



PALO ALTO/PENINSULA CHAPTER AGO

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NEWSLETTER—JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2011

FROM THE DEAN

Dear Chapter,

Happy holidays to all. After the festivities, I hope you will get some well-deserved rest!

Many thanks for the wonderful St. Nick's party we had at the home of Dorothy Wurlitzer. Dorothy and Mike were consummate hosts, and the food and wine were sublime. St. Nick was there too, though we didn't see him. It was so nice to see everyone so relaxed.

Hope to see you at the end of January at the workshop on accompanying by Paul Rosas. After that we meet at Stanford for our annual masterclass with Robert Huw Morgan, and then a week later back at Paul's church again for the local composers' recital. Lots to look forward to.

Since it is our 20th anniversary, I thought we might look back to what happened twenty years ago, which was the Loma Prieta Earthquake. The consequent damage and restoration of Memorial Church, where we will congregate soon for our masterclass, is the topic of the interview below.

This interview took place in August 2010 at the home of Olivier and Lynn Pieron by me, Rani. I knew the Pierons from my former church, and remembered Olivier mentioning something at a dinner

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party about supergluing mosaic tiles with a syringe after the earthquake. I never forgot this, and thought it would be interesting for us all as local organists since this space provided the inspiration for the founding of our chapter. I hope you enjoy it.

R: Olivier, what was your role in the restoration of Memorial Church? I don't know.

O: At the time I was working at Stanford as a project manager in the facilities department, and after the earthquake we were in charge of touring all the Stanford buildings to assess the damages. One of my fellow colleagues was the person who toured the church after the earthquake, and he was the project manager. To my great surprise three months after this I was put in charge of the church. So I inherited the project of restoring the church after the earthquake. Why, I have no clue, but it was fascinating.

R: What is your field? I don't even know that.

O: I manage construction projects. Basically, somebody has an idea at Stanford to do this, this, and this, or this building is obsolete. So we supervise the project including the program, the design, the construction build it, and move people in. My role was to shepherd all the involved parties so that they end up in the right place, whether they are architects, consultants, or construction people. So, I inherited the church after the earthquake.

This church has been rebuilt twice, the first time after the 1906 earthquake. What I learned is when they rebuilt the church after 1906, that was that they did not tie all the building pieces together so in 1986 they shook in different directions. Mrs. Stanford completely rebuilt the church after the 1906. It was dismantled piece by piece, stone by stone, catalogued and rebuilt.

R: Exactly as it was before?

O: What they did was put reinforced concrete walls and applied the stone on top of it, which was a lot sturdier. The only part that was never restored was the crossing of the church. That was the only piece that was really not heavily damaged, apparently. Unfortunately, in the '89 earthquake...

R: That's where the angels are, right?

O: Yes, the church is composed of four pieces: the chancel where the altar is, the transepts which are the sides of the cross, the crossing, and the nave, the largest part. The crossing is where all parts converge, where the dome is and the steeple was. What happened in the '89 earthquake was that the transepts moved. they hadn't been reinforced completely.

CONTINUED OVERLEAF...

FROM THE DEAN, CONTINUED...

Some of the stones displaced themselves by close to two inches. The rest of the church didn't have a lot of damage, with the exception of the organ balcony which fell inwards.

R: That was before the Fisk?

O: That was after the Fisk. They had to reinforce the balcony in order to install it. The other main damage was mostly to the mosaics in the crossing. One big piece of one of the archangel mosaic fell down on the pews and stones fell in the balconies of the transepts. You have to remember that at the time the transepts were closed; nobody could enter the transepts because they did not have two exits.

L: You mean they were closed to the public?

O: Prior to the earthquake they were closed to the public. My guess is they were closed around the 60's when the fire marshal decreed that the exiting was not acceptable. Part of the of the project was to reopen the balconies. The structural engineer in charge wanted to demolish the crossing and rebuild it so that it would be completely safe. My question was what would happen to the mosaics and what would happen to the dome? Well, we'll rebuild, and my answer was that they were old and they should be preserved'. I wanted a second opinion, to tell me if it can be done without demolishing these.

R: Now if they rebuilt it would it look exactly the same?

O: Yes, it would look exactly the same, but at great effort and cost.

R: Oh, ya, ya.

O: We obtained a second opinion and the structural engineer devised a very creative solution. What we found by doing exploration work is that most of the walls in the chancel were double walls with a void in the middle.

R: Between the concrete and the outer walls?

O: No, between the wall of the crossing that hadn't been modified and the new walls they had built after 1906. Making the story brief, they use the void to pour concrete with reinforcing that is invisible to everybody which is basically an inverted crown which was dropped from the top. We uncorked the top of the church and dropped a massive piece of reinforcing into the walls.

