



PALO ALTO/PENINSULA CHAPTER AMERICAN GUILD OF ORGANISTS

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NEWSLETTER—MARCH/APRIL 2012

FROM THE DEAN

Dear Chapter Colleagues:

Although it seems a very long time ago indeed, I trust that you all survived the holiday season with its many services and other performances. I am writing this brief note to you all on the evening of Ash Wednesday—for those of you who are observing it, I wish you a blessed Lent, and hope that you find some space within it to rest and reflect on your work.

I continue to be delighted in the quality of our chapter's programs this year, thanks in large part to David Sheetz's leadership. As always, Robert Huw Morgan's master class at Stanford was attended by many and offered fresh insights into a wide range of pieces. More recently, we had the opportunity to meet in a new venue, Woodside Village Church, for a repertory-sharing session. It is always a pleasure to see the pieces that each performer brings, and to hear them introduce their choices. Thank you to all who participated, and especially to Dorothy Straks, the music director at the church, for hosting us.

You will see in the newsletter a separate article about Christian Lane, who will visit us in mid-March to offer a chapter master class as well as a recital at my church. Don't miss this opportunity to meet and hear one of the world's finest organists! Chris will also be playing a pre-convention recital in Nashville this July. I have registered for the national convention and know of several other chapter members who will be going



(among them Adam Detzner, who will be playing a "Rising Star" recital). Please let me know if you'll be there and we will look out for you!

Although our chapter is small, I am always amazed at, and grateful for, the vitality of organ music within it, and the many ways in which the AGO serves individuals and congregations in our area. One such way is through professional certification, credentials that support performers in growing their skills and help congregations identify capable organists. I'm delighted to announce that a member of our chapter has applied to take the Service Playing Certificate this year; why not take the time to review the certification requirements on the national AGO website and see if you might consider doing the same?

With my best wishes,
Matthew

UPCOMING CHAPTER EVENTS

**MASTERCLASS FOR YOUNG ORGANISTS
WITH CHRISTIAN LANE**
Tuesday, March 13th, 7:00 p.m.

Hope Evangelical Lutheran Church
600 West 42nd Avenue, San Mateo

COMPOSERS' FORUM
Saturday, April 28th, 3:00 p.m.

Covenant Presbyterian Church
670 East Meadow Drive, Palo Alto
(Note change in location!)

See inside this issue for more information
about these exciting upcoming events!

ABOUT OUR MARCH ARTIST AND VENUE

MEET CHRISTIAN LANE

by Matthew Burt

Chris Lane's official biography has all the hallmarks of a world class organist: degrees from Eastman and Yale; positions at St. Thomas, Fifth Avenue and Harvard; and, perhaps most impressive of all, First Prize in the Canadian International Organ Competition, which is held only every three years and earned him CAN\$25,000, artist management by Karen McFarlane, and a series of concert and recording opportunities. However, I am delighted that our wonderful newsletter editor Tim Getz has asked me to offer some brief thoughts about Chris from a personal perspective, which I am pleased to do here.



Chris is an exceptional musician, whom I have had the pleasure of observing as a recitalist, an accompanist, and a teacher. He is passionate about the organ and its music, and in particular is a strong advocate of new music and collaborations between the organ and voice or other instruments. As a master class leader he combines tremendous scholarship and performance practice with abundant musicianship and an encouraging teaching style. In recitals, he takes great care to select programs that suit each instrument and audience, providing variety and contrast. He is also a gracious guy who loves meeting new people and evangelizing on behalf of the organ and its music.

I encourage you all to come and meet Chris in person at our chapter master class on Tuesday March 13th, and at his recital at Christ Church, Portola Valley on March 16th at 7:30 p.m. The concert will feature major works of Bach and Buxtehude alongside selections by Gabrieli, Schumann, Vierne, Whitlock, Pärt, and Cooman. Christ Church is offering a discounted admission charge for AGO members of just \$10.

