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Don't miss events presented by your friends and colleagues.
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and attend some concerts!

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Dean's Message

Fall is often seen as a natural time for new beginnings. That’s thanks in part to the dominance of the academic calendar that derives its timing from the post-harvest season. For those who celebrate Judaism, September sees the celebration of Rosh Hashanah—the New Year—celebrated with liturgies that several of us will have been involved with as organists, singers, and congregants.

Now is the perfect time to grow our Chapter. We have seen a steady increase in membership over the past few years which is most encouraging considering the downward trend that many chapters are experiencing. That’s due in part to some exciting programming, creative and engaging communication, clear and effective leadership, and an overall easier process of joining the Guild via the ONCARD online registration system. There are many reasons to join the guild, and I invite you to read this excellent article by David Vogels, published in The American Organist in 2015, for a detailed discussion of the benefits of AGO membership.

Here are my top five reasons:

1. **Stronger together!** It’s true, more members mean more money to be spent on programs, which enables us to present bigger and better performances, conferences, masterclasses, and outreach events. It’s also energizing and restorative to spend time with friends and colleagues who have similar interests.

2. **The NYC Chapter is awesome!** Once the mothership of the AGO, the NYC Chapter draws on the multitude of excellent organs, musicians, conservatories, and our second-to-none location. Our events allow you to enjoy experiences not available to tourists.

3. **A lifetime of learning!** Whether you’re a music lover, amateur organist, or professional music director, there’s so much to inspire us on to greater heights, whether that’s through hearing an amazing performance, taking
place in a masterclass, or discussing repertoire ideas with a colleague. And the world-class certification programs of the AGO are a sure-fire way to progress your skills and, ultimately, your career.

4. **Stay in touch!** The NYC Chapter operates an extensive sub list. With hundreds of houses of worship in the NYC area, some of our members make thousands of dollars a year due to their contact information being made available.

5. **It makes financial sense!** The market value of our program events alone is far higher than the cost of membership. That’s not to mention the other benefits of being a member, such as a subscription to The American Organist, discounts offered through the AGO website, and access to the AGO’s job placement services.

Do you know someone who would like to be a part of the AGO? Why not bring them to a concert, masterclass, or social gathering and show them what we’re about. Or just forward them this message with a personal note. And, as always, please let us know your thoughts, your reasons for joining (or leaving!) the Guild, and what we can do for you.

With my best wishes,

James Kennerley, Dean
Program News

Many thanks to those who came to our opening event at the Basilica on September 13th; we had a great crowd! Congratulations to Stephen Pinel for his insightful lecture, to Raymond Nagem for his creative and brilliantly-executed program, and of course to Jared Lamenzo for conceiving-of and hosting the evening. Jared has been an indefatigable champion of the Erben Organ in his ten years at Old St. Patrick's.

Soon upon us will be our second event on Thursday, October 18: At a Solemn Musick, the Miller-Scott Organ in concert at Saint Thomas Church at 7:30 PM. Director of Music Daniel Hyde conducts the Saint Thomas Choir of Men and Boys with Orchestra of Saint Luke's in a concert featuring Saint Thomas's
Associate Organist **Benjamin Sheen.** More information about the concert’s repertoire can be found [here](#).

Standard Admission tickets are free for NYCAGO Chapter members, but must be reserved in advance by calling (212.664.9360) or [emailing](#) the concert office. **Tickets are going quickly, so please reserve yours soon to ensure a seat!**

[Directions to Saint Thomas.](#)

The **AGO Certification Preparation Workshop** for those preparing to take AGO diploma certifications will be on **Saturday, November 17 from 4:00-6:00 PM** at **Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church.** [David Enlow](#), [Andrew Henderson](#), and [James Kennerley](#) will lead workshops and give coachings. Participation in this educational workshop is free, but you must register in advance [here](#). The event is open to all those of the Chapter who are considering taking an exam and for those who are confirmed to do so. [Directions to MAPC.](#)

Mark your calendars for the **2019 Presidents’ Day Conference: On the Avenue** on **Monday, February 18**, with lectures, tours, and performances at **Saint Thomas Church** and **Saint Patrick’s Cathedral** on Fifth Avenue. More details soon to follow!

Sincerely,

[James D. Wetzel, Sub Dean](#)
Quote of the Month

"No matter how corrupt, greedy, and heartless our government, our corporations, our media, and our religious and charitable institutions may become, the music will still be wonderful."
-Kurt Vonnegut

Won't you be my neighbor?
Rodman Wanamaker (1863-1928)

Wendy and I live at the corner of Broadway and 9th, kitty-corner across from what was built as the "Annex" to the Wanamaker Store that occupied the block between 9th and 10th Streets, and between Broadway and Fourth Avenue. The building that now occupies that block was home to Leon Klinghoffer who
was murdered during a terrorist attack aboard the cruise ship *Achille Lauro* in 1985. The Annex still stands as 700 Broadway, home to the New York offices of Google and Facebook. There was an opulent bridge across East 9th Street connecting the two buildings above the block that is now known as "Wanamaker Place."

Rodman Wanamaker inherited the department store empire founded by his father, John. He had residences in Philadelphia, Atlantic City, and Palm Beach (which was sold to Joseph and Rose Kennedy following his death and later served as JFK's "Winter White House"), and at 12 Washington Square in Greenwich Village, just four blocks from the store, where Farley the Goldendoodle romps in the dog run. The photo shows Fifth Avenue looking north through the Washington Square Arch, with Rodman Wanamaker's front door to the right of the arch.

