

# CATALAN BELL HERITAGE

by Ramon Gene Capdevila.<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Introduction

The *Confraria de Campaners i Carillonistes de Catalunya* (CCCC) [Catalan Bell Ringers and Carillonists Association], organized the 19<sup>th</sup> World Carillon Congress, which took place at the *Palau de la Generalitat*, seat of the Catalan government, in Barcelona from 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> July. Attended by over 175 attendees from 18 different countries, the congress was a great success. During the post-congress, which took place in Tarragona, Lleida's lands and Montserrat from 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> July, attendees could visit various emblematic Catalan bell towers and could enjoy some of our traditional manual bell peals.

We highlighted that Catalonia has the public carillon that is more regularly played in Spain and also a private catalan-flemish mobile carillon, as well as a rich bell heritage. Now we are going to give some hints about it, by Mr. Per Rasmus Møller from the Nordisk Selskab for Campanologi og Klokkespil (NSCK) request for "*Acta Campanologica*", which we accept with pleasure.

We are going to analyze briefly our bell towers, bells, bell peals and bell ringers from a cultural and historical perspective and also make a brief reference to ours carillons and the abovementioned World Carillon Congress.

## 2. Catalan bell towers

Mr. Jordi Cervelló, president of the CCCC, said in the World Carillon Congress' opening speech that in Catalonia "*from the top of a bell tower, you can always see the neighboring bell tower.*"<sup>2</sup> Although this is a literary exaggeration, it is true that bell towers are a symbol of our identity, of our towns, of our people and of our cultural and religious values.



1. The bell tower of Cervera.

Catalonia was blessed with a large number of places of prayer of the Catholic Church (*cathedrals, monasteries, chapels and shrines*) built by our ancestors. All these temples have their bell tower, the most important building that highlights in the outline of any of our towns. The bell tower is the most

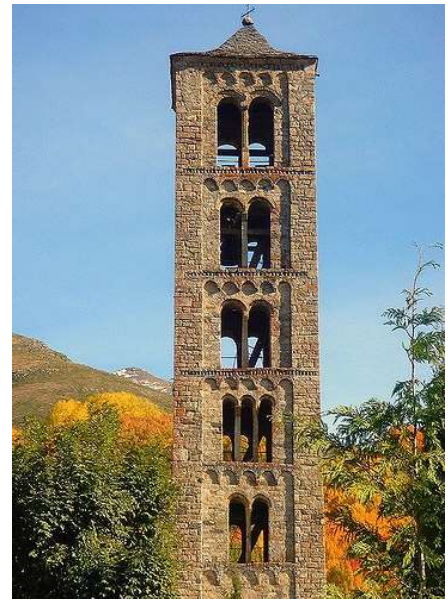
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<sup>2</sup> He takes this phrase from the Mr. Lluís Llach song "*País petit*" (Little Country) recorded in 1981.

precious jewel of any town. Its bell tower is the highest, oldest, which has more bells and where have been the most extraordinary tales. It is a tourist attraction; it lights up every night and from there ring their bells. "*Catalonia from the air*", a documentary film on TV3, our public TV, begins the aerial approach of each village with bell tower.

Sometimes they had bells before the bell tower, so bells were located on the roof of the church or hanging from a nearby tree, this allows our legend that bell towers can grow up. However, some watchtowers existed before the bells. Defense towers have always been there and although it seems that would not been need near the churches; they were raised soon in order to protect the temples where people took refuge when they were attacked by their enemies. In several churches of Syria, we can see strong defense towers from the 5<sup>th</sup> century.

Experts believe that the first towers built with the only purpose of becoming bell towers were in the 9<sup>th</sup> century in Ravenna (*Italy*), next to the churches dedicated to St. Apollonian. Since then, bell towers spread for whole Christian world. In our country, first pre-Romanesque and Romanesque bell towers were built since the middle of 10<sup>th</sup> century (*Barcelona, Vic, Ripoll, Girona, Cuixà, Sant Serni de Tavèrnoles, Sant Climent de Coll de Nargó, Sant Mateu de Bages, Sant Andreu de Gurb, Taüll*). From this period, we have few documents too.