THE HOPE LUTHERAN CHURCH SCHOENSTEIN

by Douglas Franks

The March 13th Palo Alto/Peninsula AGO master class with Christian Lane takes place at Hope Evangelical Lutheran Church in San Mateo. In Hope's rear gallery stands a two-manual, 28-rank Schoenstein organ built in 1983. The organ has an independent floating positif division mounted on the railing overlooking the congregation from behind. The positif can be coupled to both manuals and pedal. Added after the main organ was installed, it is a welcome addition and can be used to good effect for a variety of purposes.

The builders of this instrument consider it to be a rather remarkable engineering feat given the limited space in the choir loft for an organ of this size and the architectural impediments that faced them. Its impressive façade is quite photogenic, and in fact this instrument was the cover feature in an issue of *The American Organist* back when it was first constructed.

The design of Hope's organ is clearly German-inspired, a logical choice in a Lutheran church. It loves Bach *et al*, but can accommodate other nationalities and eras. In a memorable recital several years ago in celebration of the organ's 25th anniversary, three Peninsula organists, Angela Kraft Cross, Margaret Kvamme, and I, presented a varied program of music by Bach, Buxtehude, Praetorius, Mozart, Parry, Howells, Mendelssohn, Widor, Hindemith, Langlais, and Albright.

The organ console recently underwent an upgrade of its keyboard combination piston assemblies, a project undertaken by Schoenstein & Co. Their work greatly improved the responsiveness of the piston action. What a pleasure to now be able to successfully carry off things like dialogue/echo effects juxtaposed with *grands jeux* brilliance in classic French literature—on two manuals, with the help of a quick thumb!

Hope Lutheran Church is not a very well known venue for Palo Alto/Peninsula AGO programs. It is an honor and privilege to open our doors and organ console for the March master class. I am personally gratified that the church's clergy and staff are enthusiastic about hosting our master class as a form of community outreach and for its value in fostering church-music arts.



Hope Evangelical Lutheran Church, San Mateo Schoenstein & Co., 1983

IN APRIL: COMPOSERS' FORUM

by Paul Rosas

This year's Composers' Forum will be held on April 28th, 3:00 p.m. at Covenant Presbyterian Church, 670 E. Meadow Drive in Palo Alto. It is near the corner of Middlefield and E. Meadow. I had the great pleasure of hosting the event last year and was introduced to organ solos and choral pieces that I was able to use later in the year. We formed an impromptu choir and rehearsed the pieces an hour before the beginning of the program and then wove the organ solos and choral music into a very exciting and fascinating presentation. Donald Dillard, a member of the National Association of Composers, USA will be hosting the event for the Palo Alto/Peninsula Chapter AGO. We need to have you ask a couple of singing friends if they would like to come to the program, and rehearse the choral pieces beginning at 2:00. Donald will be having his church choir help us, but it would be good to have added reinforcements. If you have organ solos, please plan to play or ask someone to perform the pieces for you. Contact Donald to arrange practice time at the church before that Saturday.

If you have composed some music or know of a composer who has created interesting or inspiring pieces for your church, please contact Paul Rosas and Donald Dillard and send the music to us by March 30th, preferably in PDF format. Let's try something a little different this year. Please let us (PR and DD) know that you are going to attend the event. We will put the music together in PDF format and send it to attendees the week before the program. You will then have some time to look at the music and practice the choral parts before the Saturday event. We will also have some copies at the church. Last year, we had a wonderful no-host dinner at a local restaurant and had a wonderful time. Please plan to stay and socialize!

To summarize: 1) Send us music by PDF file to: tpaulrosas@comcast.net and dedillard@comcast.net or hard copies to Covenant Presbyterian Church, c/o Donald Dillard, 670 E. Meadow Dr., Palo Alto, CA 94306 by March 30th. 2) Call Donald Dillard at 408-564-4845 to arrange practice time at the church. 3) Ask a singer to help us Saturday, April 28th and come to the rehearsal at 2:00. 4) Plan to play your piece or ask an organist friend to play your music. (If you need help finding someone, contact Paul). 5) Come to the dinner after and have fun!



