Generating a Bells Used Chart for Dorico

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Long ago, Finale didn't have a plugin for generating a BUC (Bells Used Chart, also HUC = Handbells Used Chart). That meant we quasi-prehistoric users typically made a spreadsheet on which to track the bells in the score and built the BUC by hand.

Then along came Our Hero, Tobias Giesen, Finale software wizard. He built the BUC generator plugin that we've come to know and love. If you're a long-time Finale handbell composer, you've been amazed and thrilled at how your life became easier; if your Finale experience started more recently, you've ALWAYS had Tobias' plugin at your disposal.

In the face of Finale's sunsetting, the option of switching to Dorico has been in front of us. But there has been a bit of balking, because Dorico doesn't have an oh-so-precious BUC generator! That also means that we're hearing "when I was running Finale on stone knives and bearskins…" a bit.

But! you can actually have your cake and eat it too! Here's how to compose in Dorico while still having a BUC generator available:

Save your Dorico project to MusicXML. The command is File -> Export ->MusicXML… That will bring up a panel where you define your project export. Specify the folder and MusicXML filename, and then export your project. For the purposes of this procedure, I'll call that file **project.1.musicxml**

Import project.1.musicxml into Finale. Finale should then display your score.

Use the Finale BUC generator plugin to generate the BUC for your score. If you use the options I like, then you'll get one BUC bar for each type of notehead (so, one for bells, one for chimes, etc.)

If you have a BUC with lots of noteheads, condense it. As of this writing, Dorico appears to limit the content of an ametric bar to a bit under twenty quarter notes (crochets). Since the BUC plugin outputs quarter notes in its result, it may be necessary to control this so that Dorico doesn't try to create a two-bar BUS to have enough space (this could also put the second part of your BUC on a second system…). To get around this, I simply use Speedy Note Entry to change all the BUC notes to sixteenth notes (semiquavers).

Export the Finale file to MusicXML. I'll call this second MusicXML file **project.2.musicxml**.

Import project.2.musicxml into Dorico. Just like magic, you get a copy of your original Dorico score, but with your BUC. Note: You probably don't want to use this score to replace the original one, because there might be things that don't translate will through the export-import process.

If you haven't already done so, create a new flow for each type of notehead in your BUC. The interface that you get in Setup mode will display boxes at the bottom for each flow in your project. You can drag these horizontally to put the BUC flows before the score. This will ensure that you can display the *UC for each note type on a separate system in your Dorico score.

Copy-paste the content of each BUC bar into your original score. Copy the chart for the bells into the bell BUC flow, etc. If you decide to have the really high/low notes included as octaves above/below, use the Note Tool (**Shift-I**) to add them, then remove the original ones from the chart.

Make the natural signs invisible. Select the notes in your *UC, and in the bottom zone (**Shift-8** to toggle its display) select **Accidentals -> Hide**.

Hide the stems. In Engrave mode, select the notes in your *UC, display the bottom zone (**Shift-8**), and use **Notes and Rests -> Hide stem** to make them invisible.

Remove any extra rests. Select the bars in your *UC (or just the rests), and use **Edit -> Remove Rests** to get rid of them.

Update 18 February 2025:

On **Dorico version 5.1.81.2225**, I've found that MusicXML exportation doesn't pick up all of the notehead types. The reason for my concern is that the wide diamond noteheads are much more readable on a score than the regular ones. I created a Dorico project to test exportation for different notehead types; please note that the table below is nonexhaustive, but it should cover the notehead types that most (handbell) composers will need:

I've submitted a post to the Steinberg Dorico forum to ask for a software update.

Exported successfully	Not exported successfully
default	Aikin shape
slashed	large circled
(small) diamond	moon
X	rectangular
	round white dot
	small circled
	triangle right
	wide diamond
	plus

That means this method of using Tobias' plugin to generate a BUC must be revised as follows:

1. Notate your handchime notes with (small) diamond noteheads.

2. Export your Dorico project to MusicXML.
3. Import your MusicXML file to Finale.
4. Generate the BUC with the Finale plugin.
5. Export the Finale file-with-BUC to MusicXML.
6. Import the new MusicXML file into Dorico.
7. Copy-paste the BUC into your Dorico project.
8. If you prefer wide diamond noteheads, change the chimes in your project accordingly.

Additional note: Dorico version 5.1.81.2225 seems to have a problem converting noteheads from one type to another in some cases, so you might have to re-enter those notes as default noteheads. Then you can change them to (small) diamonds, export to MusicXML, undo to return them to default noteheads, and change them to wide diamonds, than save.