2. *The Romanesque bell tower of Sant Climent de Taüll.*



3. *The bell tower of Tarragona Cathedral.*

bell towers are one of the most impressive human works. The height of the bell towers is a frequent topic. According to Mr. Delfi Dalmau measurements, only 342

During the 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, the new construction techniques and mainly the competition with the nearby cities make that bell towers get higher and had bigger and weightier bells. However, they built also a multitude of belfries, simply bell walls that became popular since the 12<sup>th</sup> century because of the Cistercian order that advocated for the austerity.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, we must not forget that bell towers aims to rise above the other nearby buildings. Its height forces us to look upwards to the sky, to the Creator. From this point of view

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<sup>3</sup> In 1157 they arranged not having bell towers in their monasteries; their bells did not exceed 500lb and no ring more than one bell at a same time.



4. The bell tower of Reus.

bell towers of the 1,500 analyzed in Catalonia are 30 meters or higher: 237 bell towers measures between 30m and 40m, 74 between 40m and 50m, 19 between 50m and 60m and 12 exceed 60m. They are the bell towers of Barcelona Cathedral (60'6m), Seu Vella of Lleida (60'6m), Sant Pere of Reus (63m), Santa Eulàlia of Esparreguera (63m), Sant Feliu of Girona (65m), Cathedral of Girona (69'9m), Sant Ot of Barcelona (73'7m) and St. Joan

Baptista of Valls (74m), which historically had been considered the highest but has been evidently overcome in the 20<sup>th</sup> century by the wonderful bell towers of the Basilica of the *Sagrada Família* of Barcelona that measures 100m the lateral ones and 112m the central ones with project that the highest reaches 172'5m.

To sum up, we have in our temples bell towers and belfries, we have higher bell towers and some that just stick out from the shrine (*Adons and Castellars*), we have slim, skinny, rugged and splendid bell towers (*Santa Maria del Mar, el Pi i Sant Just of Barcelona, Cathedral of Tarragona, Seu Vella of Lleida, Bellpuig d'Urgell, Sant Pere of Reus, Cervera...*).



5. The bell tower of Os de Balaguer.

We have Romanesque, Gothic, and Baroque bell towers (*Maspujols, Vinyols, el Catllar, Falset*), neoclassical, very profuse in our lands, Renaissance and Art Nouveau bell towers, and also some that have been built recently, since the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, after the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), where architects used new techniques and materials and the ground-breaking character of our times (*Pont*

*de Suert, Sant Pau de Segúries, Sant Pere Màrtir d'Olot, Santa Maria de Sales of Viladecans, Aiguafreda*).

We have rectangular floor bell towers, sometimes almost square, particularly Romanesque, octagonal, mainly Gothic, few hexagonal (*Bellpuig d'Urgell*) circular (*Ars, Sant Serni d'Anserall, Gabarra*) or semi-cylindrical (*Santa Maria del Bruc, Pardines*).

We have bell towers in front of the temple, in the right angle or in the left angle, even sometimes in both angles as twin towers (*Santa Maria del Mar of Barcelona,*



*Seu Nova of Lleida*) but occasionally one of them remained unfinished<sup>4</sup> (*Sant Just of Barcelona, l'Escala*). We have also bell towers behind (*Caldes de Montbui, Gelida, el Pi of Barcelona, Santa Maria de Manlleu*), on the transept (*Santa Maria of l'Estany, Santa Eugènia of Berga*), and even at the ends of the transept (*Cathedral of Barcelona*).

We have many bell towers that end up with a flat roof or a roof, but there are also that end up with a dome, statue, cross or weather vane. We have some that remain unfinished and even a few that are slightly inclined (*Vilagrassa, Santa Eugènia of Nerellà*).