Covenant Presbyterian Church, Palo Alto

ST. BEDE'S LENTEN ORGAN SERIES

by Rani Fischer

St. Bede's Episcopal Church
2650 Sand Hill Road, Menlo Park
Sundays in March at 4:00 p.m., \$10/\$8

March 4th

Ronald McKean

Known for evoking daring musical ideas from traditional harmony, Ronald McKean is Director of Music Ministry at St. Joseph's Catholic Church at historic Mission Mission San Jose in Fremont, home to the Spanish style Opus 14 of Rosales Organ Builders. For the past 26 years he has given weekly organ and harpsichord concerts featuring a vast repertoire of musical languages. It is rare to hear improvisation that captivates the soul, the perfect entryway to Lent.



March 11th

Angela Kraft Cross

Angela Kraft Cross has endeared audiences and critics, alike, both in the U.S. and in Europe. *The American Organist* in September 2009 writes, "She affords the seasoned listener a guided tour of the music, while giving those who are unfamiliar with the music a breathtaking and memorable first-time experience." Enjoy the lyricism and passion in Lenten themes from J.S. Bach's revered German Organ Mass, Klavier-Übung III.



March 18th

Katya Kolesnikova

Sense the profound timelessness of Lenten German chorale preludes from J.S. Bach's *Orgelbüchlein*, as well as his quintessential, grand Prelude and Fugue in b minor, BWV 544, played with compelling refinement and technical prowess. Katya Kolesnikova is one of the Bay Area's finest new talents.



March 25th

Rodney Gehrke

With jubilation at the Feast of the Annunciation juxtaposed with dire introspection in the last

days of Lent, we enter a world of musical drama. Rodney Gehrke is revered as both performer and pedagogue: organist at All Saints' Episcopal, Palo Alto, organist and choir director at San Francisco's Temple Emanu-El, professor of organ at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, and undergraduate organ instructor at the University of California, Berkeley.



FROM OUR AGO REGION IX COUNCILLOR

Leslie Wolf Robb

I had the opportunity to visit Nashville in October for AGO National Council meetings, and was dazzled by the organs, the city, and the people. I can't wait to go back for the convention this summer, and I hope all of you are planning to be there, too!

My top 10 reasons for going to Nashville:

1. **Inspiration:** World-class organ and choral performances make me want to practice five hours a day!
2. **World-class organs and venues:** Can I take the Fisk at Covenant Presbyterian home with me (maybe the whole campus)? And move Schermerhorn Hall to San Diego?
3. **Worship:** There's nothing like having over 2,000 organists singing hymns together.
4. **Growth:** workshops that give me new insights on literature, practicing, teaching, improvisation, and so much more
5. **Fun:** talking with friends, dinner with friends, talking with friends, helping others spend their money in the exhibit hall, talking with friends (we organists have to spend a lot of time being quiet in worship—conventions are our time to make up for that!)
6. **Shopping:** discovering new teaching materials and new literature to share in church and in concert, new CDs, and hopefully a fun t-shirt or two
7. **Southern hospitality:** It's the best!
8. **Challenge:** learning new ways to practice and improvise, build great working relationships, and promote the organ. Come to Nashville; go home smarter!
9. **Exploring a fantastic city:** Nashville is spectacular! Museums, plantations, history, and so much more. I can't wait to visit The Hermitage again!
10. **All of the venues are air-conditioned. :)**

OFFICERS

**Palo Alto/Peninsula Chapter AGO
July 2011-June 2012**

Matthew Burt, *Dean*
David Sheetz, *Subdean*
Douglas Franks, *Secretary*
Jill Mueller, *Treasurer and Registrar*
The Rev. P. Kempton Segerhammar, *Chaplain*

Members-at-Large:

Donald Mulliken & Sarah Wannamaker
(Class of 2012)
Jay Martin, Webmaster & Keith Wannamaker
(Class of 2013)
Tim Getz, Newsletter Editor
(Class of 2014)

CONCERT LISTINGS

Saturday, March 3rd, 4:00 p.m.

Choir School Concert
St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Burlingame

Sunday, March 4th, 4:00 p.m.

Ronald McKean
St. Bede's Episcopal Church, Menlo Park, \$10/8

Sunday, March 11th, 4:00 p.m.

