

Principal Pipings

May 2020, Vol. 75, Issue 10



Dean's Message

Happy May!

I hope you've been able to take some time this last month or two in quarantine to relax and enjoy some needed personal time. Hopefully this will be over soon and we can resume some normal activities!

As there are no May events to advertise, you will find next year's calendar in place of our normal "upcoming events" section. Also please note that the AGO National Convention has been canceled for this summer. You'll find several "guest" articles in this newsletter on a variety of subjects from Bill Webber, Jane Johnson, and Lynn Vera, so I hope you enjoy hearing from your colleagues.

This will be our last newsletter until August, and therefore my last Dean's Letter as my term is complete. Thank you for allowing me to serve you these last two years, and I hope you have had as much fun as I have. It has been a pleasure to bring you new and exciting programs, and to hopefully help you grow professionally and build new friendships.

As I've said the last several newsletters, please let me or one of our incoming officers know if you have anything you'd like to loan to the chapter for our September 75th anniversary event – don't worry, it will be returned!

James

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2020-2021 program year

Please note that all times will be announced when they are finalized.

Sept. 26,
2020

Lexington AGO 75th Anniversary Luncheon and Celebration

Walnut Hill Church, Lexington, KY

Silent Film Gala with the Bluegrass Theatre Organ Society (ticketed event)

Kentucky Theater, Lexington, KY

Oct. 3,
2020

Nov. 6,
2020

Jillian Gardner, organ recital

Christ the King Cathedral, Lexington, KY

Annual Christmas Pipes Member Recital and Fundraiser

Southern Hills UMC, Lexington, KY

Dec. 6,
2020

Feb.
2021

Pedals, Pipes, and Pizza

Date/Location TBD

Marcello Giannini, organ recital, co-sponsored with Christ the King Cathedral and Campbellsville University

Christ the King Cathedral, Lexington, KY

Feb. 5,
2021

March
6, 2021

Choral and Organ Reading Session

First Christian Church, Winchester, KY

Lunch with Elizabeth George, AGOHQ Director of Member Engagement and Chapter Development

Location TBD

April
17,
2021

May
21,
2021

Katie Minion-Sheetz, organ recital

Christ Church Cathedral, Lexington, KY

Chapter Updates

We are sorry to report the passing of long-time chapter member Persis Elwood. Her daughter Holly reports that she was playing the piano up until just a few days before her passing. The chapter has made a donation in her name, and any contributions can be sent to:

Central Music Academy
644 Georgetown Street
Lexington, KY 40508

The Lexington Chapter sends its thanks to Karl Bruhn, who is completing his 6 year term as Great Lakes Regional Councilor. Karl has been a great friend to the Lexington Chapter and has been very supportive of our efforts by making several trips to Lexington during his tenure. Thanks Karl!

Congratulations to our newly elected Executive Committee Officers! The votes were unanimous –

Jane Johnson, Dean

Brian Hunt, Subdean

Anna Pan, Treasurer-Registrar (incumbent)

Grant Holcomb, Secretary

Gabrielle Manion, Member at large 2023

Thank you to our outgoing officers, James Humlong, Dean; Don Seevers, Subdean; and Tina Wagoner, Secretary.

“On the Passing of an AGO Colleague” by Bill Webber

Our longtime treasurer of The Middlesex Chapter of The American Guild of Organists (AGO), Fred Briegs, passed away on April 20. He served as the chapter treasurer and member of our executive board for at least 30 years. He was a kind, gentle soul and will be greatly missed among the organist community of central New Jersey. Fred was the Director of Music and Organist at First Presbyterian Church of Woodbridge, New Jersey for many years.

When I returned to my home state of Kentucky in 2009, I left the Middlesex Chapter where I had served since 1994 on the executive board as secretary, sub-dean, and as a member at large. Fred was the chapter treasurer when I transferred from Florida in 1993, and remained faithful to that post until his passing. I remember his calming and quiet presence at our chapter board meetings like it was yesterday. Our chapter members had developed close friendships over the years, and we really enjoyed spending time together.

