



PALO ALTO/PENINSULA CHAPTER AGO

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NEWSLETTER—NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2010

FROM THE DEAN

Dear Chapter,

Welcome to our new members: Randell Franklyn Busby, Andy Chislett, Glen Frank, Timothy Getz, Susan Jane Matthews, Richard Pering, and Valerie Sterk! We hope to get to know you better as the year progresses.

It was a lovely time at our 20th birthday party. Thanks to all who contributed, either by setting up, buying food, cooking, cleaning, or just sharing time with us, especially to Matthew and David at Christ Church, Portola Valley. We held a general assembly meeting at which I announced a possible change to our bylaws. Last Sunday the executive board approved this amendment: in order to pay members for presenting workshops it must be approved by majority of the board. Also, we decided that officers may not receive any compensation for their work.

But enough business, not long ago a handful of us packed into a car and took off for David Parson's house in Sebastopol to hear and play an organ built by Paul Sahlin, who also accompanied us. We were treated to a lesson in pipe organ construction from Paul, and after discussing



the fine points of organ anatomy were given a beautiful lunch prepared by David. Then we went for a little hike on his ten acres of woods. It felt wonderful to get away to such a peaceful setting on top of hill with quite a view. I hope you, too, will eventually visit David and his partner, Jonathan, who could not have been more gracious.

Our next meeting will be **Saturday November 13**, our hymn-playing workshop, from 2 to 5 p.m. at First Lutheran in Palo Alto. Our leaders will be Jay Martin, Andy Chislett, Joe Hansen, Jane Mc Dougle, and Betsy Baumgardner, whose article on hymns I think you will enjoy. We will discuss how to play to encourage congregational singing, as well as, history and philosophy in the living tradition of hymnody. Our panel will address many styles of hymns from various sources, including Taize, gospel, Victorian, contemporary American, colonial American, and anything else you would like. Let me know soon if you have a particular hymn or genre which you would like to explore.

In December we have been lucky enough to be invited to a dinner in the celebration of the Feast of St. Nicholas by former board member, Dorothy Wurlitzer, at her home in Redwood City. She has an organ in her living room, presumably a Wurlitzer, and she has offered us a catered dinner. Just maybe, if you if you remember to leave your organ shoe by Dorothy's hearth, St. Nick will leave something good inside. This is all happening on **Sunday December 5** at 4 p.m. Thank you, Dorothy, for your extraordinary generosity. Please RSVP Angela sooner than later.

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CONTINUED OVERLEAF...

FROM THE DEAN, CONTINUED...

And now, a little story: a few weeks ago I sat down to practice at church, and I felt something sticky under my fingers. What, who, what!!! Who has been playing my organ and getting the keys all sticky? What little creep ...? I was highly exasperated.

I finally calmed down and remembered something I learned from listening to David Hurd. He said that the organ where he grew up was left unlocked so that he could play it whenever he wished. Had it not been that way, he never would have secretly tried it out when no one was around, and he could never have become the composer that he is now. After all, he argued, why shouldn't consoles be left unlocked? They are virtually indestructible, and they don't belong to the organist at all. They belong to all the members of the church. Granted different environments require different rules; however, at his home church as a boy he was able to form a lasting bond with the pipe organ.

His story made me realize that finding sticky keys is exactly what I have hoped would happen. Someone had been interested in the organ upstairs in the organ loft. Why, that's what I'm always trying to have happen all the time, for someone to have a bit of fun, satiate a bit of curiosity, and appreciate this remarkable instrument intimately. That's our goal in the AGO, that people get close to organs and get to know them. After that, I played for a couple of hours, without washing my fingers.

The rest of the year is shaping up nicely, with our master class with the inimitable Robert Huw Morgan at Stanford in February and a members' recital of local composers in March.

RANI FISCHER

MEET OUR NEW REGIONAL COUNCILLOR

I'm excited to be serving as your new Regional Councillor for Region IX!

I've been a part of the AGO since my college years and earned my C.A.G.O. not long after graduation. Currently I serve as Director of Music Ministries for St. Paul's Lutheran Church and School in San Diego and teach piano and organ to both children and adults. I've served on the board of San Diego AGO in many capacities and have been privileged to serve on two national AGO committees. My passion is getting young people interested in organ study and I believe that we need to reach out in a variety of ways to help our student members become active, engaged participants in AGO. I believe that long-range planning and goal setting are crucial for long-term growth for chapters and for the AGO as a whole, and look forward to continuing to help the AGO grow and flourish as we work together.

Region IX includes Arizona, California, Western Colorado, Hawaii, Korea, Nevada, Utah, Singapore, Sydney, and our newest chapter in Taiwan – and has a host of tremendously gifted musicians within its borders. You'll have the opportunity to hear many of them next summer!

The San Francisco Chapter will celebrate its 100th birthday in 2011 and has partnered with the Palo Alto/Peninsula chapter to present a phenomenal program for the 2011 Regional Convention. I'm looking forward to hearing the new instruments that have been built since the 1984 convention, being inspired by and learning from artists, composers, and workshop presenters from all over our region, and getting to know all of you! Mark your calendars now for July 3- 7, 2011, and join us in the beautiful City-by-the-Bay and surrounding communities for a wonderful five days of music, learning, and connecting with colleagues.