Angela Kraft Cross
St. Bede's Episcopal Church, Menlo Park, \$10/8

Friday, March 16th, 7:30 p.m.

Christian Lane
Christ Church, Portola Valley, \$10 AGO members

Sunday, March 18th, 4:00 p.m.

Katya Kolesnikova
St. Bede's Episcopal Church, Menlo Park, \$10/8

Wednesday, March 21st, 8:00 p.m.

Christopher Marks
Stanford Memorial Church, free

Sunday, March 25th, 4:00 p.m.

Rodney Gehrke
St. Bede's Episcopal Church, Menlo Park, \$10/8

Saturday, May 19th, 5:00 p.m.

Choral Evensong
St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Burlingame

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

SUBSTITUTE ORGANISTS

Are you available on Sunday mornings to serve as a substitute organist? Can you recommend someone wonderful? We are currently compiling an updated (and hopefully, expanded!) substitute list. Please contact Don Mulliken (damulliken@aol.com) with name, email address, and phone number. With summer vacations on the horizon, this list will be a great help to all of us!

POSITION AVAILABLE

Christ Episcopal Church Los Altos (CCLA) is looking for a part-time Choir Director. The position requires approximately 15 hours per week (TBR). The Choir Director will direct both the adult choir and the children's choir, participate in staff meetings, plan and select music for worship and additional church services and programs, supervise the church organist, and provide guidance, overall, for the parish music program. Experience and proficiency in music theory, technique and performance, as well as an ability to lead, direct and motivate are required. Salary: TBD. A complete job description is available. Please forward resume and/or biography to the CCLA Parish Manager at Jani@ccla.us.

The PAPenAGO newsletter is published bimonthly in September, November, January, March, May, and July. Submissions (concert listings, job announcements, articles, etc.) are welcome and are due the 10th of the month preceding publication. They may be sent to editor Tim Getz at tim@gracepa.org.

BRING BACK THE ORGAN!

The following article appeared recently as a blog post at www.knowtea.com, and it's been making the Facebook rounds this winter. A pastor and musician from the evangelical community makes a compelling case for our instrument and art!

—ed.

Throughout the 1990s, churches experimented with the "seeker-friendly" or "Willow Creek" philosophy of church marketing. One of the underlying premises of this philosophy was, if you want to attract "unchurched" people to your church, then the last thing your church should resemble is—a church. Pulpits had to go, replaced by flimsy music stands that could be removed at a minute's notice. Baptismal fonts and Communion tables had to be kept sight unseen (only to be

brought out for the midweek “believers’ service”: Sunday was reserved for the “unchurched”). Many churches got rid of the choir in favor of more showbiz-oriented “worship teams” or “praise teams.” In some cases, the choirs stayed around, although they were usually relegated to the role of background singers for the “stars” on the worship team. But even if the choir escaped the ax, the organ (and the organist) almost never did.

So far, the American church in the 21st century is exploring emergent and missional philosophies. (I realize that these terms are not synonymous, but there is considerable overlap between the two.) One of the encouraging aspects of these current trends is that churches have finally realized that most worshipers are longing for a sense of connectedness to historic Christianity. People want to know that they are part of a larger story: a story that began long before we arrived on the scene and that will continue long after we are gone. “Seeker-friendly” churches could not deliver the goods in this area. “Seeker-friendly” worship was extremely tied to its own temporal and geographic context, whereas emergent or missional worship tries to reflect a more global view as well as what Robert Webber called the “ancient-future” outlook. One important element, however, is still largely missing:

Bring back the organ.

If you ask the average person on the street what a church is “supposed” to look like, they will most likely mention pews, stained glass windows, pulpits, altars, etc.: all those “churchy” furnishings the Willow Creek movement tried to eradicate. Similarly, in surveys, people routinely associate church music with hymns, choirs, and organs. In Western culture, the sound of a pipe organ is probably the most “churchy” sound people can imagine. For some reason, church leaders have got it in their heads that “people don’t want that,” but this is mistaken. Marva Dawn, in *Reaching Out without Dumbing Down*, cites a survey of American Christian teenagers which reveals that the type of music they deem appropriate for worship is music that is characterized by all these “churchy” elements: choirs, hymns, and the organ. Adults suppose that teens will consider rock and roll the most appropriate for worship, since that is what they prefer to listen to in their daily lives, but this is not the case. So removing “churchy” music and instruments in the name of “what the young folks like” actually results in an environment that young people find fake and, frankly, embarrassing. If the survey Dawn cites is any

indication, when young people go to church, they want it to “sound like church.” They want it to “feel like church.” Most churches can take one simple step that will go a long way in recapturing that feeling:

Bring back the organ!

