



MONTRÉ

Newsletter of the Sarasota-Manatee Chapter of the American Guild of Organists

SEPTEMBER 2015

FROM THE DEAN

An old army buddy of mine expressed a sentiment that is probably shared by many of us organists. We'd just like to practice our art and be paid handsomely. For better or worse, this usually means working for churches, because that is where the organs are. My friend was a brilliant organist with a master of sacred music from Northwestern. We connected a few years after serving our military obligation. He had hung up his organ shoes and was a traveling sales representative for a publishing house, passing through the area. He enjoyed playing my residence tracker, the first time he had played an organ in many years, but he had no desire of returning to church work.

We organists are a deeply spiritual group. Whenever I would play J. S. Bach's E-flat Prelude and St. Anne Fugue on the big Casavant in Detroit's Cathedral of the Most Blessed Sacrament, I could truly feel that this was the old master communing with God. For Bach, the organ was his pulpit. Organs were also the most high-tech gadgets of the 1600s and 1700s. They were often unreliable. In addition to being able to play the organ, an organist was also expected to keep it in repair. So, when Bach had a reliable organ, that freed his time and enabled him to compose the great masterworks that form the backbone of our repertory.

Like many of us, Bach was often at odds with local church and other authorities. He composed the *Orgelbüchlein* while serving time in jail over a pay dispute with the Duke of Weimar. He once compared the playing of a certain bassoonist to the bleating of a nanny goat. When the bassoonist and five others ambushed him, he drew his ceremonial

sword and was severely reprimanded. Bach also made it known that he hated menial chores that he considered beneath his dignity, such as teaching Latin. He was also severely reprimanded for visiting a wine shop during the long sermon of a service that would have typically lasted all day. Because peasants were required to attend church against their will, many churches had hour glasses — which you can still see today — to tell the preacher when his time was up. Of course, the nobility had their own private area that was walled and glassed off from the "great unwashed."

Today, as we organists strive to practice our art, we face many of the same obstacles that have plagued organists throughout the centuries: inferior instruments, singers who can neither read music nor carry a tune, incompetent clergy, unappreciative "peasants," declining attendance, and a host of other things. Yet, we carry on as God has called us. Thanks to our fellow organists in our Guild, we do not have to suffer alone.

Soli Deo gloria. Carl Parks, Dean

UPCOMING CHAPTER EVENTS

Chase Loomer Organ Recital ■

Sunday, October 11, 2015, 4 p.m. at Christ Church, 4030 Manatee Avenue W, Bradenton. Mr. Loomer is a sophomore at Eastman School of Music where he studies organ with David Higgs and harpsichord with Eduardo Bellotti. He won our chapter's competition last March and in July was awarded first place in the AGO/Quimby Southeast Competition for Young Organists. Chase will be featured in the Rising Stars series at the AGO National Convention in Houston next summer.

Chapter-Sponsored Choral Workshop ■

Saturday, November 14, 2015, 9:30 a.m. at First Congregational UCC Church, 1031 S. Euclid Ave., Sarasota. Led by Dr. Joseph Holt, Artistic Director of Gloria Musicae and Artist in Residence of Faith Lutheran Church in Sarasota, this workshop presents an exciting opportunity for you and your choir members. Sing, enjoy and explore four pieces of attractive, usable and versatile choral literature. Dr. Holt will explore choral techniques such as blend, balance, diction and intonation. Contact Nancy at 715.574.1757 for information or to register.

Chapter Board Meeting ■

Tuesday, November 17, 2015, at 4 pm. Redeemer Episcopal Church, 222 South Palm Avenue / Sarasota, FL 34236.

FUTURE CHAPTER EVENTS**David Cherwien Hymn Festival ■**

Friday, January 29, 2016. Pine Shore Presbyterian Church, Sarasota. This is another opportunity for you and your choir members to participate in making glorious music. Details will be forthcoming.

Chapter Dutch Lunch ■

Tuesday, February 23, 2016. Casual get-together for members, spouses, friends and colleagues. Location details will be forthcoming.

ORGAN COMPETITIONS**Young Organist Competition 2016 ■**

Saturday, March 12, 2016. Sponsored by the Greater Columbia AGO Chapter, Columbia, S.C. Open to Grades 8-12. First Prize \$1,000, Second Prize \$500, Third Prize \$300, Hymn Playing Award \$250. Best Bach Performance \$250. For rules and application see "Young Organist Competition 2016" at www.columbiaago.org.

ON THE LIGHTER SIDE**Golden Rules for Choir Singing ■**

As we all start gearing up for the new season, we thought it would good to share the rules for choir

members. You may want to consider adding them to your choir guidelines. Some will laugh, some will cry, but we hope you all enjoy!

- ◆ Everyone should sing the same piece.
- ◆ Take your time turning pages.
- ◆ Do not worry if you do not have perfect pitch – you may find singing less stressful without it!
- ◆ The right note at the wrong time is the wrong note.
- ◆ The wrong note at the right time is still a wrong note.
- ◆ A true interpretation is realized when not one note of the original remains.
- ◆ If you happen to sing a wrong note, give a nasty look to one of your neighbors.
- ◆ If everyone gets lost except you, follow those who get lost.
- ◆ If you are completely lost, stop everyone and start an argument about repeat marks.
- ◆ Strive to achieve the maximum notes per second – that way you at least gain the admiration of the totally incompetent.
- ◆ If a passage is difficult, slow it down. If it is easy, speed it up. Everything will work itself out in the end.
- ◆ Markings for slurs, dynamics, ornaments and breathing should be ignored. They are only there to embellish the score.
- ◆ When everyone else has finished singing, you should not sing any notes you may still have left.

CHAPTER INFORMATION

Website ■ agosm.org

Here you'll find the full chapter calendar of events, as well as other concerts and events of interest planned for the wider Manatee and Sarasota county areas.

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