We have, to sum up, many wonderful bell towers, thanks to the artists who had the boldness and the technique enough to lift them, which have endured all sorts of adversity (*wind, earthquakes, vibrations of bells, over time*). In the majority we can access to the cell through its interior, although in some it is necessary to climb above the roof of temple with the help of a hand ladder (*Sant Vicenç de Besalú, Santa Maria de Barberà del Vallès, Abrera, Tavèrnoles, Begudà, Sant Julià Sassorba*). In those with an interior stairs, these are usually made of stone, with a central eye, or of wood, especially in the Pyrenees, currently not all in good condition. There are some that instead of a staircase have a ramp (*Esparreguera*). It's value climbing it. From the cells we can admire from above our land and from nearer our bells.

### **3. Catalan bells**

What would it be of a bell tower without bells? A chest without its treasure. Bell towers and bells form a unit that identifies our society, which reminds its past and evokes its future. Bells are essentially a mass media, immediate and effective, that marks and structures the time, the everyday and the extraordinary, highlighting the moments of celebration and the extraordinary or tragic events. Bells are a nexus and a facilitator of community life.<sup>5</sup>

From the musicological perspective, the bell is one of the oldest sound instruments, a very good way to produce powerful and pleasant sounds. Over time, they were perfected, giving the characteristic shape of an inverted vessel, which sounds when they are hit by an internal bell-clapper or from outside with a hammer. The sound of the bells, each with its note, can reach a maximum of six kilometers, although they mostly only reach between two and three kilometers, a scope that is sufficiently important to alert and gather all neighbors, both the nucleus and those who live in farmhouses or work abroad. Putting the bells in a high place was not for anything other reason than to spread the sound better and to manifest also the power of the Catholic Church and therefore of the God, on earth and people.

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<sup>4</sup> In some cases the bell towers were built before the temple (*Centelles, Sant Antoni de Vilanova*), but in general is the last part that is done, so it is not surprising that some bell towers remain unfinished. Sometimes, at late times, are completed and other elements such as domes or roofs are added.

<sup>5</sup> In this regard, several studies suggest that the geographical boundaries of our parishes were defined according to the distance they could hear the bells. So, we were part of the parish whose bells we can hear from home.

It is difficult to accurately date the origin of the bells. They exist since man learned the technique of hardening the clay with the use of fire and its use is common in civilizations very different and far away in Time, thus confirming its widespread use throughout history. In Europe, they spread with Christianity. The monasteries had already been used since the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Tradition attributes the introduction of bells to the Catholic Church to Saint Paulinus of Nola of the Campania (*Italy*).<sup>6</sup> Considering that Saint Paulinus of Nola was ordained a priest in Barcelona, we must conclude that Catalonia have bells from the outset that these were used by the Catholic Church.<sup>7</sup>

The oldest important bells in Catalonia are "*Fructuosa*" (1313) and "*Maria Assumpta*" (1314) of the Cathedral of Tarragona. Of their inscriptions, we can know the years of the foundry and which was commissioned by the bishop Guillem de Rocabertí - this is why they are named together as "*rocbertines*"-.<sup>8</sup> Other important bells are "*Seny Major*" of Cervera (1424) and the bell of the Hours of Montblanc (1510).

The liturgical bells, before being placed in the bell tower and in the framework of a very solemn celebration that explains their importance in society, were blessed, with godfathers too, they gave a name, mostly female, and they became sacred objects, which could not be used for profane purposes without the consent of the Church.<sup>9</sup>

But the bells have also had awful times. From the 16<sup>th</sup> century it was recognized that the head of army could confiscate the bells of the towns taken by force, but generally people rescued it by payment, it was called the "*bell right*". The 20<sup>th</sup> century was terrible. It is estimated that during the Spanish Civil War were destroyed 80% of all existing bells, many to melt and manufacture weapons, others

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<sup>6</sup> Since the middle ages, in Catalonia the bells have called "*campana*" and "*nola*" and also "*Seny*" (from Latin word "*signum*", that means signal).

<sup>7</sup> According to tradition, St. Paulinus of Nola was ordained a priest by Bishop Lampius in response to popular outcry. He became bishop of the city of Nola. The Catalans bell ringers have him as the patron saint along with Santa Barbara; it is celebrated on 22 June.

