Visit the website of the NYC AGO Chapter

Don't miss events presented by your friends and colleagues. Visit the Concert Calendar of the NYC Chapter, and attend some concerts!

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Dean's Message
**Sumer Is Icumen In!**

_Sumer is icumen in / Lhude sing cuccu_  
_Groweþ sed / and bloweþ med_  
_and springþ þe wde nu / Sing cuccu_

_Summer has arrived / Sing loudly, cuckoo!_  
_The seed is growing / And the meadow is blooming,_  
_And the wood is coming into leaf now / Sing, cuckoo!_

Many of us know this delightful Middle English medieval text, set to a canon and preserved in a very beautifully illuminated thirteenth century manuscript that is now held in the British Library. The illustration below shows the opening two lines of the canon or rota, together with the pietistic Christian text that was penned in red (‘Perspice Christicola”) in case the performers were feeling particularly devotional that day.

The work stands as the first known example of six-part polyphony, and scholars posit that it may have been composed by W. de Wycombe, the equivalent today of organist and music director at several churches in the West Midlands.

Summer is a particularly important time for us organists. It’s a chance to take a well-earned respite after a busy season of performing, directing, administering, and all the other jobs we are so frequently called to do. It’s also the time for
plotting, planning, dreaming, and inspiration.

To that end I would encourage you to attend as many conventions and organ performances as you are able. There's nothing more inspiring than being surrounded by like-minded music lovers and experiencing top-notch concerts, workshops, and lectures. Below is a selection of some fabulous events taking place this summer. There are, of course, many, many others besides these. I hope that you’re able to attend one or more of these events and allow your soul to be refreshed. Have a wonderful summer. Lhude sing cuccu!

With my very best wishes,

James Kennerley, Dean

AGO Regional Conventions: numerous venues around the country boasting superb programs and performers: [https://www.agohq.org/regional-conventions/](https://www.agohq.org/regional-conventions/)

Organ Historical Society 2019: a celebration of a fleet of instruments in Dallas, TX: [https://organhistoricalsociety.org/2019/](https://organhistoricalsociety.org/2019/)

Riverside Church, NYC: 7 PM concerts on Tuesdays throughout the summer featuring a selection of fabulous players: [https://www.trcnyc.org/summerorganseries/](https://www.trcnyc.org/summerorganseries/)

Friends of the Kotzschmar Organ, Portland, ME: stunning ocean meets vibrant foodie scene and a one-of-a-kind municipal organ: [http://www.foko.org/full-schedule/](http://www.foko.org/full-schedule/)

Spreckels Organ Society International Summer Organ Festival, San Diego: Civic Organist Raúl Prieto Ramírez and guests present programs throughout the summer:
Educational opportunities:

AGO Pipe Organ Encounters: several chapters are hosting POEs this summer: [https://www.agohq.org/education/poe/](https://www.agohq.org/education/poe/)

Baylor University Summer Organ Institute: [https://www.baylor.edu/busmc/index.php?id=929491](https://www.baylor.edu/busmc/index.php?id=929491)

Indiana Pre-College Organ Academy: [https://music.indiana.edu/precollege/summer/jacobs-organ-academy/](https://music.indiana.edu/precollege/summer/jacobs-organ-academy/)

Interlochen Organ Academy: [http://www.camp.interlochen.org/program/music/hs/organ](http://www.camp.interlochen.org/program/music/hs/organ)

Oberlin Academy: [https://www.oberlin.edu/summer-programs/organ-academy](https://www.oberlin.edu/summer-programs/organ-academy)

Rochester Summer Organ Academy: [https://www.esm.rochester.edu/organ/summeracademy2019/](https://www.esm.rochester.edu/organ/summeracademy2019/)


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**Program News**

A perfect way to enter into the summer mode of which James wrote above is to join us for our season's finale, the **Dinner Cruise in New York Harbor** in two days on **Monday, June 3rd**.
Ticket sales will end at 12:00 Noon on June 3rd, so this is effectively LAST CALL for tickets. (Speaking of last call, there will be a full open bar as well as delicious dinner on board, in case you needed that incentive to join us.)

- Embarkation begins at 6 PM at Pier 60 at Chelsea Piers Marina on Manhattan's West Side.
- The Affinity departs at 6:30 PM sharp, cruising through the upper Hudson Bay, around Battery Park, past the Statue of Liberty, and up the East River.
- Returns to Pier 60 by 9:30 PM.

Tickets are $80 for NYCAGO Members and $100 for guests, who are most welcome. Some tickets remain, but be sure to buy yours now. On behalf of the Program Committee, I'm looking forward to welcoming you aboard!

Looking further ahead, the Committee is already hard at work on next season's events. Any suggestions or feedback are most welcome! Please email me here.

Sincerely,

James D. Wetzel, Sub Dean and Chair of the Program Committee
"Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on."
- John Keats

Won't you be my neighbor?

Wendy and I live in Greenwich Village, in the heart of the campus of New York University. At the beginning of a school year, we see families bringing new students to campus, with all the excitement that goes with this rite of passage. The parents go home, leaving their kids to forge new friendships, and learn the mysteries of being a serious student in one of the world's busiest cities. Our bedroom window is above the intersection of Broadway and East 9th Street, where we hear those groups of new friends heading out for a fun evening, and stumbling home in the wee hours, sometimes shouting stupidly in the middle of the street.