When in school, Rodman was a member and business manager of the Yale Glee Club. Later, he was central to the founding of the Professional Golfer's Association, and donated the twenty-seven pound silver trophy for the PGA Championship. He sponsored research and photographic expeditions to chronicle the lives of Native Americans who he understood to be a vanishing race, and he sponsored many record-breaking pioneering aviation events.

Following his father's example, he was a prolific patron of the arts, especially the liturgical arts, and he continued the vast collection of stringed instruments by Stradivari and Guarneri that were used in orchestral performances at the stores in Philadelphia and New York, and at the Whitehouse. Under his leadership, Marcel Dupré, Enrico Bossi, Louis Vierne, and Nadia Boulanger presented concerts in both stores.

On January 3, 1922, *The New York Times* published a brief article that stated, "Rodman Wanamaker is ill in his new home at 12 Washington Square, having been overcome by smoke from a fire that caused about $25,000 in damage at his other home at 69 Washington Place. He was so helpless from the effects of the smoke that he had to be carried to the street by his butler, Ernest Schmidt."
Rodman Wanamaker died of kidney disease on March 9, 1928 in his home in Atlantic City, New Jersey, and was interred in the family mausoleum in the churchyard of St. James the Less in Philadelphia, where he had donated the ornate bell tower. The Wanamaker retail empire was the largest in the world to be controlled by a single man. Following his death, a Board of Trustees took control of the stores with a mandate to care for the surviving members of the family.

When we head home from the dog run, on the exact route between Rodman's house and the Wanamaker store, Farley wins countless passing smiles as he proudly carries his tennis ball up the street. I wonder how many times Mr. Wanamaker walked the same streets, and I wonder what he would think of the variety of tattoos and hair colors of today's Greenwich Village.

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**Joke of the Month**

A Cappella: When the choir sings without accompaniment and the organ goes sharp.

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From the Editor

New audiences.
Some decades ago, the venerable and beloved organ historian, Barbara Owen, said to me, "We have to get the organ out of the church." I guess I was young and stupid, but I didn't understand what she meant. What would the organ be without the church? Wasn't Bach a church musician? Buxtehude, Widor, Franck? Take away all the organs that have been paid for by churches over the centuries and you'd have nothing left. There could never have been instruments like those in Royal Festival Hall, the Meyerson Symphony Center, or Disney Hall, without the vast heritage of huge church organs across the world. You know what, Barbara? You're nuts.

Fast forward thirty years. Who knew that churches would be closing by the score, even by the hundreds across the United States and Europe. When Alan Laufman was director of the Organ Clearing House, there was a two-page mimeographed list of available organs, and all the photos fit into a couple huge three-ring binders. Now we have more than four-hundred-fifty organs listing, and gigabytes of photos and stoplists, with new listings arriving at the rate of up to ten each week.

Perhaps it's harder than ever to be sure that there will be human civilization a century from now, but if there is, will the pipe organ be part of it? Increasingly, I believe that depends on reaching new audiences of people who would never be caught dead in church. Or, as a colleague once quipped, those who would only be caught dead in church.

On Wednesday evening, September 26, music lovers in Portland, Maine had an opportunity to learn what that might be like. Jean-Wily Kunz (Organist for the Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal and professor of organ at the Conservatoire de Musique de Montréal) was joined by bassist Frédéric Alarie, drummer Camil Bélisle, trombonist Hélène Lemay, and clarinetist/saxophonist André Moisan in a program entitled "Impressions" in Merrill Auditorium of City
Hall. *The Kotzschmar Organ*, that venerable hundred-rank Austin donned a proverbial beret, and let loose in a brilliant, sophisticated, improvisational evening that included new music, jazz standards, and a lengthy set of variations on "A Theme of Paganini" that made Franz Liszt look like a beginner.

In his program notes, Jean-Wily Kunz wrote, "The organ is often associated with the church, with an austere and codified musical repertoire, and with an audience from another era. Over the course of centuries, from the Middle Ages to the present, it has sometimes been a simple bystander in the history of music, but at others a key agent developing musical style. Now, in today's era of cultural convergence and artistic crossbreeding, it embarks on a musical journey in search of original repertoire."

I was fascinated that while this group of virtuosi generated a tremendous but tasteful volume of (amplified) sound, we never heard "full organ." The opening of the "Paganini Thing" sported a big chorus including powerful reeds as Kunz introduced the ubiquitous theme as a lengthy pedal solo, but for the rest of the evening, in his own words, the organ became "a versatile and unifying instrument, capable of unexpected sonorities. Its rich timbres provide an ideally textured background for improvisations on the clarinet, saxophone, and trombone. With its large range it can rival the double bass in the low registers, and join with the percussion to complete the rhythm section of this extraordinary quintet."

I don't know if Barbara Owen had anything like this in mind when she startled me with her statement, but I do know, informed by a lifetime of watching and listening, that she was on to something. I am not for a moment suggesting that she was literally correct. The pipe organ will always need the church, and the church will always need the pipe organ. But we will all benefit by our own generosity as we open the big red front doors and teach our beloved instrument to speak to the masses.

What's your next new idea?

Visit our amazing website!