<sup>8</sup> The "*Fructuosa*" bell has two inscriptions on the top, stretched along two lines. The first says "+: AN: Mº: CCC: XIII Q: D: ROCBTIO: G: PSUL: VIGIS: ALM: TECLE: FACTA: FVIT: CAPEN: SB: EIVS: HONORE:" and it is difficult to interpret, although it can be inferred that it was done by the Rocabertí prelate. The second says: "+ MENTEM: SACTAM: SPOTANEAM: HONOREM: DEO: ET: PRIE: LIBERACIONEM", which mean "*I sing in a pious and voluntary way in honor of God and to liberate the country*", its an inscription quite usual in the 14<sup>th</sup> and early 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. The bell "*Maria Assumpta*" have the inscription: "+ ANY Mº CCºC XIIIº IN MENSE MADII DNS G ARCHIEPS TERRACONÑ ME FECIT FIERI" meaning that "*the year 1314 in the month of May the lord Guillem, archbishop of Tarragona have commanded to do*" and "*VICIT LEO D'TRIBV IVDA RADIX DAVID ALLELVIA XPS VINCIT XPS REGNAT*" which translates as "*the lion of Defeat tribe Judah, the root of David alleluia. Christ conquers, Christ reigns*".

<sup>9</sup> Its role as a sacred object is also mention in the book of Exodus in the Sacred Bible. In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, in some parishes, bells are registered among baptized children in sacramental books.

only for the wave of anti-religious hatred. Later, between 1970 and 1990, the vast majority of bells were electrified, which caused the disappearance of many bell ringers and traditional bell peals and a progressive degradation of our bell towers.<sup>10</sup>

The *Direcció General de Patrimoni Artístic of Generalitat de Catalunya*, different dioceses, the CCCC and other local groups have been doing some bell towers and bells inventories (*Pallars Sobirà, Garrigues, Valls d'Àneu, Tarragona, Girona*) but certainly there is still much work to do in this regard. These inventories highlight the forgetfulness that many bell towers fall from since the peals are automated and are important to know the existing bells to be able to apply the most appropriate protection measures, although, in our opinion, the important thing is not only to keep the bells as pieces of a museum but also to make them sound.

#### **4. Bell peals in Catalonia**

The bell peals are also, in accordance with what has been said, a very old ethnological heritage in all towns of Catalonia. Not surprisingly, the bells were the only communication media for many years.

At the moment, since we live in a technology society that uses other alternative tools to know the time and the events, the functionality of the bells is in doubt, but precisely for that reason, its cultural importance increased. In this regard, Mr. Xavier Orriols, says: "*The change of attraction that, after the 20<sup>th</sup> century, took place in the consideration of the heritage; thus, many elements and matters that were only appreciated by their functional utility acquired the added value of the heritage good, so, the category of being conserved and transmitted by implicit virtues not sufficiently considered until then*".

Keep in mind that bell peals are linked to a specific community who demand, listen and interpret them. When they are played they are played for all people. They had a point of democracy and citizen participation. In accordance with the needs of each community, the peals are necessarily different. Likewise, the fact of having more or less bells and that they were more or less big, causes that, even when the peals are nominally the same, they present a great variety. Thus, in short, each town and city maintained its characteristic peals, which were established and transmitted by the successive generations of bell ringers, orally or through "*consuetes*", written document that contents the type of peal according to the different situations.<sup>11</sup>

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the type of bell peals all through Catalonia has been reduced as a result of various factors such as the destruction of bells in war periods, electrification with standardized solutions that do not respect the uniqueness of the

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<sup>10</sup> In a presentation about the use of bells in the 2<sup>nd</sup> congress of popular and traditional culture of Catalonia (1995-1996) these effects were already confirmed and the speakers urged to protect the manual peals.