In the last few weeks, we've seen kids carrying home their purple caps and gowns in neat plastic bags, giddy with the excitement of the new freedom that faces them after commencement. NYU is a huge school with more than 50,000 students in several campuses, most of them around Washington Square, and nearly 10,000 faculty members. While there's a mammoth general commencement ceremony at Madison Square Garden, there are also small ceremonies at individual schools around the neighborhood, so we see great gaggles of gigglers with robes flapping, moving up the sidewalks and through Washington Square. And Washington Square itself, vibrant enough in mid-
winter, takes on the atmosphere of a carnival with jugglers and acrobats, food trucks, and plenty of celebrating.

This afternoon I saw a Facebook post from a student just graduating from Oberlin, thrilled with the feeling of freedom. I remember having a similar feeling the day of my graduation from the same school, driving out of town with the car windows open and music blaring. I had finished all the juries, exams, recitals, and papers, and now I was free. Looking back on that sunny afternoon more than forty years later, I know how naive I was.

I had lived off campus for my last three semesters, but I still relied on the dining halls for most of my meals. I had been fortunate to find a job as music director for a big church in Cleveland that provided enough of a salary to meet most of my tuition bills. But now I was out on my own, with no one to rely on but myself. I got married, had children, started a business, and never again had the luxury of nothing to do but learn. That's at the back of my mind as I see the excitement on the faces of the kids getting ready to move from their academic lives out into the real world. I wonder which of them will achieve greatness. Will I hear in ten years of the good work done by one of the students graduating this week?

Many members of the AGO Chapter of New York City are involved in teaching in all sorts of venues, from private studios to universities, passing on lessons learned in their own academic experiences tempered by those learned in the rough-and-tumble world of real life. Teach on. Play on. Never stop learning.

Joke of the Month
From the Editor

Our apartment on East 9th Street is within a few blocks of three significant new pipe organs, those in Church of the Ascension (Quiorin, 2010), Grace Church (Taylor & Boody, 2013) and St. Joseph's Church (Letourneau, 2014). What a wealth. In the few years since these organs were built, two of those churches have undertaken large-scale interior renovations that have required the covering of the organs. Three years ago, the vaulted ceiling at Grace Church was restored. Both of the magnificent solid-oak organ cases were covered in multiple layers of plastic, all of the interior reed pipes were covered with baggies, the iconic 32' Double Open Wood Diapason in the rear gallery (a glorious relic from the 1928 rebuild by Skinner of the 1912 E. M. Skinner organ) was covered, and the facades and expression shutters of the remote Solo and Pedal Divisions were sealed, all to protect the brand-new very valuable instrument from the ravages of dust. This work was accomplished under the guidance of organ curator Larry Trupiano and Patrick Allen, the church's organist. This photo shows the painters' extending boom being used to hoist a huge sheet of plastic into place above the north organ case. At the far right of the photo, you can see the south case under plastic.

Just months ago, we learned that St. Joseph's on Sixth Avenue at Washington Place was planning to install new air-conditioning equipment requiring that
large holes be cut in the ceiling, even
directly above the organ. The Organ
Clearing House was engaged to protect
the organ with assistance from curator
Peter Batchelder. The tops of the reed
pipes were vacuumed so covering the
pipes with plastic bags would not knock
dust into the resonators. The horizontal
Trumpet along with its racks and supports
was removed and stored inside the organ
case, and the entire case was covered
with two layers of plastic and sealed with
tape. Here you see the spiffy new organ
as a black hulk, covered with two layers of
dense plastic guarding against the
inadvertent ministrations of the ignorant.
We exchanged stories with Peter
Batchelder about contractors who
discovered that the interior of an organ case or chamber could be used as a
storage locker, even a changing
room.

Fire, water, and dust are the three
great enemies of pipe organs, with
vandalism supplanting any of them
in order depending on magnitude.
Many church organists are
specifically charged with
responsibility for the care of the
instruments in their church, and
sadly, the leaders of many
churches are ignorant of what
constitutes proper care of a pipe organ.

If you hear rumbling about plans for any carpentry, renovation, installation of
HVAC equipment, or major cleaning, you should speak up about the care of the
organ, piano, and any other delicate instruments that might be around. Setting
up scaffolding to clean light fixtures will raise as much dust as a carpenter
cutting wood. And anyone who has tried to tune a reed pipe can attest to the
fact that the leg of a spider will stop a pipe from speaking, let alone an air space
full of airborne dust.
The organ is typically the most valuable piece of equipment in a church building. While it may appear at first glance to the uninitiated to be a heavy, grungy industrial fixture, the organ is mortally sensitive to the introduction of dust. Reed pipes are the obvious victims, but when dust gets at the magnets and valves, ciphers and dead notes result. That type of damage might not appear for years after the work is complete, when a rogue fleck of dust finds its way through the labyrinth to its resting place on a Pitman Valve. The careful adjustments of keyboards are at risk, as is the tuning, voicing, and regulation of flue pipes. Look at the hundreds of tiny pipes in a mixture, and think of the result of a dusting of particles.

Don't forget the blower. Sweep the floor of a basement blower room while the blower is running, and imagine all the debris being sucked into the powerful fan, and blown through the interior of the organ's windchests. Many an organ has been ruined by that kind of negligence. Before cleaning or renovating a blower room, cover all the openings with plastic and heavy tape, turn off the power to the motor so it can't be turned on inadvertently, complete the work, and wait forty-eight hours for the dust to settle before running the blower again.

Finally, it's vitally important that all this work be accomplished by or under the supervision of, an experienced organbuilder or organ technician. The well-meaning contractor or parishioner will stomp into the organ armed with a bucket of plastic bags and cause more damage than an earthquake. We're so fortunate to have wonderful organs under our fingers and feet, and it's essential that we understand their care.

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