R: That's steel rods?

O: No, no, no, that's steel beams, we're talking major beams with a complete circle above the dome which basically completely ties everything.

R: So the beams are vertical?

O: The beams are vertical and you have a tie on top of it above the dome, so you don't see anything. It's above the dome or inside the wall. Of course, we had to hire dwarves to go inside the wall.

R: You're kidding.

O: To fit inside the wall which was too small for burly construction workers. Anyway, it was an extremely successful design. So my role was to push hard to do it in

a different manner. Initially the structural engineer wanted also to replace the mosaics in the crossing.

R: The angels.

O: Archangels. These are archangels, four archangels. .

R: Do you know their names?

O: No.

L: Everyone wants to know their names. It's the fallen archangel, but I'm not sure if it's the same one that fell in the Bible.

O: Anyway, the piece that fell was fairly large, and could have killed a few people if it had felt during a service or a concert. Also, we completely replaced the roof diaphragm, which is the plywood sheet you put on the roof before you put the tile and tarpaper because it hadn't been replaced since 1913 and was not stiff enough

R: So there's the ceiling... what are the layers?

O: The ceiling is wood. We didn't touch the ceiling. There's wood, then beams; on top of the beams are sheets of plywood (the diaphragm), tarpaper, then tile. So we replaced with modern plywood, many sheets of it. In addition to the structural work, we needed to hire a conservator to restore the artifacts that had been damaged. We interviewed several and hired a lovely English woman named Lesley Bone who worked in SF for the Legion of Honor and had been trained in England. She was very good, matter of fact and down to Earth.

L: One thing you may not be aware of was that things were tough on all campuses in the 60's so they did things like put chicken wire on all windows that were within rock-throwing distance. All the ones that were around the altar were dark and gloomy because you were looking through stained glass and though chicken wire. That's what was there in '89.

R: In '89?

O: The chicken wire was still there when we restored the church in '95. In any case, . .

L: It took many years to get this project underway, it didn't happen the day after.

O: The problem was money was very short.

R: At Stanford?

O: Well, they weren't expecting this earthquake, and I believe they were self-insured. They were raising money for all these projects, and I remember being invited to a meeting with Mr. Hewlett, Bill Hewlett, to ask him for a donation. There comes this short man with a simple blazer, looking ordinary, but incredible sharp. One of his questions was, why should I give you money when there are many, many teaching buildings that need money? Because, after all, the role of the university is teaching, not praying. He still gave several million dollars to the church project. he was very, very interesting. That was my chance of meeting the legendary Bill Hewlett.

R: Whose idea was it to do a thorough renovation beyond that of the repairs?

O: The idea was a joint idea from the dean of the chapel and the university.

R: Do you know who that was?

O: Bob Gregg... a wonderful person. Anyway the fact the main crossing had moved was worrying the university because of the potential for major problems in case of a mild earthquake.

L: Liability, right?

O: the decision was made to reinforce the church so that it met current code.

R: So apart from the angels, were there any windows damaged, any other mosaics?

O: A few pieces of stones fell in the transept balcony, but that was it.

L: Were the organs damaged?

O: No.

L: But they didn't want to do a superficial repair job because they were worried, now that this earthquake has done this much, what will happen next time?

O: Yes, they wanted to be able to use the church and have no concern for the safety of the people inside. The fact that the angel pieces fell on the pews was very worrisome because it could have sent a few people to heaven. .

L: The front row seats . . . the most important people at a concert.

O: Flying with an archangel My personal concern was the preservation of all historic artifacts, whether or not you like this church. But, . . .

L: It's a little over the top, isn't it? A little flamboyant.

O: The description is very interesting because it's built in a Romanesque style, but the interior is very Byzantine. It was very reflective of Mrs. Stanford's extensive trips in Italy, Greece, and Turkey. The Stanfords used to travel a lot with their son. So, preservation of the artifacts was my main concern. The gaudiness needed to be preserved intact.

L: In fact, it needed to be enhanced, since it was all smoke-covered.

O: I believed that the cave needed to be illuminated.

L: It was dark, Rani. The whole church was dark even on a bright sunny morning from all the soot, candles, and chicken wire.

O: The chandeliers which were providing the light were put in place 1915, late in the process and were not very bright. So, basically, the scope of the work expanded from structural reinforcement to historically restore the church. Of course, estimates skyrocketed.

L: For example?

O: I will give you an example that is quite interesting. Before the church was damaged, Stanford had started a restoration program for the stained-glass windows, and I happened to be a part of that. .

R: Well, what else had to be done, other than take the chicken wire off and wash it?