<sup>11</sup> While "*consuetes*" were written since ancient times in some parishes and cathedrals, the most completely preserved are from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Special importance deserves the "*Consueta*" of Cervera (1807), which details exhaustively the different peals and how to play them. There are some partially conserved older "*consuetes*" that indicate only when the peals were played but without specifying how to play them, for example the "*Consueta*" of Igualada (15<sup>th</sup> century).

towns, the progressive leaving of rural villages, the clear secularization of Catalan society, the loss of functionality and the lack of generational relief.<sup>12</sup> Thus, currently, in a large part of Catalonia we can only hear the hours and the prayer and maybe the dead peals, which are played by mechanical or electronic way. However, we find yet in some towns traditional and manual peals too. For their relevance, we have to mention Tarragona and Cervera, where we do not have only important bells but also a large amount of manual bell peals.



6. Traditional manual bell peal of "Corona d'Aragó".

Above wiew. (Cervera, 2017)

achieving stop them with his mouth looking up, that is called "*alabant a Déu*" (*Praising God*).<sup>13</sup>

The bell tower of Cervera is also the only important one where bells are on windows, instead of inside, and where they are played by the traditional way of "*Corona d'Aragó*" (*Old Kingdom of Catalonia, Aragon, Valencia and Balearic Islands*) that consists in

<sup>12</sup> However, in recent years has been a revival of interest in bells (*CCCC activities, Cervera and Borges Blanques bell schools, new bell ringers associations in Reus, Basilica del Pi of Barcelona...*).

<sup>13</sup> The shift occurred due to Spanish influence from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, and more recently, with the electrification of the bells from the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. In this regard, we fully share what Dr. Llop i Bayo says: "*it is known that in a few Catalan regions the bells round completely but everywhere they bluff and they "Praising God "(they were, better!), Leaving them stops vertically, with the cup inverted, head in the sky. (...) The slow and coordinated oscillation of bigger bells, while minors blend much faster, is (or was, better said) the characteristic, the Catalan contribution to the world culture of bells. This movement was acoustically completed with the location of the bells in the windows of the bell towers, producing various sonorities when rolling in one direction or another. The wisdom of the bellmen consisted of the combination of these changes, to produce continuously different peals, which reflected the human presence and expressiveness behind the ring technique. (...) [From the electrification] the bells round completely, so you need to modify the historical wooden and stone counterweights with new ones. They are now iron gems, which modify the timbre and change the way they play, much faster and with a different rhythm, ternary, while the traditional form is binary. After the seventies, however, the most serious aggression arrives, which may suffer bells and their traditional peals: the disqualification of the entire acoustic and communicative system. With the excuse that the bells are out of tune and that the style of playing is wild and dangerous, the conception is totally modified. Now you have to make tuned bells and you must sound it like in German. The proposal represents a complete change of traditions because bells always sound identically and the message is difficult to be recognized and the bells moved to inside the cells*".

Finally, we list the relevant bell peals preserved in Catalonia. We differentiate didactically between religious and secular peals but it is no doubt that initially the bell peals in Catalonia were greatly religious that gradually get secular functions, especially in alarm situations.

First we must mention the celebratory peal because of its wide spread around our lands and its diversity. We observe different peals depending on the importance of the celebration according to the liturgical calendar. This peal was then extended to the civil festivities.

Other religious peals are prayer peal,<sup>14</sup> Angelus (*at 12:00h*), Holy Rosary, Sacred Heart, the month of Virgin Mary (*in May*), peals for the different rituals solemnized by Catholic Church (*baptism, marriage and death*), as well as extraordinary peals (*new pope, bishop or archbishop, beatification or canonization...*). Special mention required the Easter Week, when bells are in silence between Maunday Thursday and Easter Sunday -On Good Friday, wooden rattles were used instead of bells-.<sup>15</sup>

Secular peals are the hours,<sup>16</sup> fire, thief, invasion and council peals as well as extraordinary peals (*military conquests, crowning of a new King, end of the year...*). In the Vall d'Aran we had the "*vediau*" peal, which call people to fix the roads, and in maritime towns we had the "*cordó*" peal, to announce the risk of dropping. Recently, in accordance to the evolution of our society, we also have peals of recognition to people and to cultural and sport organizations and claiming peals (*for peace, for refugees...*). Halfway between secular and religious we have the "*storm*" peal, which were used when hailstorm was expected for preserving crops.<sup>17</sup> Thus, we have definitely a magnificent sort of peals for any occasion.

