

American Guild of Organists Newsletter

Utah Valley Chapter #928
2007-2008

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Dean's Message

December is here already! Good grief, how time flies. When I was a little girl, I thought Christmas would never come. Now, that time passes quickly, both on the calendar and by the lines on my face, it feels like the year only lasts four months. It never ceases to amaze me.

I love snow. Lots and lots of snow. I'm not from here, so the novelty hasn't worn off yet. I like the way it feels on my face, and the crunch of it under my shoes. Yes, I hate shoveling it, just like the rest of you, and it's horrible on the streets and freeways, but I love the blissful cleanliness, white against a background of dismal grey. Snow covers all it touches with this blanket of purity and a veil of quiet that no other season brings. For me, the snow is so representative of the divine nature of Christmas.

As latter day Saints, we know that Christ was actually born during spring, wild flowers blooming, lambs being born in the fields amongst the sheep, shepherds keeping careful watch over them during the night as well as the day. But as we celebrate Christmas with the rest of the world, during our winter season, with everything covered in white, doesn't make you think of the gift that was given to us long ago? The birth of a special baby, to take away the sins of the world, to cover us all with the blanket of the atonement, soft, white, peaceful, clean. Nothing else can compare, can it? Unless you experience the blissful nature of its effects, the atonement might not mean much. Snow is a little like that too. Try to describe snow to someone from Syria, they can't fathom what it would be like. You have to experience it to truly know.

A few years ago, I was sitting in my car, waiting for a friend of mine to come out of a shop. It was snowing lightly. We had been talking about Christmas, and how we could get back to celebrating it the way it was meant to be celebrated. Neither one of us could figure out how to bring our families back to the simple celebration of such a blessed event. I was sitting, pondering that, watching the snow fall. I looked up at the sky, and a single snowflake hit the windshield, and immediately melted into the shape of a perfect 5 pointed star. I'll never forget that moment. I sat there in amazement. There it was, my Christmas star, tiny, perfect, sitting above me on the windshield. There was no noise around me, just the quiet, whiteness of the snow falling, and this one perfect snowflake that said it all. Simple. Maybe stupid. Momentous.

Perhaps this year we can focus our attentions on the simpler meanings of Christmas. Look around you. Find the true meaning behind the holiday. Take a day off from thinking about shopping, presents, meals, family traditions, and find the deeper meaning for yourself. Look inward. When the snow finally does fall, look for your perfect snowflake, your star, and the true meaning for YOU.

May the Lord bless and keep each and every one of you this Christmas season. Many of us are suffering from some pretty hard life experiences right now. The holidays seem to magnify what already seems like the burdens of Job. I find myself frequently asking my husband, wouldn't now be a good time for the Lord to come? But I know, He will come in his own good time. But for now, each of us has to find Him in our heart, and find peace, alone, on our knees. That's how it works, but it does work, all in His good time.

Merry Christmas to all of you. Stay safe, keep warm, hold one another a little tighter, and remember, you are loved.

Affectionately,

Nancy Christensen, Dean

Chapter Events

December 16th, 7 PM: Due to lack of participants, the AGO Christmas recital for the Utah State Hospital has been canceled.

December 23rd, 7:30: Community Christmas Choir Concert directed by Dr. Douglas Bush in the Provo Central Stake Center. This is a nearly 30 year tradition and always sets the real spirit for the celebration of Christmas.

January 27, 7:30: Hymn Sing with David Chamberlain in the American Fork Tabernacle. Be sure to invite members of your ward and stake who could use inspiration on good hymn singing and accompaniment.

February: French Toccata and more. This will be an evening of French music.

March (in the process of re-planning)

April: Super Saturday

May 20th 7:30: Frank Ashdown will give a presentation on his compositions at the Provo Tabernacle. He will be assisted by Don Cook, David Chamberlain, and James Drake.

Christmas Oratorio BWV 248

(Weihnachtsoratorium)

by J.S. Bach

Submitted by Meg Griffith

This work of immense variety of musical forms and the greatest complexity in harmony and part-writing, must be regarded as the most fully-developed examples of their form in Bach's entire oeuvre. This work was performed in 1734-1735 over a period of 12 days in Leipzig. It spanned this Season of Rejoicing from Dec. 25, the birth of Christ to Jan. 6, the Feast of the Epiphany, the coming of the 3 wise kings. The 6 parts were performed in 2 different churches in Leipzig. All but Parts III and V were in one church. The other two were performed at the Nikolaikirche. The work followed the Buxtehude pattern with respect to the presentation of a unified multisectional

work over several weeks. It starts with drums, then trumpets join in, leading to a festive beginning with the choir. Part II begins with a sinfonia by a quartet of oboes, then joined by strings and flutes. Bach surpasses his model composers with his quality and originality of his orchestral textures.