O: Oh no, no, no, no.

R: There's a lot more?

O: They had consulted with a former stained-glass factory worker who had persuaded them that they needed to dismantle the stain glass, de-lead it, and put it back in place, then protect them with lexan, which is a very, very hard bullet-proof material used by banks. I happened to visit the atelier of this person, which was his backyard shack where he was dismantling stained-glass windows and basically making himself a life-long project. .

R: So had he already started with the Stanford windows?

O: He had already restored two of them.

R: Before the earthquake or after?

O: Before.

R: That was sweet deal for him.

O: Very sweet deal. In any case we finally got the conservator, Lesley Bone involved and, she told us three things. One, putting lexan in front of this window is a terrible idea because it creates a micro climate and a pocket of air trapped between the glass and the lexan, which might create more problems than you are fixing. Two, she did not think that dismantling was absolutely necessary because it did not look like the lead was in very bad condition. And, third yes they are dirty, but they can be cleaned, and I can show you how. And she took a sponge with soap and water, and cleaned every single one of the windows. Took forever, but they did it the proper way.

R: This is the British woman?

O: She hired a graduate student, and they washed every single window inside and out. They were restored to their absolute splendor.

R: Now they look like Tiffany's, are they?

O: They were not done by Tiffany. They were done by another studio, . . . J.& R. Lamb studio from New York.

R: They're gorgeous windows.

O: They are absolutely gorgeous. You are right; they are based on the same principles as the Tiffany's. They are made of three layers of painted glass encased in lead surrounding, which give them a lot more depth than medieval stained-glass window , not a 3-D, but close.

R: And a marbled effect.

O: Yes, so she just restored them with soap and water.

L: And Q-tips.

O: And, yeah, Q-tips. The mosaic inside the church which pretty much covers every square inch of wall , were absolutely disastrously black. Lesley did the same thing. She trained construction workers to clean them with soap and water, and restore the splendor of the gold to the Byzantine effect.

R: And it's gold leaf?

O: It's gold leaf. They are very small pieces of glass with gold on the front.

[Lynn brings out a little bag with little gold glass squares.]

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FROM THE DEAN, CONTINUED...

These were found in the crawl space under the floor of the church. There's one basement under the chancel. Under the nave there's a crawl space, and we found a significant amount of pieces of mosaics that were left.

R: Olivier, I think I remember you saying a couple of years ago that you superglued each of these tiles to the wall?

O: Let me correct this. In order to avoid having all archangels fall to Earth, which would be ungodly, we had to devise a way to support the mosaics in the crossing. These curved mosaics are supported by a plaster backing which is framed by steel banding. What happened is over time and during the earthquake, the mosaics had peeled off from the plaster backing. So, our delightful English woman again, went to work with the structural engineer. Again, we had a very creative structural engineer, . .

R: Different firm?

O: No, same firm, different engineer, young man, very clever, who said instead of demolishing the whole thing, why don't you create a new backing behind the plaster with fiberglass. And then, how do we attach the mosaic to the fiberglass was the question. That's where our English woman found that she had a repressed-dentist career and she took a dentist drill and drilled through the tiles at regular intervals and injected epoxy in the holes and then replace the dislodged mosaic piece. The beauty of this method is that nothing had to be removed. So you had this huge scaffolding all the way to the mosaics and this young lady drilling with a dentist drill. Lesley saved the university hundreds of thousands of dollars by using a sponge and soap and water. Of course she recommended we keep an eye on the windows to make sure they were not deteriorating and carefully catalogued all the windows making note of the order in which the windows would need to be repaired in the future.

R: So the man who was in his backyard.

O: Was put out of business.

R: Oh dear.

O: He had to retire. What else can I tell you? The chandeliers had to be taken down. They are on a chain. We had to lower them down on the ground to clean every single glass globe and replace the pieces missing or create pieces of glass that matched it. If you looked at these chandeliers which looked like a fly head with eyes, all over the place...

R: What do you call that, Victorian?

O: It's kind of Victorian style, yes, or maybe art deco. We took everything down, even the pews. Instead of replacing the pews, we sent every single of the pews to a stripping company, a company that could put the pews in a bath of acid to strip them of grime and varnish. We refinished all the pews and replaced the cork floor which was eighty years old and itself replaced the tile floor that existed before the 1906 earthquake. The entire sound system was replaced, and because we had made some r budget savings

in the restoration, we were able to install what is called a pew-back system. It's time-delayed. Let me explain, in such a big church, you have a huge reverberation effect when you hear the sermon, for example. so each pew speaker sound is delayed row by row, so that you time you hear the speaker you have the impression that you are hearing it live.

