



THE NEW YORK CITY CHAPTER
of the
American Guild of Organists

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John Bishop, editor

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Dean's Message

Dear Colleagues,

Autumn in New York, the song tells us, seems so inviting. It's good to live it again! This autumn begins my final year on the board; several of my fellow board members also conclude their terms at this time. Work has already begun on the nominating process, and I hope that anyone who is at all interested in serving the chapter will take advantage of the upcoming opportunities to make that desire known.



It has been such a privilege for me to serve the chapter in several capacities over the past ten years, and I can only hope that all of our efforts together have advanced the cause of the organ and organ music, the stated aim of the AGO throughout our land, as much as possible. I have tried my best, and where that was sufficient, I am gladdened. In the areas where I fell short, I ask your forgiveness.

In every autumn, the NYC AGO chapter programs begin anew. Our Sub-Dean James Kennerley and the program committee have been preparing the slate of events, with wonderful education, performance, and social opportunities throughout this program year. May it be a good one for us all.

Yours truly,

David Enlow
Dean

2017 International Performer of the Award winner

We are delighted to announce that **James David Christie** has been chosen by the membership to be the **winner of the 2017 International Performer of the Year Award**. We had a superb slate of finalists and the race was extremely close. It also saw the highest level of participation from the Chapter, which is always encouraging. Jim will be the twenty-first winner of the coveted award, which was created in 1978 to recognize excellence in organ performance and to increase public awareness of the organ and its performers. The award is considered by many to be the highest honor given to organists by a professional musicians' guild in the United States.

Jim is well known to many of us in the AGO and the national and international organ scenes. He has performed, literally, around the world with symphony orchestras and

period instrument ensembles as well as in solo recitals. He was the 1979 First Prize winner of the Bruges (Belgium) International Organ Competition and was the first American to win First Prize in this prestigious competition as well as the first person in the competition's eighteen-year history to win both the First Prize and the Prize of the Audience.

Dr. Christie was awarded an honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degree from the New England School of Law for his outstanding contributions to the musical life of Boston and the New England Conservatory honored him with their Outstanding Alumni Award. He has served on international organ competition juries in Paris, St. Omer-Wasquehal, Chartres, Biarritz, Béthune, St. Albans, Amsterdam, Lübeck, Bordeaux, Dublin, Worcester, Calgary, Montréal, Columbus, Dallas, Leipzig, Erfurt, Weimar, Merseburg, Speyer, Tokyo, Moscow, Kaliningrad, Astana, Lausanne, Pistoia, Boston, Bruges and several others.

He holds positions as Chair and Professor of Organ at the Oberlin College Conservatory of Music, Oberlin, OH, Distinguished Artist-in-Residence at the College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, MA, and serves as College Organist at Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA. He has previously held positions at Boston Conservatory, Harvard University, M.I.T. and Boston University.

Many thanks to Chapter auditors Chelsea Chen and Steven Lawson for dutifully checking the results of the vote, which were submitted both electronically and in paper form.

With our best wishes,

The International Performer of the Year Award Committee

James Kennerley, chair

Jared Lamenzo

Renée Louprette

Stephen Tharp



James David Christie, winner of the 2017 International Performer of the Year Award

Program News

Work is now well underway to finalize the complete season of events for 2017-18. It's going to be a great one!

Our first event of the season will feature Chapter competition winner **Alessandro Pittorino in recital**, followed by a champagne reception.

Early in 2018 we will have our **Improvisation Festival featuring David Briggs**, Artist in Residence at the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine.



The **Presidents' Day Conference** is the Chapter's landmark event. This year, we will be celebrating the installation of the magnificent relocated/enlarged Noack Opus 111 from its original home in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts to historic Saint Paul's Chapel in downtown Manhattan. Benjamin Sheen, Associate Organist at Saint Thomas Church, will start the

festivities with a recital on the Taylor and Boody instrument on Sunday, February 18 at 5:15 PM. On Monday, February 19 we will spend the day with the Grammy Award-winning Trinity Choir, Trinity Baroque Orchestra, who, together with Jonathan Ambrosino, Avi Stein, Peter Sykes, Julian Wachner and others will lead us in a day of celebrating the old and the new, with thrilling performances and unique sightseeing possibilities.

Following the announcement of James David Christie as winner of the 2017 International Performer of the Year Award, we are hoping that the Chapter will present him in concert in the spring. Stay tuned for more details!

In addition to these fabulous events the Chapter will be holding various **educational activities** for children, adults, amateurs, and professionals. The Chapter's **Organ Day for Pianists** will be held on Saturday April 7 at the Church of the Transfiguration and Marble Collegiate Church (Claudia Dumschat and Ken Dake, hosts). These occasions are great for introducing keyboardists to the thrills (and challenges!) of playing the organ, and we will have a host of generous and welcoming teachers.

The season will be rounded out in June with a splendid **cocktail reception and dinner** at Saint Thomas Church, preceded by a **duet recital by Daniel Hyde and Benjamin Sheen**.

With my very best wishes, on behalf of the Program Committee and the IPYA Committee,



James Kennerley
Sub-Dean & Chair of the Program Committee

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Quote of the Month

"Music can name the unnameable and communicate the unknowable."

