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Don't miss events presented by your friends and colleagues. Visit the [Concert Calendar](https://www.nycago.org/concerts) of the NYC Chapter, and attend some concerts!

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How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!
Here will we sit and let the sounds of music
Creep in our ears: soft stillness and the night
Become the touches of sweet harmony.

Shakespeare, The Merchant of Venice, Act V, Scene 1

Now is the time when our work as organists and church musicians is the most present in the minds (and ears) of audiences and congregations alike. In church, music takes on a heightened role in the form of Christmas pageants, carol services, and concerts galore at an intense pace that many of us won’t have experienced since Holy Week and Easter. For some of us it is a favorite time of year. For others, it can be a source of stress and angst.

Last year I gave my 50th performance of Handel’s Messiah. It is a masterpiece, of course, and I feel privileged to have had cause to conduct, play, sing, and record it commercially so many times over the years. But I must admit that there have been occasions (more often-than-not during the long da capo arias!) when I have questioned the work’s effectiveness or become indifferent to the splendid choruses with the blazing trumpets and the singers ringing out. At a concert a few years ago, the conductor asked all those present who had never been to a performance of Messiah to stand. Scores of people rose to their feet, which served as a powerful reminder to the orchestra and singers that our music making was about to create a “first” for those individuals. Likewise, while we may be tempted to consider this season as a time of repetition and regurgitation, always remember that there will be many for whom your music will be novel and transformative.

Shakespeare reminds us of the power of music, and it is that power that I encourage us all to remember this holiday season. In the first performance of those words as set to music by Ralph Vaughan Williams in 1938 (his Serenade
to Music), Sergei Rachmaninoff was literally moved to tears at the work’s overwhelming beauty (he was the soloist in his Second Piano Concerto during the first half of the concert). Colleagues, audiences, and congregation members may share their appreciation of your efforts with you this season. Some may complain that they didn’t hear this or that, or that the organ was too loud. Many will say nothing at all. Shakespeare describes how music “creep[s] in our ears.” The effect of music can be up-front and impressive, but also subliminal: “sweet harmony”.

Let’s be sure to seize the moment and offer our very best this season. Whether people tell you or not, your music is making a positive difference. And when we’re done, let’s also remember that effective rest and restoration follow such an intense output. Happy Holidays, Happy Hanukkah, Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year to you all.

With my best wishes,

James Kennerley, Dean

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Program News

While at dinner last week, a lady sitting at the next table overheard my friend (a fellow organist) and me talking shop, and soon she joined-in, sharing fond memories of the Skinner organ at the Long Island church in which she grew up. She told us how much she loved the pipe organ and its music, was fascinated to meet two practitioners of the art, but regretted not having been to a recital in years. It did not take much to induce her to visit our Chapter’s concert calendar and get her to sign-up for our newsletter.
The exchange was a heart-warming reminder to me that programming organizations such as ours must not forget the value of personal invitation and engagement, whether on the job or on the street. As church music continues to contract from the collective consciousness, the responsibility of each one of us to invite people - importantly, non-organists; not just colleagues or even parishioners - into an awareness of our life becomes all the more urgent! So, looking past the holidays and the doldrums of January to our keystone chapter event, the President's Day Conference, please consider the people with whom you interact who might accept an invitation to join us!

The **2019 Presidents' Day Conference: On the Avenue** on **Monday, February 18** begins at 9:00 AM at Saint Thomas Church, Fifth Avenue, moving down to Saint Patrick’s Cathedral in the afternoon. The day's events - including recitals given by the in-house musicians, lectures, and tours - are free for NYCAGO Chapter and dual members.

As a prelude to the Conference, Katelyn Emerson will offer the fourth recital of the Grand Organ Series at Saint Thomas on **Saturday, February 16 at 3:00 PM.** Admission to this is free for all!

Sincerely,

James D. Wetzel, Sub Dean
Quote of the Month

"When I rest, I rust."
-Placido Domingo

Won't you be my neighbor?
Meet me at the Met.
The Metropolitan Opera Company is the crown jewel of one of the world's greatest capitals of the performing arts. It has one of the two largest operating budgets of an American arts organization, taking see-saw turns with "the other Met." More than 6000 people are employed there, from the hyper-visible singing stars and musical directors to carpenters, electricians, wig-makers, costume designers, and a robust team of people in administration, development - that mystical world of raising hundreds of millions of dollars for the arts. The "Artist Roster" includes nearly 700 names, with some of the most exciting living musicians tucked away alphabetically. And by the way, the Artist Roster doesn't include more than a hundred members of the famed Met Orchestra.

The current program book lists nearly ninety benefactors whose gifts are $1,000,000 or more, nearly thirty of which are above $5,000,000. Twenty-five pages are devoted to listing patrons starting with gifts over $5500, with the largest single gift of $50,000,000 from Ann Ziff (Chairman of the Metropolitan Opera Board) and her family. That's what it takes to stage grand opera.

Last night, Wendy and I, son Andy and his girlfriend Kate attended the opening night performance of Puccini's Il Trittico, the collection of one-act operas that goes from sad-to-saddest-to-hilarious. The evening featured the expected casts of brilliant singers, a marvelous conductor, and of course, the world's best
pit orchestra (man, can they play!), but the highlight of the evening was the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of Placido Domingo’s debut at the Met, and his first performance of *Gianni Schicchi*, the 52nd role he has played on that stage.

