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Dean's Message

Resurgam!

On a recent visit to Portland, Maine (where I have the distinct pleasure of holding the position of Municipal Organist), I noticed for the first time the city’s motto: Resurgam. Accompanied by the image of a phoenix rising from the ashes, the motto translates as “I shall rise again.” It’s an apt tagline for a city that has endured repeated destruction—notably when it was virtually flattened by British naval vessels in 1775, and almost a century later when it burned to the ground in a massive fire in 1886 (the largest in any American city up to time). Fire may have destroyed the physical city but it only served to strengthen the resolve, pride, and ambition of its residents. Each time, Portland became bigger and better than before.

On Palm Sunday my phone and those of several choir members were “exploding” with alerts reporting a fire at the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine. Many of us will remember the fire of December 2001 that silenced the magnificent Grand Organ for years. And, just when the newly restored State Trumpet was returned to its crowning position over the West Door in recent weeks, it appears that the instrument will remain silent until the organ is deemed safe for use.

The day following the fire at Saint John the Divine is one that will continue to haunt many of us for decades to come. News reports showing flames engulfing the roof of Notre Dame de Paris resembled a scene from a post-apocalyptic movie. Videos portraying the collapse of the spire and the vault of the crossing elicited powerful emotional responses: immense sadness, loss, even physical sickness. Those emotions were, I think it’s fair to say, strongest among the organ community. Notre Dame is our Mecca. It houses the most famous organ in the world. It has been and continues to be home to the greatest Titulaire organists, composers, and improvisers. It quite literally
defines our art. The thought that the building and the organs would be gone forever is a nightmare that so many were living in real time during that week, the holiest of times in the Christian church.

In subsequent days, reports flooded our Facebook feeds and news apps, detailing the damage, and suggesting various theories for its cause, and suggesting ways in which the cathedral would be restored. Increasingly, the organs became a feature of those reports, including an April 16 article in the Washington Post by Chapter member and dear friend Craig Whitney. On April 24 the New York Times published an article detailing the experience of the fire from the perspectives of the resident organists themselves.

Michael Barone shared a report on April 23 from Mario d'Amico Holzmann, representing investigations made by Paschal Quoirin on site (Quoirin and Cattiaux have been responsible for all work on the Notre Dame organ in recent years):

"Very good news from the great organ of Notre Dame! After two hours of examination of the instrumental part, I did not notice any damage that could have been caused by the fire. Simply dust, a clean, light brown dust a bit like sand, non sticky, a dry dust. There was a thermometer with memory inside the instrument, it indicates a temperature of 17 degrees (62.5 fahrenheit) the day of the fire. So no degradation of the pipe and the electronic components. In a fortnight we will be able to put the organ back in order to be able to make a more detailed diagnosis, in particular of the state of the wind chests, but frankly I am very optimistic. The ideal will be to confine the organ in a well-sealed and air-conditioned cage. Then do the cleaning, rank by rank, and play the organ regularly. And finally, dismantle the confinement when the vault is rebuilt, and reinaugurate it."

Marvelous news! While it will surely be years before we are able to hear that indescribably thrilling instrument again, there is significant hope that that day will come. In the meantime, let’s do our part by attending organ performances, playing concerts, and educating the public on the wonders of the pipe organ. There’s nothing like it, and there’s no time like the present to make that known.
Resurgam indeed!

With my very best wishes,

James Kennerley, Dean

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**Program News**

The Chapter's program year concludes with a **Dinner Cruise in New York Harbor** on **Monday, June 3rd**. This event, which has become a biennial tradition, is always a delightful opportunity to socialize and celebrate the end of the season with friends and colleagues.

**Tickets are now available** – [Purchase them here](#).

We'll embark at 6 PM at 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, and we have already sold 20 tickets. Be sure to buy your tickets now.

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 is the wine that fills the cup of silence.”
- Robert Fripp

Won't you be my neighbor?

The way it used to be done.

On 7th Avenue in West Village, between Commerce and Morton streets, there’s a tiny building with a trapezoidal floor plan made necessary by the unusual layout of the streets. The Greenwich Locksmith is now run by the son of the founder, and he specializes in hard-to-find keys, and in repairing antique locks, a spectacular find for an organbuilder. I first noticed the place while walking Farley the Goldendoodle and was amazed by the decor on the building.
The old man had spent a lifetime welding keys together in intricate designs and fastening them to the shop, leaving no doubt about what goes on inside. I'll share a few photos and let the place speak for itself. Any colleague who works in an old building might make use of the special skills found here. It's a true, old-time craftsman's workshop.
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.

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Joke of the Month

Editor’s note:
On a recent cross-country flight I was sharing the plane with members of a high school orchestra who had just performed at Carnegie Hall. My seat mates, two teenage violinists, were watching through the window as baggage handlers loaded musical instruments onto the plane. I remembered a funny piece I saw online. YouTube doesn't allow me to embed a link here, so this month's joke requires a little effort. Open YouTube and enter "United Breaks Guitars" in the search bar. Go ahead. I'll give you a couple minutes.

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From the Editor

Hadestown

Ten years ago, Anaïs Mitchell conceived a retelling of the legend of Orpheus and Euridice, casting it as a musical with a narrator, a "girl-group" of commentators, a chorus of workers, a loving young couple, and King Hades and
his wife Persephone. It was staged three years ago at the New York Theater Workshop in Greenwich Village. Wendy and I were lucky to see that production, which had the characters finding themselves and each other, gelling the work into a serious production that ran in London for two years.

The show opened on Broadway at the Walter Kerr Theater on April 17 after a month of previews. We've had several opportunities to see new productions begin as they first hit the stage in smaller theaters, and then hit the big time with major funding and grand effects, and when we saw Hadestown in previews, we were thrilled by how the show had grown, how a few of the players had been changed, and how the story had gained strength and momentum.

André de Shields is Hermes, the narrator, a sleek 73-year-old dressed in sharkskin, and gliding slyly around the stage. Amber Gray is the complex, hilarious, and frightening Persephone, and basso profundo Patrick Page is as convincing and chilling a Satan as you could dare to see on stage. The score is sexy and beguiling, performed by seven live musicians perched on the sides of the stage. It was heart warming to see how the musicians are included in the action, and how openly and fully they were introduced by Persephone as the second act began.

Anaïs Mitchell wins the prize for prescience. One of the highlights of the show, sung by Hades and the cast, focuses on building a wall "to keep us free." There was hardly a dry eye in the house.

Hamilton climbed from a small local theater to the big stage several years ago. I won't predict that Hadestown will be as great a transformer of the art of musical theater, but it's very powerful, it's fun, it's performed and produced in spectacular fashion, and I recommend it. Witnessing Patrick Page as King Hades alone is worth the price of your ticket. And your partner's. And your friend's.

I'll not spoil it by sharing links, but if you doubt me, you can find a few tantalizing tidbits on YouTube. (Hint, enter Hadestown Wall in the search bar.) Tell them I sent you.
Visit our amazing website!