*In response to the pandemic, we, Dutch investigative journalist Jet Schouten and carillonist and composer Pamela Ruiter-Feenstra, teamed up to create **Healing Bells**. Schouten suggested that the lament quality of the Ukrainian folk tune “Plyve Kacha”¹ was fitting to commemorate those who have suffered and died from the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The low, close, parallel harmonies of Ukrainian folk singing find kinship in the deep resonance of the bells. Ruiter-Feenstra arranged “Plyve Kacha” in phrase fragments alternating with viral spirals, in which the carillonists’ hands move in a circular gesture similar to the shape of the coronavirus as it appears under a microscope. The viral spirals represent COVID-19, as well as any social virus such as xenophobia and racism that infects society, spreading as if contagious. Each time more music plays, the virus grows quieter, slower, and less virulent. Three quarters of the way into **Healing Bells**, the low bells pull apart the virus particles one-by-one, and eradicate them through low bell tolls, which are followed by a stately conclusion of the folk tune lament.*

*We acknowledge health care workers, who risk themselves to care for others, despite shortages of testing kits, masks, and ventilators. We grieve over people of Asian descent worldwide who have been targeted in racist and xenophobic attacks. We offer **Healing Bells** to lament and mourn with those who have lost loved ones, as well as for anyone who has suffered social isolation.²*

*Carillonists world-wide are invited to join in a global premiere of **Healing Bells** at noon local time on 21 May 2020, the UNESCO World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development.*

*In solidarity and healing via the arts,
-Pamela Ruiter-Feenstra & Jet Schouten*

¹ For information on “Plyve Kacha,” see <https://www.pri.org/node/65044/popout> and listen to the wonderful six-voice *a cappella* ensemble Pikkardiyska Tertsya sing the folk tune: https://youtu.be/-KNHAXbH_nY, and see more about the ensemble here: <https://www.ukraine.com/blog/pikkardiyska-tertsiya-the-power-of-the-human-voice/>.

The Ukrainian folk song “Plyve Kacha” was widely used in another crisis in 2014, after more than 100 protesters were killed by snipers in Kiev’s Maidan (Independence Square). See Andrea Crossan’s report for *The World*, April 16, 2014, “An old Ukrainian folk song takes on new meaning in the current crisis:” <https://www.pri.org/stories/2014-04-16/old-ukrainian-folk-song-takes-new-meaning-current-crisis>.

² Photo credit of bells: Peter Matthews, at the University of Michigan Baird Carillon, Taylor foundry, 1936.

Healing Bells

Oekraïens volkslied "Plyve Kacha" Pamela Ruiter-Feenstra & Jet Schouten

Klokken hebben lang gefunctioneerd als duiders van de tijd en hadden daarnaast een signalerende functie, die bewoners op de hoogte brachten van sterfgevallen, herdenkingen en vieringen. In de tijd van de Zwarte Pest geloofden sommige mensen dat klokken de kracht hadden om deze ziekte af te weren. Toen de klokken in beslag werden genomen door de nazi's en omgesmolten werden voor militaire doeleinden, raakten dorpelingen hun dagelijkse ritme en houvast kwijt.

Anno 2020 ervaren de meesten van ons een sociaal isolement als gevolg van COVID-19. Het ritme van ons dagelijks leven is verstoord. Te midden van het wereldwijde lijden, verlangen veel mensen naar de schoonheid van livemuziek, die een zekere normaliteit aanduidt en troost biedt.

Naar aanleiding van de pandemie hebben wij, de Nederlandse onderzoeksjournalist Jet Schouten en beiaardier en componist Pamela Ruiter-Feenstra, samen *Healing Bells* gecreëerd. Schouten suggereerde dat de klaagzang van het Oekraïense volkslied "Plyve Kacha " passend was om degenen te herdenken die hebben geleden en zijn gestorven aan de COVID-19 pandemie wereldwijd. De lage, nauwe, parallelle harmonieën van dit Oekraïense volkslied vinden verwantschap in de diepe resonantie van de klokken. Ruiter-Feenstra bewerkte "Plyve Kacha" in fragmenten afgewisseld met virale spiralen, waarin de handen van de beiaardier bewegen in een cirkelvormig gebaar, vergelijkbaar met de vorm van het coronavirus onder een microscoop. De virale spiralen vertegenwoordigen COVID-19, die net als elk sociaal virus, zoals xenofobie en racisme, de samenleving besmetten en zich verspreiden alsof ze besmettelijk zijn. Het virus patroon, de spiralen op de beiaard, nemen geleidelijk aan af en worden langzamer gespeeld. Driekwart in de compositie op de weg naar genezing, trekken de lage klokken de virusdeeltjes één voor één uit elkaar en worden ze afgeweerd door de laagste klok, waarna, tot slot, de lament melodie weer terugkeert.

We erkennen de gezondheidswerkers, die zichzelf riskeren om voor anderen te zorgen, ondanks de tekorten aan testkits, maskers en ventilatoren. Wij rouwen om mensen van Aziatische afkomst wereldwijd die het doelwit zijn (geweest) van racisme en xenofobie. We bieden *Healing Bells* aan om naast diegenen te gaan staan die dierbaren hebben verloren maar ook om van ons te laten horen aan alle mensen in isolatie.

Beiaardiers wereldwijd worden uitgenodigd voor de wereldwijde première van *Healing Bells* op het middaguur, 12.00 uur, lokale tijd op **21 mei 2020**, de UNESCO Internationale dag van de Culturele Diversiteit, Dialoog en Ontwikkeling.

In solidariteit en genezing via de kunsten,
-Pamela Ruiter-Feenstra & Jet Schouten

For meantone
carillons

Healing Bells

Ukrainian Folk Song;

Plyve Kacha

Pamela Ruiter-Feenstra & Jet Schouten

Viral spirals

Carillon

Measures 1-4 of the Carillon section. The right hand plays a series of triplet eighth notes, while the left hand is mostly silent. Dynamics include *ff*, *accelerando*, and *rit.* The piece ends with a 3/4 time signature change.

Grave, with singing rubato

The healing power of bells

Measures 5-9 of the Piano section. The right hand plays a slow, melodic line with a singing rubato feel. The left hand provides a harmonic accompaniment. Dynamics include *mp* and *mf*.

Measures 10-13 of the Piano section. The right hand continues the melodic line, and the left hand provides a harmonic accompaniment. Dynamics include *mf* and *mp*.

Call (improvisatory)

Measures 14-18 of the Bass section. The bass line features a series of eighth notes and chords. Dynamics include *f* and *p*.

Measures 19-23 of the Bass section. The bass line continues with eighth notes and chords. Dynamics include *p*.

Response

Measures 24-27 of the Piano section. The right hand plays a slow, melodic line. The left hand provides a harmonic accompaniment. Dynamics include *mp* and *mf*.

27

2/4

Viral spirals

30

mf *accelerando* *rit.*

Grave, with singing rubato

34

f *The healing power of bells*
p *Call (improvisatory)*

39

2/4

44

f *Response* *mf* *f*

47

mp

50

mf

mp

mf

mp

2/4

Viral spirals

57 *mp* *ritardando*

Grave, with singing rubato

61

mf

mp

65

65

69 *f*

mp

75 ***ff***

hurriedly

The low bell kicks away the viral particles one by one

allargando

p

87 **Stately and Slower**

mf

pp

91 *bring out outer voices*

f

3

3

3

96

p

mf

101

allargando

mp