The opening choruses and arias are parodies. The music already existed and furnished with new text. Numbers from BWV 213 and 214 are models for the arias of Parts I and V. BWV 215 is a possible model for aria no. 51. The work is in the following keys: D-G-D-F-A-D. The 3 parts in D major all include trumpets. No brass instruments are heard in Parts II and V. Part IV in F has the appearance of the horns and nowhere else. Bach rounded off the whole work into unity by making the first chorale of Part I recur at the close of Part VI.

Even with the uses of parody, according to Spitta, Bach restored what was considered secular music to their native home when he applied them to church uses. Bach had the artistic responsibility to avoid musical transfers for mere convenience. They were made with a perfect feeling that they were in the right place till they were set for church use. In the end, only a new piece of music would do. Part VI is mostly from a lost church cantata. New recitatives, turba choruses and chorales were added. The alto aria is the most inward and deeply-felt piece in the entire work. "Spitta says, "No other work by Bach contains a richer collection of charming and easily comprehended melodies than the Christmas Oratorio." -

From class notes by Dr. Doug Bush, CD program notes by Werner Breig and biographies on J.S. Bach by Philipp Spitta, Christoph Wolff and Malcom Boyd

Quote of the Month

Philipp Spitta said of the great *Magnificat* written for Christmas Day 1723, "It has rightly been reckoned one of highest inspirations of his genius."

PIPES IN THE DESERT -- WORKSHOPS

The AGO Region IX Mid-Winter Conclave (Pipes in the Desert) will be held in nice, warm Tucson, Arizona, January 20–24, 2008. In addition to a rich array of solo and choral concerts, a variety of workshops will be offered. There are workshops on hymn-singing and playing; Bach performance practice at the organ; choral conducting; handbells in worship; Mexican organ culture; organ and instruments; presentation of the work in progress on the historic organ at St. John the Divine in New York City; organ music of Brahms; organ master class; accompaniment styles for leading congregational singing; children's choir techniques; new service music for the organ; and others.

Two composers with anniversaries in 2008 will be featured in the workshops. Johannes Brahms (175th anniversary of his birth), will be presented in a workshop by Dr. John Brobeck, focusing on Brahms's organ music. Some of the organ music of Olivier Messiaen (100th anniversary of his birth), will be heard at the master class with Paul Jacobs.

Did you know that Paul Jacobs has performed all 9 hours of Messiaen's complete organ works?

Please visit the conclave web site at www.agoixaz.com and read all about it, then print the registration form and send it in! Discounted hotel rates are available until December 20.

PIPES IN THE DESERT



THE NEXT MID-WINTER CONCLAVE

EXPERIENCE ORGAN AND
CHORAL MUSIC IN THE
BEAUTIFUL SONORAN DESERT

EXPLORE WAYS TO
RE-ENERGIZE CHURCH MUSIC

ENJOY MUSIC AND HOSPITALITY
WITH A SOUTHWESTERN FLAIR

FOR ADDITIONAL INFO
VISIT: WWW.AGOIXAZ.COM

TUCSON, ARIZONA JANUARY 20-24 2008

AGO PIPE ORGAN ENCOUNTERS WITH THE KING OF INSTRUMENTS PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR EDUCATION AND FELLOWSHIP

Nine Summer 2008 Educational Programs for Teenagers and Adults Announced by the AGO

NEW YORK CITY—The American Guild of Organists (AGO) is proud to announce six PIPE ORGAN ENCOUNTERS (POEs) and one POE (Advanced) for students aged 13–18; and two POE+ programs for adults in 2008. Complete contact information for each summer program can be found in The American Organist Magazine and online at <www.agohq.org>.

POEs for Teenagers

June 8–14	Waco, Tex.
June 15–20	Salt Lake City, Utah
July 6–11	Holland, Mich.
July 13–18	Charlotte, N.C.
July 20–26	Worcester, Mass.
July 27–31	Seattle, Wash.

POE (Advanced)

July 6–11	Lincoln, Neb.
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POE+ for Adults

May 18–23	Fort Collins, Colo.
June 15–20	Pittsburgh, Pa.

PIPE ORGAN ENCOUNTERS introduce young people to the pipe organ through instruction in organ playing, repertoire, history, design, and construction. These regional summer organ music institutes for teenage students provide private and group instruction in service playing and solo repertoire, opportunities to learn about the musical heritage of various religious denominations, and a chance for young musicians to meet others with similar interests. Basic keyboard proficiency is required, although previous organ study is not necessary. The POE (Advanced) is designed for teenagers who have already attended a POE, or who are already receiving private instruction. Scholarship assistance is available.