R: Fascinating.

O: Extremely high-tech at the time.

L: So they used low-tech window cleaning and high-tech speakers.

O: The advantage is to avoid having ugly speakers hanging on the side of the crossing.

L: Did there used to be speakers?

O: Huge speakers. We also completely redid the lighting system and the design was done pro bono by a Stanford alum in Texas. It is designed to accommodate anything from an intimate service to a full, live orchestral concert. If I remember correctly there are about 25 settings.

What else? We restored the Murray-Harris. I didn't touch the organs, unfortunately.

R: Tell me another story.

O: Once upon a time out of the blue, we received a message from Italy, from Venice, saying they were willing to sell Stanford two original paintings of Memorial Church. We didn't know what it was. When we finally learned was that the Salviati factory, which was the Venice studio that built and made all these mosaics, was shutting down . And they had found in their archive two original paintings, and they were willing to sell to Stanford for significant sum of money. So, we looked at the photos of the paintings , and said ok, we'll consult with the Stanford archivist, and finally decided it was not worth the money, so we said thanks but no thanks and we left it there. Three months later we received a note from Salviati saying that they were willing to make a gift to Stanford... of these two paintings. We eventually received the two paintings which were effectively the original watercolor mock-ups of the exterior of the church made by Salviati. The original designer of the mosaics who was managing the mosaic factory in Venice, who had made a good amount of money out of this commission.

R: This was before the big earthquake in 1906?

O: Yup.

R: OK, so they'd just gotten the mosaics up, and then the big earthquake. . .oh no.

L: Well the whole university had just gotten up. It was founded in 1896, but it took a long time to build.

R: That's a good story.

O: But, the best story remains the stained-glass window, soap and water versus artisan retirement and lexan.

L: Yeah, that's the best.

R: So do you remember the figures? How much did the British woman save you?

O: I think the British lady saved us probably in excess of a million dollars. What she did was leave Stanford a fabulous piece of architecture.

O: It remains my favorite challenging project at Stanford in seventeen and a half years.

R: What about Lesley? Did she get much recognition?

O: Yes, fortunately, I think Lesley got a lot of recognition from it.

R: Do you know where she lives now?

O: She used to live in San Francisco. She was a wonderful person. I think everybody who worked on this project deserved big hugs and kudos for making things happen the way they did. The project was three and a half million dollars under budget.

R: What's that with inflation, four?

L: I think so. When they were done they invited all the construction workers, and they all came in their suits. Most of them were Mexican. There was a church service; it was a very moving day. Anyone who took part in this service must have felt really proud. I mean this was a special day for everyone. It was the only time Olivier had God as his client.

RANI FISCHER

HALOWEEN ORGAN CONCERTS

Certainly all of us as members of the AGO are aware of the mood that seems to permeate a vast assortment of Americans concerning organs, the solo literature written for it, recitals of same, and the continuing place of the instrument in worship in Christian churches. In brief, they don't much care and in the extreme, would just as soon it all just vanish and leave them to enjoy other instruments. Certainly this latter opinion is often the case where "worship wars" in congregations have been won by a garage band and the organ stands silent or may even have been removed.

An interesting organ-based event that runs completely contrary to such negativism's has been held the past 3 Halloweens in Davies Hall featuring organist Dennis James plus two percussionists accompanying a Hollywood-produced silent film. I've attended all 3 performances, the 2010 version being the 1921 Paramount release based on the horrifying tale of "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde." The feature was prefaced by a 20 minute comedy with Buster Keaton, also silent, "The Haunted House."

James is a consummate accompanist for silent films no matter what the plot. I've seen his work in various venues with everything from westerns to melodramas and in the case of the Davies/Halloween performances, horror films. His organ training as a graduate of Indiana brings a celebrated mixture of snip lets from familiar organ solo literature mixed with jazz, country, big band and other genre all clothed with organ registrations [assuming the

instrument is capable] of amazing color to bring the emotional impact from the action on screen to the mind of the viewer. The 5-manual Ruffatti in Davies with its 150+ ranks, while in no stretch of the imagination is a clone of the "Mighty Wurlitzer," when assisted by two percussionists equipped with devices never included on any theatre organ makes for a wonderful sonic experience.

He comes onstage with a sinister sort of swagger wearing a rubber mask, pointed hat and a black cape trimmed inside in red. Upon reaching the organ bench, he makes a huge gesture with raised arms and looks rather like a 2-ton bat about to launch into a full organ, including en chamade registration, of the Toccata portion of the T&F in dm of JSB. The sold out house, of some 2,800-strong, upon hearing just the first several familiar notes responds in a deafening yell of approval. Not your customary way of starting an organ recital including his registration but then that's the whole purpose here... something non-conventional.