Besides the fact that most people connect the sound of a pipe organ with church more than any other sound, there are many sound reasons (pun intended) for retaining (or recovering) the use of the organ as the primary instrument in worship.

1. The organ is the best man-made instrument for supporting congregational singing. I say the best man-made instrument, because the best instrument for encouraging singing is the human voice itself. One sings more freely and with greatest confidence when one is surrounded by good singers. But if one is going to have accompanied singing in church (discussions of accompanied vs. unaccompanied singing will have to wait for another time), instruments that most closely resemble the human voice in terms of sound production will encourage better singing than instruments which differ from the human voice. The human voice is a wind instrument: supported air is sent through the larynx, causing the vocal folds to vibrate, thus creating sound. The organ is a wind instrument too: actually a collection of wind instruments all in one place (reeds, flutes, trumpets, etc.), and one person can play them all simultaneously. The piano is a percussion instrument, not a wind instrument. As soon as a note is struck on the piano, the sound immediately begins to decay. That does not encourage sustained singing “on the breath.” This is not to say that the piano is not a great instrument, or that great music has not been written for the piano: I am a pianist myself and love the instrument a great deal. But it is not well suited for accompanying congregational praise. Neither is the guitar. The guitar is, technically, a stringed instrument, but it is played as a percussion instrument (by plucking or strumming the strings), not in a sustained manner (bowing) as other stringed instruments can be played. Guitar-led congregational singing is inevitably throaty singing, and is usually pretty anemic as well, except for those who are singing into microphones, and then, of course, their voices are being artificially amplified or “lifted up,” and there should be no artifice in our worship. Forced, throaty singing does damage to the musical instrument that God gave each of us (our voices): God’s people need to learn to sing “on the breath” (note: this is not the same thing

as breathy singing!), and accompanying singing with wind instruments, such as the organ and/or a brass choir, is one of the best ways to encourage healthy singing.

2. The organ is made up of choirs. In my previous article (about choral music in the church), we saw that biblical worship is all about choirs. If Christian worship is fundamentally choral worship, then it follows that instrumental choirs would accompany the singing of human choirs (remember that the congregation itself is one of those human choirs). One should assemble brass choirs, woodwind choirs, handbell choirs, etc. to use in worship, but it is impractical to use these on a weekly basis. (I do not recommend the weekly use of a church wind ensemble or orchestra, as they are almost always out of tune and do not play together, due to their limited rehearsal time. It seems more desirable to have these groups make contributions to worship frequently enough that their gifts are being employed, but not so often that their performances sound thrown together. Worship should not be artificial, but it should not be shoddy either.) Employing the organ is a way to have wind-ensemble-led congregational singing every week. Furthermore, the various choirs (ranks) or families of pipes that make up the organ mean that there can be an almost limitless variety of tone colors in the worship service. A talented, thoughtful organist will change registrations as necessary to complement the changing moods of the various stanzas of the hymns that are sung.

3. The organ is a powerful instrument. It is no wonder that the organ is called “the king of instruments.” Such power is useful in painting a picture in worship of the majesty and grandeur of our God. Now many instruments can produce loud sounds, but in the case of the organ, it is the instrument itself, not the performer, that is the source of this strength. A pianist must exert his strength to play loudly, drawing attention to his own might. Playing the organ indeed requires great skill, but the player himself is dwarfed by the sheer magnitude of the instrument, so the “Look at me!” factor is much less in the case of an organist than with a pianist, guitarist, or other instrumentalist. It helps to have such an instrument in worship that points beyond ourselves, particularly one whose power comes not from the one playing it, but from the wind, as God reminds us that life is to be lived “not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit (Heb. ruach, “breath” or “wind”), declares the Lord of hosts (Zechariah 4:6).”