- Leonard Bernstein



David Enlow, FAGO
Juilliard Faculty
Organ Lessons, Coaching,
AGO Exam Preparation

Won't you be my neighbor?

In his 1949 essay, *Here is New York*, E. B. White described the phenomenon of separate neighborhoods making up the city, in which a person or family lives within a three or four block radius that contains pretty much everything they need. More than 8,500,000 people from scores of countries live in the city's 304 square miles, bustling together on the roads, buses, and subways, offering their culture as part of a rich and vibrant fabric.

Since moving here four years ago, Wendy and I have been thrilled by the quality and variety of artistic experiences available, and delighted to meet so many interesting new people. But there's another side to life here. When things get busy in New York, they really get busy. It only takes ten or fifteen minutes of delay for the subways to jam up so busy stations like Grand Central Terminal or Times Square are packed with something like the population of New Orleans. An accident or breakdown on FDR Drive is like damming a river – the traffic backs up in the cross-town streets, and things grind to a halt.



Before we moved to the city, I frequently stayed in hotels during Organ Clearing House projects, and learned to avoid certain times of the year, like Fashion Week, and the General Assembly of the United Nations. The hotel that usually charges \$200 a night skyrockets to \$800, and I can attest that the hotel room that isn't worth \$200 surely isn't worth \$800!

Lurking on Facebook the other day, I came across a post by NYC AGO Chapter Member Patrick Kreeger, Associate Organist at Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church:

When you work across the street from Trump tower, DJT is in town, and there are police blockades everywhere, blocking access for folks to get to their jobs...

I tried bargaining with the cop:

"But officer, if I can't get to Fifth Ave Pres, how am I to learn Parry's Blest Pair of Sirens?"

It won't be learned by osmosis. I just need to get to the organ bench, please and thank you."

I think Patrick's strategy was wrong – he should have invoked *I was glad*. The cops are sick of sirens. Patrick and I spoke on the phone yesterday, and I had a chance to hear a lot about life in the neighborhood around that church.

The four or five block radius around Trump Tower has become the site of scores of protests, and Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church is one block south on the other side of the street. Patrick shared that since Mr. Trump was elected, the protests are not quite daily, but close. There's no predicting when police barricades will be up to close 55th, 56th, and 57th Streets. The Secret Service is all over the place, and both vehicle and pedestrian traffic is seriously inhibited.

Shortly after the election, it was rumored that Trump would visit the church, and the Secret Service swarmed the place. The visit never happened, but lots of time and resources were invested in the possibility. Coincidentally, *The New York Times* is reporting these days that the Secret Service is running out of money because it's so complicated to protect the Trump family.

Stop and think how all this confusion can affect the life of a church where diversity is emphasized every week. For those parishioners, these challenging times extend to the challenge of simply getting to church on Sunday, or parrying your way through a crowd to learn an anthem accompaniment. Stay cool, Patrick, and play up a storm. Thanks for you post.

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Joke of the Month

The pastor stood before the congregation and said, "I have good news, and I have bad news. The good news is, we have all the money we need to complete our building program. The bad news is, it's still out there in your pockets."

From the Editor

Summer

The curmudgeonly satirist, H. L. Mencken, once said, "Outdoors is the place you pass through between the hotel lobby and the taxi."

We're all thinking about the end of summer and the beginning of the "New Year." We call it the Academic Year, the Program Year, the School Year, or to paraphrase Mencken, the time between summers. Some of you have completed concert tours, some have taken lifetime "bucket list" trips, and some have taken ambitious advantage of extra practice time available and learned some big new pieces.



Two smashing new organs have been installed this summer within a couple of hours of New York City, by Schoenstein (Grace Episcopal Church in Hartford), and Richards, Fowkes, & Co. (Calvary Episcopal Church, Stonington, CT). And, of course, the installation of the huge new organ by Dobson Organ Company at St. Thomas' Church on Fifth Avenue has progressed through the summer. The spectacular new organ case on the south wall of the Choir has just been unveiled as scaffolding was removed this week. I urge my colleagues to take any opportunity to go hear these wonderful new organs.

Mine has been an unusual summer as I was placed on a Grand Jury Panel (and named foreman) in the Supreme Court of New York City. It's a panel of 23 peers that meets for twenty consecutive weekdays, with the responsibility of voting indictments for felonies. Each day, Assistant District Attorneys present two or three cases to us, calling witnesses, and instructing us on the law. It's an intimate look into the workings of a big city involving possession and use of weapons, drug dealing, surveillance, under-cover operations, and serious family altercations. It's a sobering lesson about people making terrible choices that cause others immense pain.

While we often hear stories about abusive police officers, most are compassionate and committed to taking care of citizens. Their work can be tedious (it's interesting to see how much time police officers spend waiting to testify before a Grand Jury, or filling out

paperwork), and wildly dangerous. I've had conversations with colleagues about how we as organists sometimes see families at their worst during weddings and funerals. Police officers really see families at their worst.

This experience has taught me a lot about the work we share as organists, organbuilders and technicians, and church musicians. We're fortunate that our work is about bringing beauty into people's lives. It's a both a privilege and a responsibility. Not everyone in your congregation is equipped to hear and appreciate music the way you do. Don't let that make it seem less important. The worst listener may be the one who needs it most.

And, don't forget, Christmas Eve is just 115 days away!

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