LESLIE WOLF ROBB, AGO REGION IX COUNCILLOR

REMINDERS FOR SUBSTITUTES

The pay guidelines on the AGO website are vague <<http://www.agohq.org/profession/indexsalary.html>> but somewhat instructive. Your sub pay is probably somewhere in the middle of the two extremes, or perhaps it is what the market will bear. Most churches are probably paying substitutes too little, but will not be unhappy about raising the price, when you tell them what you are receiving at other places. If you are good, they will call you back and pay your fee. Hand out the above AGO web address so that they know what they are paying is within reason. Should you make the same money as the regular organist? A good question. Seems fair to me, and a question that you might discuss with the permanent organist.

**LEA SCHMIDT-ROGERS,
REGION IX PROF. DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR**

FREE ELECTRONIC ORGAN

Thomas, The Trianon organ (about 1976, 3 keyboards, 2 large Leslie speaker and pipes, bench, and sheet music) available free. For more information contact Sandy Walter at <nursesandy94404@yahoo.com>.

NEW HANDBELL MUSIC

Paul Rosas has completed a new arrangement of "While Shepherds Watched" for harp, handbells, and cello. Would anyone know of a handbell group that would be interested in taking a look at it? If so, please contact him at (408) 482-0517.

HYMNS IN THE WORSHIP SERVICE

There is an upcoming hymn workshop on November 13, and so this little article is to inspire you to come and share and talk about a very important part of worship: Hymns!

I am sure, dear reader of this article, that you have a favorite hymn or two! I am also sure that there are many opinions on how to play a hymn as well! And why is that? Because hymns are personal! They are prayers. They touch our hearts like no other music can. Hymns are powerful, because they are music, poetry and theology all in one fell swoop! The opportunity for sheer inspiration bursting forth is all there in that simple hymn! It's truly powerful.

Imagine yourself in a Jewish temple or Roman pagan temple saying prayers. A bit difficult, I mean let's look at today, when in church we say common prayers, and even then like to look at a bulletin to make sure we are saying the right words? Well, that was essentially how chanting started. It was discovered when you put music with words, the words were easier to remember. That is where hymns originate, from thousands of years ago!

Chanting the text turned into sung prayers, than eventually into prose/poetry and tunes written specifically for the poetry; and the poetry conveying theology. In other words, chanting from the priests/monks to singing by the common folk.

The priests, cantors, and monks were well schooled in the chant tones and words, however, common folk were not. And this really became established in the time period of the Reformation. I have mixed emotions about the reformation, because the music prior to the reformation, such as Tudor music in England was absolutely gorgeous art music. It was sung with Men and boy choirs and totally grand. In the period of the reformation there was "government" decree to take out all organs in all of the churches. This meant that the common folk had to sing a cappella with a cantor lining out the musical phrase/text for the people to sing back. I do not have the direct quote, but I remember reading a citation by Samuel Pepys in his diary about his visit to a country church. He wrote: (and this is from my memory) that he had never heard one note split into so many pitches, and that how some would shoot above the pitch and others would sink under the pitch. The gist of that passage was Pepys, who loved hearing good singing, found the Church Service to be absolutely deplorable.

Over in "Lutheran Territory", the organ was still used, but for introducing the hymn via the hymn prelude. The following is from a book, long sent back to the library, so again I am quoting from memory.

Buxtehude, widely known for his Advent Series, which showcased new music and new talent, was also a virtuoso improviser. That was why Bach walked the 200 miles (which he may or may not have) went to study with Buxtehude to learn the art of improvisation on the hymn

prelude. It was also rumored that Bach might have been interested in the post; Buxtehude was getting close to retirement.

Buxtehude's hymn preludes were often so complex, that the congregation could not figure out what hymn they were supposed to sing. Therefore the solution was to create a hymn-board and place the numbers on the board... so that the congregation would see which hymn they should sing from the hymnbook. Bach learned well. When he returned to his church, he did just what he learned from Buxtehude, beautiful improvisation, which left the poor folk confused, or as it was notated "their mouths shut with confusion".

I loved that story, am sorry I can't put in the proper sources for the research! And I surmise it may not be entirely accurate, as stories are when handed down through the years.

When organs were re-installed, one of the main purposes was to lead in congregational singing of the hymns.

This brings us to current practice, and now called traditional music in the church – the organ playing the hymn and leading the congregation in singing. The other practice is the praise band (like the tavern instrumentalists in Reformation Days) called contemporary music.

How do you play a hymn? What works well for you? What creative approach do you use with your hymn playing? It would be wonderful to hear your answers at the upcoming workshop. Just the opportunity to interact and listen/talk with one another would be a good experience for all.

As for me, one of my favorite texts for a hymn was by an American poet, David Bates. It has been set to the tune called FRAGMENT from The Sarum Gradual, 1527, arranged by H. Walford Davies. Music from A Students' Hymnal (Hymns of the Kingdom) by permission of the Oxford University Press and used in the Christian Science Hymnal.