The POE+ is a summer program filled with practical information and instruction for adult pianists and other musicians interested in improving their service-playing skills. Participants will be introduced to basic organ skills through private instruction and classes. The week-long experience will lead to greater confidence and competence at the organ.

POE and POE+ site locations are selected by the AGO Committee on the New Organist and approved by the AGO National Council after application by AGO host chapters. The deadline for applications to host 2009 POE and POE+ programs is March 15, 2008. Applications are available from AGO National Headquarters. Partial program funding is provided to AGO host chapters.

As you probably noticed, Salt Lake City is on the list of POEs for Teenagers. Be sure to let Ingrid Hersman (Dean of the Salt Lake Chapter) know if you can help out in anyway. Her e-mail address is: hersman@sisna.com

FREDERICK SWANN
TO BE HONORED AT AGO RECITAL
AND
GALA BENEFIT RECEPTION IN
LOS ANGELES
Celebration to Benefit the AGO Endowment
Fund

The American Guild of Organists (AGO) will sponsor a Recital and Gala Benefit Reception honoring organist FREDERICK SWANN on Sunday, April 13, 2008, at 4 p.m., at the First Congregational Church of Los Angeles. Founded in 1867, First Congregational Church is the oldest protestant church in Los Angeles. The Recital will feature Mr. Swann performing on the church's Great Organ, which is celebrated as one of the largest, most complete church organs in the world. The Gala Benefit Reception will follow. The gala is sponsored by the AGO National Council and its Development Committee, Bruce P. Bengtson, aago, director. All proceeds will go to the AGO Endowment

Fund in Fred Swann's honor.

For Recital only, \$20 (by April 11) \$25 (at the door)

Contact: 213-385-1345 or e-mail
<musicadministrator@fccla.org>

For Recital with Gala Benefit Reception, \$100 (\$75 tax deductible, space is limited)
To advertise in the souvenir program book
To make a tax-deductible contribution in honor of Mr. Swann

Contact: F. Anthony Thurman by March 14:
212-870-2311 ext. 4308; e-mail
<gala@agohq.org> or online
<www.agohq.org>

FREDERICK SWANN is president of the American Guild of Organists, organist emeritus of the Crystal Cathedral and of the First Congregational Church of Los Angeles, and organ artist-in-residence at St. Margaret's Episcopal Church in Palm Desert, Calif. In addition to his prominent church positions, [Riverside Church, New York City (1957–1982), Crystal Cathedral (1982–1998) and First Congregational Church of Los Angeles (1998–2001)], he was for ten years chairman of the organ department at the Manhattan School of Music and served on the faculties of the School of Sacred Music at Union Theological Seminary and Teacher's College of Columbia University.

In addition to solo recitals in churches, cathedrals, and concert halls throughout North America and many foreign countries, Mr. Swann performs frequently with symphony orchestras and choral groups. His numerous published works and recordings, and his wide experience as an organ consultant have added to his visibility in the organ and choral worlds. Although in semi-retirement since 2001, Mr. Swann remains active in all aspects of his long and illustrious career. Among recent honors were his election in 2002 as Performer of the Year by the New York City Chapter of the American Guild of Organists; in the fall of 2004 he was selected to play the Inaugural Recital on the spectacular new organ in the Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles.

The AGO's aggressive initiative for education and outreach prompted the formation of the AGO ENDOWMENT FUND in 1994. The purpose of this fund is to expand programs for leadership development among AGO members; educate new organists; and cultivate new audiences for organ and choral music. Tax-deductible contributions to the Endowment Fund are invested in perpetuity to produce continuing support for essential Guild educational programs and projects.

AGO Elections Coming Up

This AGO year (2007 - 2008) marks the last year that the current officers will hold their positions. Although all newly nominated/elected officers will not take their respective positions until June, 2008, as a Guild we need to consider new people for all positions. Nominations will take place in December and January for voting at the end of January. The National offices of the American Guild of Organists must be notified of the changes at that time, even though their service will not begin until after our closing social in May.

If you would be willing to serve in any of the available positions, please contact Nancy Christensen, Dean.

We are a small Chapter and all of your willing service is deeply appreciated. The positions we are looking for are Dean; Sub-Dean; Secretary; Newsletter Editor; Treasurer/Registrar; Website Editor/Historian; Photographer; Publicity and Public Relations; Education Coordinator; and Member at Large.

Traditionally, because we are a small Chapter, each individual serves for a period of two years. However, the new directive from the National Office is that members may serve for a period of only one year, if they so choose.

Please help us to maintain our Chapter through unselfish and faithful service. All of us have busy lives, our callings in Church, burdens of school, work, family, and all else we have to deal with. However, in consideration of all of that and the large chunks of time we are investing, would each and every one take a moment to consider sharing a small corner of your time with your local AGO Chapter? It will be a rewarding and satisfying experience, and will keep our little chapter moving on.