4. The organ is a very expensive instrument. Yes, I see this as a plus, not a drawback. Too often churches assume that “good stewardship” means being cheap, but some things are worth the money. Christ’s honor is worth the money. We live in a nation littered with disposable-looking metal buildings erected as houses of worship because it was the cheap thing to do. Contrast this with the great Romanesque and Gothic cathedrals of Europe, which took centuries to complete. Those who began building those churches never lived to see their completion. In many cases, their children never lived to see the completion of these churches. That is dedication to something bigger than one’s self. That is looking past one’s own nose. Evangelicals gather in their disposable buildings and play disposable music on disposable instruments. An organ installation, by contrast, is a permanent thing. It says, “We are committed to excellence in church music, and we want to encourage that excellence for many, many generations to come.” Isn’t Christ’s honor worth that? Spend the money on something that will last. Let the world keep its disposable music.

5. The organ can help create a “church culture.” The church should not follow the world; rather, in all areas, including the arts, the church should lead the way, setting the example of excellence, and let the world follow suit. For the past century or more, the world has led the way and the church has followed suit, usually with results that are far from excellent. Evangelical Christians in particular have been known for creating inferior copies for themselves of things that already exist in the world. This is what Francis Schaeffer referred to as “the Evangelical ghetto.” Or, as Ken Meyers has put it, Evangelical Christians have learned to be of the world but not in it. Instead of aping the culture around us, the church should be creating a “church culture” that is superior to anything in the world. In church music, the organ is the cornerstone of the “church sound” and thus of a church musical culture. With the exception of some concert halls and old-time movie palaces, churches are pretty much the only buildings where pipe organs can be found, and since the organ is not a portable instrument, that also means churches are pretty much the only places that pipe organ music will be heard. This means that the sound of church music will be unique. A renaissance of interest in pipe organ music will also mean that those churches with fine pipe organ installations will be in demand as locations for recitals, which can only help further the church’s visibility in the community.

Colleges in this country have seen a dramatic decrease in the number of organ majors. It is no wonder: young people have grown up in churches in which, if there was a pipe organ, it sat in a corner gathering dust. Since so few churches are looking for organists, the job prospects for young people who might desire to become organists are slim, so they major in something else. But it is not too late. Forward-thinking churches can, and should, endow organ scholarships for the purpose of raising up a new generation of skilled, theologically-minded church organists who can help create a new, more excellent culture of

church music. If your church's organ is in disrepair, have it fixed. If it has fallen into disuse or is used rarely, have that problem fixed too. Search for a gifted, dedicated organist (i.e., one who takes his/her job seriously and will practice accordingly), and reward him or her handsomely for undertaking this important part of leading in worship (you pay peanuts, you get monkeys). We need to restore the "king of instruments" to a place of prominence, as it can help us exalt the King of kings like no other instrument can.

Bring back the organ!

Palo Alto/Peninsula Chapter of the American Guild of Organists remaining 2011-2012 Program

Tuesday, March 13th, 7:00 p.m.

Master Class for Young Organists

Christian Lane, Assistant University Organist and Choirmaster, Harvard University

Winner, 2011 Canadian International Organ Competition

Hope Evangelical Lutheran Church, San Mateo

(players will include Adam Detzner, Winner, 2011 Quimby/AGO Regional Competition for Young Organists)

Saturday, April 28th, 3:00 p.m.

Composers' Forum

Covenant Presbyterian Church, Palo Alto

Paul Rosas and Donald Dillard, coordinators

no-host dinner option following

Monday, May 7th, 6:00 p.m.

Master Class, Demonstration in Hymn Improvisation and Accompaniment

Samuel Soria, Organist, Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels, Los Angeles

Transfiguration Episcopal Church, San Mateo

(joint event with San Francisco AGO)

potluck dinner to begin

Saturday, June 2nd, 4:00 p.m.

Members' Recital

St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Burlingame

no-host dinner option following