## 5. Bell ringers and the CCCC

We have bells and bell peals, but what would we do without bell ringers? In the beginning, ringing the bells was one of the tasks of porters (*Ostiarius*), people who had received the lowest of the four minor orders. The duties of the *Ostiarius* were

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<sup>14</sup> In this regard, we should mention the papal bulls issued during the 13<sup>th</sup> century, authorizing that it could celebrate the liturgy in various Catalan territories, without the bell ringing in interdict time (*canonical censure*), so, we must conclude that playing bells was an established practice. [Bulls published, in Catalan, at FUNDACIÓ NOGUERA "*Butllari de Catalunya: Documents pontificis originals conservats als arxius de Catalunya (1198-1417)*" Volum 1 Edició a cura de TILMANN SCHMIDT i ROSER SABANÉS. Barcelona, 2016]. From the 14<sup>th</sup> century Catalan bishops get indulgences to those who heard the bells (*for example, at 1305, Roderic archbishop of Tarragona get indulgences to residents of Cervera that at the first bell peal on morning pray kneeling*).

<sup>15</sup> Currently we have very few wooden rattles. We can find one in use in Cervera.

<sup>16</sup> The hours were configured as a public service, the first few mechanical clocks were installed at the request of the neighborhood, and the particular way to call the hours in Catalan comes from this peal.

<sup>17</sup> The ability of the bells for breaking storms, with their powerful sound and calling upon the divine clemency comes from old times. This peal is still played once a year in Cervera for Santa Barbara (*on 4 December*).



rang the bells, opened and closed the doors of the church, admitting worthy people in the temple and drive out the unworthy (*not baptized*), open the preacher's book and, in addition, diligently preserve all sacred things (*percutere cymbalum et campanam, aperire ecclesiam et sacrarium, et librum ei aperire qui praedicat*). Soon, these tasks were entrusted to the laity (*sacristans, bell ringers, gravediggers*), thus making it a profession, usually a family tradition, that get guild character from the 16<sup>th</sup> century.



7. Official CCCC logo.

All bell towers had its bells and its bell ringers, but these were spread all over Catalonia. Since 1988, they have been invited to the annual meeting in Os de Balaguer by the priest Vicenç Alfonso. Gradually, they were taking collective consciousness, sharing projects and desires, hopes and setbacks. A few years later, in

1993, decided to found the CCCC.<sup>18</sup>

We would not end this section without a huge recognition to all bell ringers and remembering the importance of playing the bells not only with the force of our arms but also with our feelings, with our hearts, which fascinated the famous Catalan poet Joan Maragall<sup>19</sup> and continues to fall in love with everyone who hears our manual bell peals.

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<sup>18</sup> In accordance with its statutory purposes, the CCCC aims to bring together all Catalan bell ringers and carillonists, in order to protect and promote the ancient and deeply rooted cultural and religious traditions of the bell towers, the bells, the bell peals and the carillons, particularly the Catalan distinctive traditions. Also aims to promote friendship between the bell ringers. For a long time the CCCC was presided by the priest Vicenç Alfons, who was appointed honorary member also, and the secretary was the monk of Montserrat Valentí Tena, a really expert in Catalan bell tradition. Currently we publish the magazine "El Batall" (*bell-clapper*) and also collaborate with several local, regional and diocesan associations of bell ringers and bell towers friends.