At the close of *Il Tabarro*, the first of the three, the curtain raised to show a large projection screen showing snippets from all the roles played by Placido Domingo, including appearances on *Sesame Street*. The curtain fell, and Mr. Domingo walked onto the stage alone for a lengthy ovation. He was joined by General Manager Peter Gelb who presented him with a chunk of the stage floor in honor of his decades of service, warning him to "watch for the hole" when he came on stage for his 52nd role.

Reading about him the morning after, I learned that Domingo has in fact played over 150 roles in his career, only 52 of them on the Met stage. He has appeared at the Met around 700 times, and entered over 4000 performances throughout his international career. He's 77 years old. In a recent interview, he confessed that it takes him a little longer to learn a role these days. He must simply love to sing.

Click here to read what the New York Times had to say about that wonderful evening.

Seven stops on the subway. What a neighbor.

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**Membership Directory**

We are in the process of putting together the 2018-19 Membership Booklet. We are working to update the necessary website pages and will send a separate communication as soon as those are up to date. This has been delayed partly due to the death of Steve Lawson, who made so many things "happen" as part of his tireless work for the Chapter.

The Directory will reach some 600 professional organists, church musicians, and people in related fields. Beautifully designed by Len Levasseur, it will will circulate throughout the metropolitan New York area, as well as most of the fifty states and several foreign countries through the chapter’s dual memberships. We anticipate that the Directory will be mailed out in early
February.

POSITION LISTINGS
**Due date: DECEMBER 15, 2018**
If you would like your position and title information to appear in the yearbook, please log in to ONCARD at [www.agohq.org](http://www.agohq.org) and be sure your listing is correct. If nothing has changed since last year and you have listed your information in ONCARD, you are all set! Positions are listed under "addresses" in ONCARD; use the title and organization fields, and feel free either to fill in the address field or simply put in a placeholder character. Secondary addresses will not be printed.

ADVERTISING
**Due date: JANUARY 15, 2019**
You will soon be able to access the updated details for advertising here: [http://www.nycago.org/html/directoryads.html](http://www.nycago.org/html/directoryads.html) Placing an advertisement is a proven way to connect with colleagues old and new. Whether you're advertising professional services, your church's concert series, or promoting an instrument, advertising is an excellent way to spread your message and to support the Guild. Position information and advertisements must be submitted by January 15, 2019. A more detailed message will be sent out later this month. For any other questions, please [email us](mailto:).
From the Editor

Black Friday
That sounds like a moniker for a disaster, like the day a great city was bombed into oblivion. Like the day a landslide carried away an Alpine village. Like the day the stock market collapsed and a nation's economy failed. But no, it's the start of the Holiday Shopping Season. Doesn't that just tingle your holly?

On November 18, 2007, when I was a simple organ guy from the provincial capitol of Boston, I traveled from our home in rural Maine to New York City for a series of meetings. I checked into a hotel on 54th Street and wandered out into the fray of 5th Avenue a few days before Thanksgiving. It was snowing, and 5th Avenue was festooned with holiday joy. I remember this in some detail because my column, In the wind..., in the January 2008 edition of THE DIAPASON reads something like a diary entry from that day. I wondered idly if Donald Trump had pulled some strings to make it snow so early in the season - that would be good for sales. "It would be better if he'd make it rain in Atlanta," I needed, as there was a continuing drought going on.

That evening was the first time I had heard My Favorite Things broadcast as a Christmas song. My solution was to duck into St. Thomas Church for Evensong, something I had only experienced once before. I wrote about the
majesty of the place, the gorgeous sounds of the choir, and the magical smell which is a mixture of incense and beeswax that I dubbed "the smell of quietness." That was early in John Scott's career at St. Thomas, and I wallowed in the beauty of the experience, the wonderful blend between organ and choir, and the spectacular setting. Apparently I said a little too much about the beauty of the organ as I was told privately that I hadn't been helpful - the conversation about replacing the organ at St. Thomas had just started in earnest. Click here to read "The Smell of Quietness."

At the moment, my email inbox includes "Black Friday from the Organ Historical Society," which seems a little strange, and stranger yet, "Black Friday Offers at Kevin Mayhew," the British supplier, "Passionately Resourcing Churches, Schools, and Musicians Worldwide." Featured in Kevin Mayhew's online store (click on "Wine and Consumables") are a wide selection of "church wafers," including Concelebration Wafers, Priest's Wafers, People's Wafers (£15.99/1000), and for £10.99, a 50-pack of gluten-free People's Wafers, which seems a high penalty for those restricted to gluten-free diets.

Click on "CD's and MP3's" to find the comprehensive series, "No Organist, No Problem!" - dozens of sets of CD's featuring recordings of hymns, including introductions and verses. They cover children's hymns, Celtic hymns, Christmas hymns, Catholic hymns, and my personal favorite, "Top 50 Hymns in Lower Keys." I admit that I listened to only a few samples, but none of these sets seem to feature pipe organs.

But wait! There's more! "No Music Group? No Problem!" "If you prefer more modern worship songs, this set is for you. Based on the winning formula of No Organist? No Problem!, it offers 3 x 200 of the most popular worship songs and choruses on 10 CDs." (£379.99) How sad to prefer modern worship songs and fail to find anyone who can't play them.

The existence of such compilations tells much about the state of church music. When I was growing up, it seemed that pretty much everyone went to church, and pretty much every church had a pipe organ. In the mid-1960's, electronic instruments were just getting going. Fifty years later, the air has gone out of the balloon and congregations with no organists sing in lower keys accompanied by recordings of electronic organs. I think they should throw in a boom-box for a Black Friday special. I wonder if a live and spirited musician playing on a pipe organ could revitalize a place like that?
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