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Dean's Message

I'm a big fan of continuing education. Many employers offer stipends for conference
attendance, to allow employees to remain on the cutting edge of their craft. We organists and choir directors, too, can benefit greatly from continuing education. The AGO, along with its sister organizations the Royal College of Organists (RCO) and the Royal Canadian College of Organists (RCCO), were founded chiefly as educational bodies, awarding diplomas that defined the gold standard of the organist's craft in their respective countries. As organists, choir directors, and liturgical leaders, winter is the perfect time to think about assessing and developing our craft. Here are a few ways:

**Watch and learn…**

One of the simplest and most effective ways is to listen to and watch our own rehearsals and performances. With the omnipresence of smartphones and discrete sound recording devices this is easily done. Try it next time you're leading a rehearsal or playing for a service. When you listen, be open and vulnerable, critical but kind. I promise you that you will learn as much from that exercise from a private lesson or coaching. For the best audiophile experience listen with headphones in a low-light setting: the more sensory information that can be focused on the ears the better. For video recordings, pay attention to posture, hand and foot positions (when playing), and facial expressions when conducting or leading a congregation. With all of these exercises, make sure you have a system of recording your thoughts in a notebook, and work consistently to implement whatever changes you note during the following session.

**Take a lesson…**

Private coachings and lessons are therapeutic and transformative! With a good teacher—and the NYC AGO Chapter has access to many fabulous instructors—you can improve your organ playing immediately. The structure of regular lessons is more conducive to progress and improvement than merely performing our duties at a liturgical service or concert.

**Colleagues, Associates, Fellows, lend me your ears…**

Diploma examinations have been at the very core of the AGO’s mission since its founding in 1896. I expect the majority of people reading this will have at least one university degree, probably two, and if you’re working professionally as an organist,
those qualifications will almost certainly have focused on organ playing within the liturgy. When I was a student in the UK I was told clearly that I needed to pass the FRCO (equivalent of our FAGO) organ diploma in order to be considered for any of the cathedral assistant organist positions. It set a base standard of proficiency that went beyond playing impressive repertoire or improvising Notre Dame-style sorties. The AGO diplomas are a brilliant way of bringing your service playing to the next level, and they are very much designed for those of us who already have several organ-specific qualifications. The Service Playing Certificate and Colleague (CAGO) diploma are entirely practical – that is to say that all the assessments are taken at the organ console. The Associate and Fellow (AAGO and FAGO respectively) are the distinct markers of the organist’s professional skills and should be aspired to by all. For more information on the AGO examinations, please email our Exams Coordinator, Colin MacKnight, himself an FAGO together with the ChM (Choirmaster certification).

**Attend an AGO event...**

The definitive event of the NYCAGO season is taking place this month. Join us on Monday, February 17 at Temple Emanu-El for a spectacular day of organ music, choral music, history, and camaraderie. Read more about that below.

With my very best wishes for your continued education!

James Kennerley, Dean
Program News

Presidents’ Day Conference
Monday, February 17, 2020

Temple Emanu-El
1 East 65th Street
New York, NY 10065
Opening event at 10:00 AM
Conference concludes at 5:00 PM
The NYCAGO presents a yearly conference on Presidents’ Day. This year’s gathering will visit Temple Emanu-El. More information about this landmark synagogue is included below in this newsletter.

All attendees will enter through the Community House at 1 East 65th Street. The registration table will open at 9:00 AM, and a Continental breakfast will be provided. (There is no pre-registration.) The conference’s events are free for NYCAGO Chapter and dual members. The general public is most welcome and tickets may be purchased the day-of for $40. Public tickets for those attending only the 4:00 PM silent movie are $20 each.

The conference itself will run from 10:00 AM until 5:00 PM and will feature Wanamaker Grand Court Organist Peter Richard Conte accompanying a silent film at 4:00 PM. Temple musicians Jack Coen, Dr. Andrew Henderson, and Daniel Beckwith will open the day with a 10:00 AM organ recital, highlighting the Temple's extensive musical legacy. In between, the renowned professional Temple Choir will participate in a concert-lecture with Cantor Emerita Lori Corrsin. Organ builder Sebastian Glück will give a presentation addressing the design and construction of the American synagogue organ. A tour of the historic campus, including a demonstration of the Beth-El chapel organ, will be offered by Mark Heutlinger, Temple Emanu-El’s Administrator. The Temple’s museum, with a special exhibit on Barbra Streisand, will also be open to attendees.