It is these kinds of experiences; bonding together for the common cause of promoting the King of Instruments, having chapter outings and sharing meals, developing friendships with our colleagues, and planning meaningful programs that help make each AGO chapter successful and a fellowship for organists worth joining and supporting with our time, our talents, and our presence.

Rest in peace, Fred.

Soli Deo Gloria, Bill Webber, CAGO

BE IT RESOLVED—BECOMING CERTIFIED

Jane Johnson, CAGO, Education Committee Chair

We are several months into the new year, and statistics tell us that by now most folks have abandoned their New Year's Resolutions. How are you doing in this regard? Did you resolve to learn some new repertoire this year? Maybe your resolution was to "improve" your service playing, or to tackle a skill like transposition. But the months are ticking by and you haven't started on any of these self-promises. Heck, maybe you don't even know where to start! Well, AGO has a solution for you. Why not work towards Guild certification? You can do it, and you'll learn so much through the process that will make you a better musician, whether you've been at this profession for 3 years or 30.

Let me encourage you in this endeavor by telling you a bit about why I decided to become certified. I had always looked with a measure of awe and respect at my colleagues who carried those initials, CAGO, AAGO, FAGO, or ChM, beside their names. But it wasn't until I attended one of our AGO meetings and heard Larry Sharp talk about how he attempted and passed the Service Playing Exam that I began to think that maybe this was something I could do too. My main hesitancy stemmed from my fear (ok, let's call it what it was, phobia) about transposition. I could NEVER learn how to do that..... could I?? But I decided to at least learn the repertoire pieces for the Service Playing Exam, and then I'd decide whether to attempt anything further. So I learned the repertoire, and then decided to see if I could learn how to do the other items on the test. Transposition was the hardest for me--I had difficulty transposing one voice at a time, much less four. But colleagues were so helpful, telling me their particular tricks. Eventually I found a process that worked for me. I set up a 15-minutes-a-day schedule to work on transposition and modulation, and slowly I began to get better. While I'll never be a whiz at transpositions and modulations, preparing for the Service Playing Exam and later the Colleague exam gave me the confidence to actually use these skills to improve my service playing.

It's no surprise that I'm now a huge advocate for the Guild's exams, since I know first-hand how becoming certified can enrich your playing both for yourself and for your congregation. There are many resources available from AGO and also from those of us who have taken the exams (there is a listing of your fellow Lexington AGO members who are certified in your chapter yearbook). We can get you started on the road to certification, and cheer you along the way. So, why not take the plunge? You can do it, and we can help!

Next year is our chapter's 75th anniversary. Wouldn't it be great to mark this milestone by having a number of our members become certified? Please contact me and I'll be happy to help get you started on this exciting and rewarding endeavor!

Chapter News

Quinquagenary: Celebrating 50 Years on the Bench

One late spring Sunday fifty years ago a shy and reluctant fifteen-year-old was driven to a Baptist country church by her dad, the K-12 music teacher in a nearby small town in shoreline Connecticut. Despite the teenager's impending sense of doom, it was a beautiful sunny morning; the Connecticut River sparkled and the landscape was alive with blooming trees and plants. At the church the dad coaxed his daughter down the aisle to the organ console where she met some friendly choir members. She climbed on the bench and began to play. It wasn't so scary after all, and the pay was much better than babysitting.

In June I will celebrate my quinquagenary (50th anniversary) as an organist. It's a shock to have reached this milestone, but recent weeks of Social Distancing resulting from the Coronavirus epidemic have given me much time for reflection. Yes, it really has been a lifetime.