<sup>19</sup> Joan Maragall (1860-1911), famous Catalan poet. He wrote an article in 1911, titled "Bells" that perhaps we should transcribe full. [We have located in Spanish in Maragall, J. *Obres Completes*. Ed. Selecta.] He wrote: "*It could be said that I did not know what it was midnight until I heard the twelve bells on this deeply asleep people fall. The bellman comes to be here the referee of joys and sorrows (...) the bellman is the verb of all this: he is the artist, the poet, the spokesman, the musician of popular life, and the bells his instrument. You notice that he plays with passion; (...) It is a good government that of the bells; It is the best (...) This is the government of the town by the town; because the bellman comes from the people; and the town that orders to peal is the same that obeys it (...) Good government this one of the bell tower, ideal, but with an essential condition: that there is a bellman; I mean a man who plays the bells with his soul, because if you play without soul, the bells do an annoying noise, and it is better not to play them. If one day is over forever and the bells are finally removed, I fear that the bell tower, due to the fact that it is an elevated tower, would be used quickly as a place of Guardia Civil (Police) watchdog, which is the one (...) It ends up dominating the people that do not have bells*".

## 6. The carillon of the *Palau de la Generalitat*

In southern Europe, the carillon as musical instrument was not so important that in northern, but Catalonia appreciated its sound and Barcelona has managed to maintain its usual use to current day. As we pointed out at the beginning, the *Palau de la Generalitat de Catalunya*, the headquarters of our self-government, has the



8. The carillon of the *Palau de la Generalitat*.

privilege of hosting since 1927 the public carillon that it is more regularly played in Spain. Moreover we have also a private catalan-flemish mobile carillon.

The current public carillon was built by “*Petit & Fritsen*” of Aarle-Rixtel (*Netherlands*) and was inaugurated in 1976, a few months before the re-establishment of the *Generalitat de Catalunya*, under the impulse of the carillonist Maria Dolors Coll. It was

renovated in 1991 by “*Petit & Fritsen*” and in 2015 by “*Eijsbouts*”. It has 49 bronze bells with a total weight of 4,898 kilos. The weightiest bell is called “*Catalunya*” (Catalonia). It includes an extension of four octaves which allows offer a broad repertoire. The current carillon was not the first one that existed there. Before this there was another of only 13 bells, inaugurated in 1927 before the Expo, that now we can find at the National Museum of Science and Technology of Catalonia in Terrassa city.

The *Generalitat de Catalunya* offers the chance to enjoy the sound of its carillon through the regular program of hearings and concerts. The hearings can be listened around the *Gothic Quarter* of Barcelona and usually take place each weekday at 12:00h and 18:00h, and some Saturdays at 12:00h. The concerts, with a wide repertoire of both classical and popular music, are on the first Sunday of each month, except August, at 12:00h. People can hear them for free from inside the *Palau de la Generalitat* and can see how the carillon is played through a CCTV. In September, the first concert matches with “*la Mercè*” (the city festival), and in July, the last ones matches with the International Carillon Festival of Barcelona, that this year has coincided with the 19<sup>th</sup> World Carillon Congress.

## 7. The 19<sup>th</sup> World Carillon Congress

The 19<sup>th</sup> World Carillon Congress, organized by the World Carillon Federation, the CCCC and *Generalitat de Catalunya* was an overwhelming success.

It was officially opened at Saturday 1 July at 18:00h at *Sant Jordi Hall* of the *Palau de la Generalitat de Catalunya*, with His Excellency Carles Puigdemont, President of *Generalitat de Catalunya*, who expressed the assurance that the Congress would be an “*excellent stage not only to enjoy the incomparable sound of carillon and delve into the culture of this instrument in a historical atmosphere as the Palau de la*



9. 19<sup>th</sup> World Carillon Congress logo.



10. World Carillon Congress' opening speech.

reception which had taken place in the Bishop's Palace, and had expressed his satisfaction for the celebration of the Congress that "*contributes to spread this musical tradition, the sound of the bells, closely linked with the culture of the Church*". Then the first concert took place, which was heard from the *Pati dels Tarongers* of the *Palau de la Generalitat*.

