Visit the [website](http://www.nycago.org) of the NYC AGO Chapter

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

**Table of contents:**

- [Dean's Message](#)
- [Program News](#)
- [News Releases from AGO HQ](#)
- [Quote of the Month](#)
- [From the Treasurer](#)
- [Won't you be my neighbor?](#)
- [Position available at AGO National](#)
- [Joke of the Month](#)
- [From the Editor](#)
Dean's Message

This year we mourned the passing of two giants of the organ world, Peter Hurford and Jean Guillou. Many words have been written to commemorate those two extraordinary men, their careers, and their inexorable influence on organ culture. Like many of us, I came to know them principally through their recordings; Peter Hurford’s complete Bach organ works series on the Decca label was particularly influential to me as budding organist.

At the tender age of thirteen, I wrote to Peter asking for lessons, and he graciously replied that I might better be served with a local teacher, and that I should return to him in a few years. He very kindly included with his reply a book, *The New Bach Reader*, a collection of documents, letters, and firsthand accounts of J S Bach’s life, music, and just about everything in between. It’s one of those books that I rarely go a week without dipping into. Peter further personalized that copy with page references to particularly humorous excerpts. I never ended up studying with him, but I had the good fortune to become Organ Scholar of Jesus College, Cambridge as he had been half a century before.

March was, of course, Bach’s birthday month. Whether you choose to follow the Julian or Gregorian calendar (and hence observe March 21 or 31 as “the day”), March is a great time to celebrate Bach and the organ. In celebration of Bach’s birthday, and in fond memory of Peter Hurford and Jean Gillou, here follow some of the more amusing accounts from Bach’s life. Enjoy!

From Forkel’s biography, as reported by Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach: *No one understood registration at the organ as well as he. Organists were often terrified when he sat down to play their organs and drew stops in his own manner, for they thought that the effect could not be good as he was planning*
it. But then they gradually heard an effect that astounded them.

From the minutes of the Arnstadt consistory, August 5, 1705:
Johann Sebastian Bach, organist here at the New Church, appeared and stated that, as he walked home yesterday, fairly late at night…the student Geyersbach went after him with a stick…and had at once struck out at him…the two of them tumbled about until the rest of the students…had rushed toward them and separated them so that [Bach] could continue on his way home.

From the minutes of the Arnstadt consistory, February 21, 1706:
Reprove him [Bach] for having hitherto made many curious variations in the chorale, and mingled many strange tones in it…[and, later on:] The organist Bach had previously played rather too long, but after his attention had been called to it by the Superintendent, he had at once fallen into the other extreme and made it too short.

With my very best wishes,

James Kennerley, Dean
Program News

We have two events at the beginning of April, and both highlight the bright future for our profession toward which we strive:

Juilliard Organ Department Studio Recital (Paul Jacobs, chair) at Marble Collegiate Church (Kenneth Dake, host) on Thursday, April 4th at 7:30 PM. More information on the program, which is free, is posted here.

Pipe Organ Day for Pianists on Saturday, April 6th from 2:00–4:00 PM
at Saint Paul's Chapel. Trinity's Associate Organist Janet Yieh and I will serve as instructors for this fun-filled and informative afternoon that is free to all. We ask that the participants have at least basic keyboard proficiency and be of at least middle school age. While registration is not required, please indicate interest in attending the event to me via email.

I am sure that each of us knows a pianist who has had to deputize as an organist for some summer service. And certainly there is at least one student in each of our churches who is fascinated by the organ but does not know how to start down the path we have all trod. Please extend to them an invitation to this afternoon!

Looking further ahead, the Chapter is delighted to be taking a Dinner Cruise in New York Harbor on Monday, June 3rd. Embarkation commences at 6 PM from Pier 60 at Chelsea Piers Marina on Manhattan's West Side. The cruise departs at 6:30 PM sharp. We will enjoy sunset views of the Manhattan skyline and the upper Hudson Bay as the Affinity sails around Battery Park, past the Statue of Liberty, and up the East River before returning to Pier 60 at 9:30 PM. Convivial company will drink in the scenery with an open bar and a delicious catered sit-down dinner.

Tickets (which are generously subsidized by the chapter) are $80 for NYCAGO Members and $100 for guests who are most welcome. We are limited to 60 guests, so be sure to book early!

**Tickets are now available – Purchase them here.**

On behalf of the Program Committee, thank you for your support!

Sincerely,
News Releases from AGO HQ

Click on these links to read three press releases from the National Offices of the American Guild of Organists about exciting programs in the coming months:

AGO Announces Six Pipe Organ Encounters

John Walker to be Honored at AGO Endowment Fund Distinguished Artist Award Recital and Gala Benefit Reception in Pittsburgh

American Guild of Organists Awarded $20,000 Grant from the National Endowment for the Arts
Quote of the Month

"Music can change the world because it can change people."
- Bono

From the Treasurer

At its last meeting, the Executive Board decided to support the Pipe Organ Encounter programs coming up on Cape Cod and in Seattle with contribution of $1,000 each.

The Executive Board also expresses thanks to the following who contributed generously to the Chapter, Pipe Organ Encounters, and Pipedreams. A total of $2,485 was given as these members renewed.

$500 and above
  Judith Hancock

$250-499
  John Byrne

$100-249
  Alan Barthel
  Louise Basbas
  Justin Bischof
Won't you be my neighbor?