I did not deliberately set out on this path; the Holy Spirit and my dad were in cahoots! I had two wonderful organ teachers at St. Ann's Episcopal Church in Old Lyme, CT. After high school I attended Hartt College of Music for one year and then transferred to the University of Connecticut. UConn was far less expensive and turned out to be a blissful experience. There were only five of us in Virginia Herrmann's organ studio. The practice organ in the Music Building was endearingly named "Little Toot" and there were always available times to practice. We organ students also had free access to pipe organs in the surrounding churches off campus. In my Junior year I auditioned for and was awarded the organist position at St. Thomas Aquinas Chapel on campus, immediately next door to St. Mark's Episcopal Church where Mrs. Herrmann played and taught. Another organ student was the daughter of the minister at Storrs Congregational Church on the corner. We climbed up to the bell tower for memorable picnics overlooking the campus in one direction and the rolling green hills of the College of Agriculture in the other. During this time a Brombaugh pipe organ was installed at St. Mark's and we watched and learned so much from the entire fascinating process. We joined the Northeastern Connecticut Chapter of the AGO and I vividly recall a workshop led by Roberta Bitgood, the first woman to serve as national president of the AGO. At St. Thomas I had the luxury of practicing Bach, Mendelssohn and Widor at full volume late at night until the wee hours of the morning. I played three and sometimes four weddings back-to-back every Saturday during the summer months. I also accompanied the Folk Group and attended many fun social events with them: camping, playing tennis, swimming at a nearby lake and having cookouts. After graduating from UConn I kept my organist position while facing the stark reality of economic survival as an adult. I became a computer programmer for The Hartford, moved to Manchester CT and commuted to UConn on the weekends. My life suddenly changed when a newly arrived graduate student climbed up to the choir loft to deliver a compliment on my prelude. A year later I married that guy and moved to Miami, FL. (cont. on page 6)

As they say, the years have flown. My husband's scientific research career took us to Pittsburgh PA, Washington DC, Tampa Bay FL and now Lexington KY. I primarily worked in I.T. jobs but my sideline organist positions were much more exciting and memorable. I was fortunate to accompany world-class soloists from the National Symphony Orchestra and the Washington National Opera; play for special ceremonies at Georgetown University and the *Paroisse Saint Louis de France (Diocese of Paris)*; and accompany the St. Jerome Chorale (Tampa Bay) in a Christmas CD project and a concert tour through Ireland. I became a piano instructor at the John Hopkins magnet school for the Performing Arts in St. Petersburg, FL. At Calvary Episcopal Church in Indian Rocks Beach I developed an eclectic 8-event concert series and directed it for three years. In 2014 I accepted a small organist position at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Lexington KY. Encouraged by this wonderful congregation, I found myself insatiably learning new repertoire in the genre of liturgical jazz. Most recently I joined the board of the Bluegrass Chapter of the American Theatre Organ Society and am gathering new pieces to learn and play at the historic Kentucky Theatre in downtown Lexington. This 50-year journey has taken many unexpected twists and turns!

Funny things I remember: the priest who suddenly called out in The Voice of God during one of my midnight practice sessions at St. Thomas; the groom who decided to go out for a haircut twenty minutes before his wedding; the Catholic church with an active wasp nest in a chandelier right over the organ (the question was not if, but when); the incessant ringing of an office phone in the middle of an AGO certification exam in an organ studio at Duquesne University (I didn't stop); the 3-manual Rogers organ in Miami that overheated during Christmas Eve and Easter Vigil services, making increasingly louder and more frequent electronic popping noises, culminating in a dramatic loud explosion and shutting itself off for the duration; the 3-manual Rogers organ in Washington DC that also overheated during Christmas Eve and Easter Vigil services, making increasingly louder and more frequent popping noises, culminating in an even louder explosion (the acoustics were better) and shutting itself off for the duration; my first Miami wedding on "Caribbean Time" (one hour later than announced) for which I had prepared a 20-minute prelude; cyphers on a tracker organ and frantically transposing music on the fly to play in complimentary keys; a kazoo anthem offering by the senior choir; a long-rehearsed junior choir anthem where during the performance of it they just stood there and didn't sing a single note; weddings with power failures; funerals with interesting music requests; a windy outdoor Blessing of the Animals service played on electronic keyboard where two HUGE dogs became enamored of me; the gentleman who called out "More" after my final postlude of the final service of eight exhausting Holy Week and Easter services; missing two pages in the middle of a big piece on Christmas Eve; playing too loudly; playing too softly; gentle disagreements with the altar guild over floral displays on the organ console and piano, blocking views of the choir and making me sneeze; impromptu singalong renditions of the Hallelujah Chorus; raucous Bell Choir rehearsals; and more, mostly related to choir parties, which my older and wiser self realizes should never be disclosed.