Looking around at the audience one sees what seems to be a preponderance of ages 15 thru 30-something many of whom are in full costume. Their Halloween party may have been before or will come after the Davies performance. The youthful majority makes for an extremely demonstrative and responsive audience both to on screen action and to Dennis James' antics with the organ. I would bet that for many, it's the first time they have ever heard any pipe organ and that for most, they've never heard one used in this manner and for this purpose. But what is abundantly clear, they enjoyed what they heard and all those critical ideas about how dead the organ is are called into question. Each of the 3 Halloween film performances by James have gotten a little more wild each time. If one is offered in 2011, I recommend you go, and be prepared for a really fun evening where the organ, for once, is the star, not a dead duck.

PAUL SAHLIN

UPCOMING BIOGRAPHY OF RICHARD PURVIS

I am working on a biography of Richard Purvis, organist of Grace Cathedral 1947-1971. I am guessing that there are members of the chapter who knew Richard. Perhaps you studied with him, heard him play in person, or had a conversation with him. Maybe you have a letter or card from him, or even some photos. If you have any information or stories about Purvis you would care to share with me, I would be most grateful to you. You can call me at (650) 856-9700, or e-mail me at <james@welch.net>. Thank you for your help!

JAMES WELCH

REGISTER FOR THE REGIONAL CONVENTION!

Registration for the AGO Region IX Convention in San Francisco on July 3-7, 2011, is now open and it is never too early to register. In fact, the last day for "early bird" pricing is January 31, 2011. The first step is to go to: www.sfago2011.org. On that page you will be able to access information about the convention, including hotel information, "Convention at a Glance," and information about the individual artists, venues, and workshops. This information is also available as part of the online convention registration process.

As space for individual workshops is limited, we suggest that you register and pay for your application as early as possible. Workshop registration selections are confirmed as soon as payment is received.

To start the registration process, simply click the "Register" link at the top of the page at www.sfago2011.org, which will take you to the registration welcome page. Please take a moment to read the welcome letter from our Convention Coordinators, Pat During and Larry Marietta. Then click on either of the "Register for the SF AGO 2011 Region Convention" buttons, located at both the top and bottom of the page. The next screen will ask for your personal information: your name, address, email address, and other information, and you will also be guided to create your User ID and Password. Once you have completed that page, you are guided to log in and start your convention registration process.

You will choose your registration category (regular/senior/student/etc.), banquet meal selection, and transportation options, followed by your workshop choices. Upon completing your registration, you will have the option to make a donation to the Region IX Convention, followed by the option to order a professional card to be included in the printed convention book. You will also have an option to help defray your registration processing costs. Once you complete your application, you may pay by credit card or check. The mailing address for a convention check payment is: AGO Region IX Convention, PO Box 52, Mill Valley, CA 94942-0052. Your check payment will be applied to your registration order as soon as it arrives.

A link to Holiday Inn Golden Gate is part of the order process. You have a choice of making your hotel reservation as you complete your order, or you may bypass the hotel reservation option. After you complete your registration, the hotel reservation is made by clicking on "Hotel Information" at www.sfago2011.org. The Holiday Inn "Group Code" for the AGO 2011 Region IX Convention is 'NOR'. Rates are valid through June 17, 2011 and subject to availability.

If you would like to make any changes to your registration, such as adding or changing transportation options, changing your banquet meal selections, or changing your workshop selections after you have paid, please contact

us at [<support@sfago2011.org>](mailto:support@sfago2011.org). As already stated, workshop space is limited, but we will do our best accommodate your requests. If you have changes and you have not already paid for your order, you may simply delete your order and start a new registration.

You can review your convention registration at any time by logging back in by clicking "Sign-in to Update Your Registration" and then clicking on the "Open Your Packet in a New Window."

If you do not have access to the Internet, one option is to ask a friend with Internet access to help you enter your registration. You may also call us at (415) 389-1515 and we will work with you to enter your registration over the phone.

BILL MONTGOMERY AND RICHARD KRAVITZ

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.

STANFORD MASTERCLASS

Save the evening of **Monday February 28** for our annual master class at Stanford Memorial Church with Robert Huw Morgan. More details soon!

OTHER CALENDAR LISTINGS

FRIDAY DECEMBER 31

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

SUNDAY FEBRUARY 27

2:00 p.m. James Welch (organ). Mission Santa Clara.

FOR ADDITIONAL CALENDAR LISTINGS *please see the San Francisco Chapter's Bay Area Concert Calendar at the following site: <http://tinyurl.com/yzcqdf>*.