Speak gently, it is better far
To rule by love than fear;
Speak gently, let no harsh word mar
The good we may do here.
Speak gently to the erring ones,
They must have toiled in vain;
Perchance unkindness made them so;
O win them back again.
Speak gently, 'tis a little thing,
Dropped in the heart's deep well;
The good, the joy, that it may bring,
Eternity shall tell.

The two words that stand out to me are "speak gently". From those two words I would be inclined to play the hymn with a beautiful solo stop for the melody and a warm, supportive accompaniment on another manual. One should also always find the "dance" in the rhythm. Allow the poetry to also help with the rhythm and phrasing.

BETSY BAUMGARDNER

A PAIR OF NEW ARRIVALS

February 2010 witnessed a pair of new arrivals [organs!] to the Bay Area, or more precisely, the East Bay Area. On the February 11, Oliver Latry, Organist at the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris played the dedication of the Conroy Memorial Organ in Oakland's Roman Catholic Cathedral of Christ the Light. the instrument was built by Orgues Letourneau, Ltee. as their Op. 118, 4 manuals and 92 ranks. Works by Boellmann, Bach, Barie, Vierne, Durufle, Cochereau, Messiaen, an original improvisation on a submitted theme and a Widor encore were performed masterfully by this splendid artist and teacher. The building is a dramatic architectural statement inside and out. Its spacious interior dimensions make a grand place for music albeit with some odd acoustical effects created by the interior shape. The organ is placed on opposite sides near the front on cantilevered wood-covered platforms. The architect told the organ builder he wanted to see a lot of wood pipes and the builder provided what may be the most numerous display of speaking wood pipes anywhere. Behind the display is, of course, everything else with the SW, CH, Echo CH and SOLO chambers along with the unenclosed GT, PED and BOMB divisions. I had to pinch myself as I listened to the incredible sonic power this instrument is capable of to believe I was in Oakland, on a Thursday evening, among a sellout crowd of 2,000, obviously enjoying very much what they were hearing and seeing, at an organ recital, no less. Where is the credibility of all those critics we've heard so much from in recent years telling us the pipe organ is an artistic dinosaur utterly incapable of reaching today's audiences?

On Friday February 19, Christophe Mantoux, Organist of the RC Parish Church of Saint-Severin in Paris and Professor of Organ at the National Conservatoire in Strasbourg performed on the new 4 manual organ in Berkeley's First Congregational Church. This is the instrument in the handsome cover photo on the February, 2010 issue of *The American Organist*. Details of how it came about are in the cover story on pp.44-46. This church is extensively used as a performing venue for a number of musical organizations. The acoustic is clear and sight lines are excellent with a maximum seating capacity of 300. This new Petty-Madden organ is the 4th organ at Berkeley First Congregational since the extensive church facility was built in 1924. Mantoux played an all French program with works by Boely, Franck, Widor, Alain and Durufle to a responsive and appreciative audience.

Members of the Palo Alto AGO Chapter should watch for recitals on these two instruments. Both reflect quality organ building and the resources to present a wide

variety of organ solo literature with admirable results. Both instruments "speak with a fine French accent" and are well suited to playing French music. Both show the great care and attention that the builder applied in the scaling and finishing of the instruments as their blend is exceptional.

PAUL SAHLIN

WORKSHOP: "THE ART OF ACCOMPANYING"

Paul Rosas plans to offer a workshop on accompanying to members of the San Jose and Palo Alto/Peninsula AGO Chapters on Saturday January 29 from 10 a.m. to 12 noon at Los Altos United Methodist Church. He would like to hear from people who plan to attend, and to have them bring the choir music that gives them the most trouble to work out solutions together. Paul himself will be present about the attitude that the accompanist brings to the work of accompanying, how rehearsal accompanying differs from performance, as well as dealing with whatever questions those in attendance want to raise. Please let Paul know if you are interested and what music you plan to bring to the workshop. His phone number is (408) 482-0517.

CALENDAR LISTINGS

SATURDAY NOVEMBER 13

2:00 p.m. Hymn-Playing Workshop (*see Dean's letter for details*). **First Lutheran Palo Alto.**

SUNDAY NOVEMBER 21

3:00 p.m. Joyce Rhodes (organ). Stone Church of Willow Glen, Presbyterian, San Jose.

SUNDAY NOVEMBER 21

3:30 p.m. Angela Kraft Cross (organ). Cathedral of St. Mary of the Assumption San Francisco.

SUNDAY DECEMBER 5

4:00 p.m. Chapter St. Nicholas Party (*see Dean's letter for details*). **Watch for invitation!**

SUNDAY DECEMBER 7

7:00 p.m. James Welch (organ) and Barbara Cramer (soprano). Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Middlefield Rd., Palo Alto.

FRIDAY DECEMBER 31

8:00 p.m. James Welch (organ). St. Mark's Episcopal Church Palo Alto.

FOR ADDITIONAL CALENDAR LISTINGS *please see the*

San Francisco Chapter's Bay Area Concert Calendar at the following site: <<http://tinyurl.com/yzcqfd>>.