Now officially retired, I am so very grateful for teachers, mentors, fellow students, clergy, choir members, AGO members in seven Chapters, and friends and churchgoers whose paths I've crossed during these 50 years. My life has been richly blessed, and I am thankful.

Lexington AGO friends, have a safe and healthy summer! I can't wait to see you again in person at our exciting 75th anniversary events in the Fall!

Lynn Vera, CAGO



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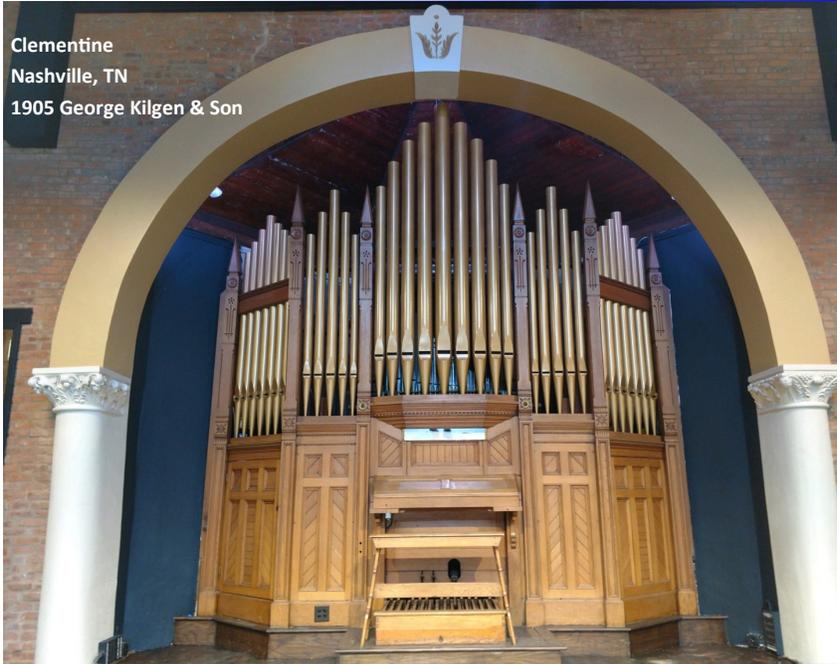


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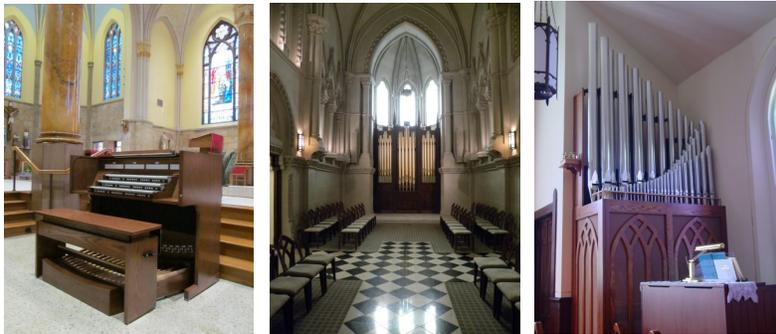
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4:00pm Evensong with Cathedral Choirs

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February 16

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January 26

Friday, December 6

7:30pm George Frideric Handel's *Messiah*
with the Cathedral Choir

For ticket reservations visit
www.ccclex.org/messiah



Sunday, December 15

7:00pm A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols
with the Cathedral Choir

Saturday, December 21

Noon *A Ceremony of Carols* by Benjamin Britten
Elaine Cook, harp, and the Cathedral Girls Choir



Palm Sunday, April 5

4:00pm Gabriel Fauré's *Requiem*
with the Choir of Men and Boys



Please visit www.ccclex.org to view the complete list of events.



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