THE ROCHESTER CARILLON

MAYO CLINIC
PLUMMER BUILDING
A carillon (care-uh-lawn) is a musical instrument consisting of at least 23 bronze, cup-shaped bells. The melodious ringing sounds of the carillon are made by bells that do not swing. Instead, the bells are rigidly fixed to supporting beams. Carillons are generally housed in towers and are always played from a clavier—a keyboard console consisting of a double row of wooden keys (batons) and a pedalboard. The batons and pedals are linked via wires to clappers inside the bells. When the batons and pedals are pressed, the wires pull the clappers against the sides of the bells—creating the music of the carillon.

The bells are cast in bronze and precisely tuned for harmonious effect by paring the metal surface from inside the bells.

The Rochester Carillon is comprised of 56 bells and is twelfth largest in the United States in number of bells. The weight of all the bells together totals almost 40,000 pounds. It is the only hospital-owned carillon owned in the world. The United States is home to around 190 carillons.

The Rochester Carillon is managed by the Mayo Clinic Dolores Jean Lavins Center for Humanities in Medicine.
THE CARILLONNEUR

The art of carillon playing originated over 500 years ago in the area of Europe that now comprises the Netherlands, Belgium, and northern France. The musician who plays the carillon is a carillonneur (care-uh-lawn-nur). This acoustic, mechanical instrument is powered entirely by the force of the performer’s hands and feet. Because the tones of the bells are altered by the intensity of the variations of touch, a carillonneur can produce a considerable dynamic range while playing.
HISTORY OF THE ROCHESTER CARILLON

The tower atop the Plummer Building which houses the Rochester Carillon was not planned as part of the original structure. Late in the building’s construction, the Mayo brothers and the city decided to house a carillon on top of the new building as a memorial to the American soldiers who had served in World War One. The architectural plans for the Plummer Building were revised and a tower was added to house the carillon. When completed in 1928, the Plummer Building was the tallest structure in the state of Minnesota. Today, the tower is a symbol of the city of Rochester and a National Historic Landmark.

The original 23 bells, a gift from Drs. William J. and Charles H. Mayo, were cast in the Gillett and Johnston Bell Foundry in Croydon, England, and were consecrated by the Archbishop of Canterbury before being shipped to Rochester. The largest bell, the bourdon, weighs 7,840 pounds and is almost six feet tall. The smallest bell from the 1928 installation rings in at 168 pounds. An inscription on the bourdon proclaims that the instrument is dedicated to the American soldier.

On September 16, 1928, the 23-bell Rochester Carillon was inaugurated with two recitals by Percival Price, the first Dominion Carillonneur of Canada.

In the summer of 1977, the Rochester Carillon became one of the largest in North America with the addition of 33 new bronze bells. Purchase of the new bells, a clavier, practice console, and playing cabin was made possible through gifts from Mrs. Frances G. Sheets and Mrs. Isabella Gooding Sanders, descendants of Alphonso Gooding, a Rochester pioneer.

The new bells, weighing from 19 to 130 pounds, were cast at the Petit and Fritsen Bell Foundry in Aarle-Rixtel, Holland. The now 56-bell carillon covers a 4.5 octave range.

A variety of music is played during each concert to reflect the diversity of the patients and visitors who come to Mayo Clinic. The Mayo brothers had a vision of innovative treatment for the body. With the addition of the Rochester Carillon, they also provided the tradition of wonderful music to soothe the heart and soul.
CARILLON PLAYERS

Mayo Clinic visitors and employees have enjoyed the outstanding service of four carillonneurs since the inauguration of the carillon in 1928.

Austin Ferguson currently serves as the carillonneur of the Mayo Clinic. He is a native of Longview, Texas, and served as Carillonneur at The University of Texas at Austin from 2011 to 2015. An active recitalist, Mr. Ferguson has performed guest recitals around the country and has participated in recitals at the annual Congress of the Guild of Carillonneurs in North America (GCNA). His carillon arrangements and original compositions are published by the GCNA and American Carillon Music Editions (ACME).

Mr. Ferguson is an active member of the Guild of Carillonneurs in North America, where he sits on the Membership Enrichment and Social Media Committees and serves as co-editor of Carillon News, the GCNA’s bi-annual newsletter. His primary carillon instruction was done with Lynnette Geary, University Carillonneur at Baylor University.

Mr. Ferguson was named the fourth Carillonneur of the Mayo Clinic in February 2017. He may be reached at ferguson.austin@mayo.edu for any questions or song requests.
FORMER CARILLONNEURS

Jeffrey Daehn served as the third Carillonneur of Mayo Clinic. He studied music at Valparaiso University in Indiana and Union Theological Seminary in New York City. Originally from Chicago, Mr. Daehn moved to Rochester in 1977 to serve as organist and minister of music at Zumbro Lutheran Church. During his 20 years of service with the parish, he met former Rochester carillonneur, Dean Robinson. Mr. Robinson encouraged Mr. Daehn to learn to play the carillon and later provided instruction. Mr. Daehn has traveled to Illinois and Iowa to receive ongoing coaching from well known carillonneurs.

Dean Robinson, a Rochester native, served for 46 years as the second carillonneur of the Rochester Carillon, from 1958 until his death in 2004. He studied music at Oberlin Conservatory of Music in Ohio, and MacPhail College of Music in Minneapolis before beginning his career, performing and teaching carillon, organ and piano.

James Drummond was the first Rochester carillonneur. He retired from the post in 1958 after serving for nearly 30 years. He said his aim throughout those decades was to give “peace and inspiration and a lift of spirit to Rochester visitors, which was the intent of the carillon’s donors, Drs. Will and Charles Mayo.”

PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

The music of the Rochester Carillon serenades Mayo Clinic patients and visitors, the city of Rochester, and the surrounding countryside during “Heritage Rings” every Monday evening at 7 p.m. and at noon every Wednesday and Friday in 30-minute concerts. The carillon is also played at the end of every work day during the week at 4:45 p.m. Recitals are also given on Memorial Day, the Fourth of July, and for other special events.

LISTENING TO THE CARILLON

Carillon music is heard best some distance from the source in a relatively open area, downwind, and away from distracting noise. The sound of the carillon is clearest during crisp, cold weather, though music can be heard year-round.

A popular place to listen is the Annenberg Plaza, a pedestrian mall bordered by the Mayo Building to the west and the Plummer and Siebens Buildings to the east. The Plaza features grassy spaces, seating areas and a large mosaic of Italian stone.

Additionally, the Peace Plaza between the Siebens Building and Kahler Grand Hotel offers an excellent spot to hear the bells.
For more information, please contact Mayo Clinic Dolores Jean Lavins Center for Humanities in Medicine at humanitiesrochester@mayo.edu