Although the World Carillon Congress is first and foremost a meeting for debate about the instrument and its technical and artistic development a set of carillon concerts were also organized beyond the working sessions to enhance its social and cultural recognition. We had concerts in the *Palau de la Generalitat*; outside, in the *Parc de la Ciutadella*, in the Barcelona Auditorium with the *Banda Municipal de Barcelona*; an unique concert in the *Sagrada Família*, where "*Caelesti Lumine*" –a work for carillon and orchestra inspired by the work of the brilliant architect Mr. *Antoni Gaudí* made expressly for the occasion by Mr. Martí Carreras- was premiered; and the closing concert in front of the Cathedral of Barcelona with *Cobla* (*traditional Catalan orchestra*), two mobile carillons and the cathedral bells, which included also an exhibition of Catalan popular culture: giants, *bastoners* (stick dance), *sardana* dance and *castellers* (human towers).



11. Concert at the Basilica of Sagrada Família.

During the post-congress, we visited the Tarragona Cathedral, where we have also a concert, the bell towers of Cervera and Borges Blanques, the Monastery of the Avellanés, where we have another special concert, and the Monastery of Montserrat, where we were welcomed by Abbot and we could hear the traditional "*Violai*" - hymn dedicated to the Virgin Mary of Montserrat- by carillon, and the Montserrat bells too.



## 8. News

As we have seen, our bell towers, bells and bell peals are a very rich tangible and intangible heritage, but so far they are undervalued, ignored and even offended or at risk. Ringing bells links us with our ancients' and their knowledge and confirm our identity. Bells and bell peals are a cultural expression of whole Catalonia that appears also in our popular imagination, in our proverbs,<sup>20</sup> and in our literature.<sup>21</sup>

In an anxious society, where everyone has watches and sees what's new by Whatsapp, the practical functionality of the bells has obviously reduced, but precisely because this it is necessary safeguard them.

At risk or persecuted, we said, because some precious bells are in small or abandoned towns and the rising of metal

prices makes them a lucrative target for thieves and because some people have tried to silence the bells, make them shut up, because of noise pollution rules.<sup>22</sup>

However, it is clear that bell peals are not noise. Bell peals are an important part of our culture as *Generalitat de Catalunya* has officially recognized recently giving the highest distinction contemplated in our cultural protection regulations.<sup>23</sup>

So I hope that we can continue enjoying the traditional manual bell peals for many years! That will indicate that we have managed to preserve bells as well as encourage new bell ringers!

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12. Official emblem for cultural elements protected by the Generalitat de Catalunya.

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<sup>20</sup> These are some common Catalan expressions: "*where are bells are clappers*" (everywhere there is everything), "*according to the bell, the sound*" (everyone does according to his condition), "*cannot be playing bells and go to the procession*" (you cannot do two things at once), "*crazy people, wooden bell*" (do not hear what fools say), "*made as the height of a bell tower*" (doing something, usually bad, very big).

<sup>21</sup> In poetry, the most known are probably "*El campanar de Lleida*" (The bell tower of Lleida) by Magí Morera, "*La campana de Sant Honorat*" (The bell of St. Honorat) by Josep M<sup>a</sup> de Sagarra, dedicated to the bell that King Felipe V commanded destroy in 1718 in retaliation for the opposition of the city, and "*Los dos campanars*" (The two towers) by the priest Jacint Verdaguer, the most important Catalan poet, figurative conversation between the bell towers of Sant Martí del Canigó and Sant Miquel de Cuixà (epilogue added to the 2nd edition of the large poem "*Canigó*").

<sup>22</sup> But article 17.6 of Decree Law 94/2010 of 20 July, which develops the Catalan Law 16/2009, of July 22 sets that "*bells located in holy places are excluded from the acoustic protection rules, in accordance with the uses that have been traditionally attributed.*"

<sup>23</sup> AGREEMENT GOV/150/2017, of 10.24.2017, that declare bell peals as "*Element Festiu Patrimonial d'Interès Nacional*" (Festive Heritage of National Interest) published in the *Diari Oficial de la Generalitat de Catalunya* (Official Journal) Number 7482 of 10.26.2017.



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