Last week, Wendy and I heard the Boston Symphony Orchestra play at Carnegie Hall. It's fun for us, still recently transplanted from Boston, to count that iconic stage as a neighbor. It's not exactly next door, but it is just seven stops uptown on the R or W trains with only a block of walking.

We had an apartment on Massachusetts Avenue (aka Mass Ave) in Boston, just across from the Christian Science Mother Church, home of that dazzling
A 240-rank Aeolian-Skinner organ, and next door to Symphony Hall. The neighborly BSO frequently offered free surplus tickets to the manager of our building, who would send an email to residents saying, "first come, first served." We snapped them up whenever we could, adding to our regular Thursday subscription series.

Last week’s concert was conducted by Andris Nelsons and featured the stupendous Renée Fleming singing the Moonlight Music and closing scene from Richard Strauss's opera Capriccio. The program opened with the shimmering Sextet for Strings from Capriccio, a lovely bit of programming with just six players on that huge stage with a hundred empty chairs. Nelsons conducted the ensemble from a stool.

The second half of the program was Also sprach Zarathustra, that fantastic half-hour of mystical poetry. It was a nice effort, but a poor choice. Not because of the opening fanfares played by four trumpets in perfect unison. (Organ tuners don't often say perfect about someone else's tuning.) Not because of the spectacular playing of BSO timpanist, Timothy Genis. (You've got be sure of your rhythm to hit those drums that hard in that company.) Not because of the rich sonorities and otherworldly accuracy of Principal Horn James Sommerville and his six, count them, six companions. (An all-Strauss evening at symphony is a tour de force for the French Horns.) Not because of the tremendous fundamental bass tone produced by the eight Basses, all with low-C extensions on their necks, or the two shiny howitzers called Bass Tubas.

It was a poor choice because of a vestige of the legacy of Isaac Stern who famously said, "over my dead body" would a pipe organ be installed in Carnegie Hall. Never has a majestic sunrise fizzled so dramatically as the mighty BSO handing over that famous C-Major Chord to the "unnamed" organist seated at a heap of transistors and marshmallows. It didn't matter that the stage was festooned with speaker cabinets the size of catering fridges. I know there are digital instruments with more gumption than the older and lesser model that lurks in Carnegie Hall, but I doubt there are any that could have lived up to that moment. I freely admit my acoustic bias. It's just not the same when it comes from speakers.

I grant that the BSO at full throttle is about as powerful a musical ensemble as walks on 216 legs, and that many pipe organs would be knocked over by the scale, volume, intensity, and energy generated by that big band. They should have played Till Eulenspiegel and saved the sunrise for Symphony Hall in Boston. Or Dallas. Or Philadelphia. Or Los Angeles. But they didn't ask me.
They wouldn't have played the piece if they were missing the French Horns. They shouldn't have played it without an organ.

---

Position available at AGO National

The American Guild of Organists has announced an opening for a national Director of Membership and Chapter Support. All candidates will be vetted by an executive search firm. The salary is $80,000 to $90,000 per year. Follow the link for more information.

---

Joke of the Month

![Cartoon of a swing set with a speech bubble saying, "It don't mean a thing." and another saying, "IT DON'T MEAN A THING." ]
From the Editor

The swing of the pendulum.

I swept the floor of my workshop this morning. That may not seem like a big deal, but it was a special sweep for me. Last weekend, two of my colleagues from the Organ Clearing House joined me at our place in Maine with a rented truck, and we loaded a finished project for shipment across the country. Every workbench and level surface had been piled high with organ parts packed for safe travel, and I had been systematically crossing off items on the long final checklist. This morning's sweep was cathartic, the culmination of hundreds of hours of work. Happily, I didn't find any parts left behind.

After several stops to pick up small instruments heading in the same direction, my colleague Terence will cross the country from mid-coast Maine, over the Rocky Mountains and Continental Divide to Seattle, Washington. Our project is a practice organ for the University of Washington, and it represents a stylistic sea change; a three-manual, twelve-rank unit organ with two expression enclosures to join a little fleet of three-rank tracker-action instruments.
Equipped with a comprehensive combination action, sequencer, manual transfer, and MIDI playback, this instrument is intended as a tool for students to learn how to manage a complex console, creating the intricate orchestral effects that have regained popularity since the maturation of the generation of historically informed performances.

I was working with Jan Leek in Oberlin, Ohio, when we were engaged in 1979 to help with the installation of the new Flentrop Organ for Trinity Cathedral in Cleveland, a smashing three-manual mahogany job on a specially built gallery at the rear of the church. The container from Rotterdam was delivered to the Port of Cleveland on board a ship called Calliope, and driven by truck to the steps of the cathedral on Euclid Avenue. I was in my early twenties and not as smart as I thought I was, but I did know enough to take interest when I carried a bundle of expression shutters up the stairs, followed shortly by a box of pipes marked "Celeste." The Flentrop at Oberlin has neither of those.

A generation ago, ensembles like Concentus Musicus under the direction of Nicolas Harnoncourt specialized in recreating the performance styles of the great Baroque composers, and I remembering watching and listening, fascinated, as they moved on to the music of Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, Schubert, and even Bartok.

Several years ago, Schoenstein installed a unified three-manual organ at the Juilliard School, a precursor to the organ we're delivering this week. It's a sign of the times that a university organ program would be interested in a "Symphonic" practice organ. Sure is different from my life as a student at Oberlin in the middle 1970s. Keep practicing hard and coming up with new ideas.

Visit our amazing website!