Please visit www.nycago.org for more information or contact NYCAGO Sub-Dean James Wetzel.

Improvised Stations of the Cross
Wednesday, March 18, 2020
Church of Saint Ignatius Loyola
980 Park Avenue at 84th Street
New York, N.Y. 10028
Renowned for their improvisational skill, chapter members David Enlow, our immediate past Dean, and Dr. Kalle Toivio, the 2018 winner of the National Competition in Organ Improvisation, share the bench in a sequence of improvisations on the Via Crucis.

Please note the change of location – now at Saint Ignatius Loyola on their remarkable Mander organ. Parts of the organ at Saint Mary the Virgin, where the event was originally scheduled to take place, had to be temporarily removed in preparation of restoration work on the rose window above it. Because of some delays with the City permits office, the work cannot now be completed by March.

Register for all choir dates here. Register for drop-in dates here.

Quote of the Month

Music is the exaltation of the mind derived from things eternal, bursting forth in sound.
A novice follows a Bishop

As John Bishop announced in the last newsletter before Christmas, his growing work as director of the Organ Clearing House and as organ consultant necessitated him to step down as editor of this newsletter, passing the baton on to some dimwitted stooge incapable of filling such an eloquent wordsmith’s shoes. But fear not, you may still enjoy John's pithy insights in his monthly Diapason column that will continue unabated. For these pages, however, I offer this first edition as editor. In all seriousness, I am very grateful to John for all of his help and advice through the transition, to the Board for their approval, and to the proof-readers who have
graciously remained at their posts.

John’s work as builder, tuner, consultant, carpenter, father, sailor, and much more supplied him with the depth of experience and wisdom to fill his 'Won't you be my neighbor' column – something I will not presume to continue. As a replacement, we are going from one song title (the tune of Mr. Roger’s Neighborhood) to another: 'Getting to Know You' from the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical The King and I. Under that heading, each month we will exhibit a music program active within our Chapter. I hope this endeavor will illustrate the unequaled assets of personal talent, supportive fellowship, architectural beauty, musical legacy, and future potential for which we New Yorkers should be grateful and of which we must be authoritative advocates. Not to mention that organists (myself included) tend to be a bit nosy and have an unreasonably high threshold for nugatory trivia.

This Chapter’s profile is large and diverse, probably more so than any other in the Guild. Some members direct big city church programs, others teach at influential academic institutes, others concertize or conduct, others are part-time organists with another weekday job, while others are retired, or are organ enthusiasts (colloquially known as ‘Super Fans’ - you know who you are and thanks for your support), or live outside the Chapter’s boundaries but support our mission. So commensurately broad is the pool of institutions from which to draw; but picking the first one was easy since we have our annual Presidents’ Day conference coming up this month. What better way to lead-up to it than with this inaugural feature?

As to the selection of future features, please be considerate and patient. If yours is not printed in March or April, it is not a personal snub. Nor will the order of selection be somehow hierarchical. Rather, I will try to time each article with pertinent events or milestones. For example, we are having our next event at Saint Ignatius Loyola. And the Church of the Epiphany is about to move from its York Avenue sanctuary. Thus you may expect those to soon appear within these pages. So that no one feels slighted, if you would like to have your program featured, please write to me and let me know.

While the constituent parts will likely morph over the life of the column (and by adapting to feedback which is always most welcome), each article will include a short paragraph describing the institution’s general profile, its musical past, the present activity of the musical program, the organ, and a biography of the currently-associated Chapter members. This column also honors and, with any luck, compliments the unparalleled work of Steve Lawson, whose NYC Organ Project is one of our greatest resources. In an effort to avoid redundancy, this new venture is intended as more of a general primer, leaving the technical descriptions and a more detailed narrative of the institution’s history as ‘further reading.’

Hoping you enjoy this project, I am,
Sincerely,

James D. Wetzel, Sub Dean and Chair of the Program Committee

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**Joke of the Month**

*In honor of the Semiquincentennial of Beethoven's birth:*

Why did Beethoven have trouble finding a music teacher?

Because his teacher was Haydn.

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**Getting to Know You**

*Temple Emanu-El*

1 East 65th Street at Fifth Avenue

Jack Coen, *Music Director and Organist*
**General Information**
Congregation Emanu-El is celebrating the 175th anniversary of its founding. What began as a small prayer group is now a great congregation – a prominent voice for Reform Judaism and in the nation’s ongoing civic, cultural and spiritual dialogue. The congregation was founded in 1845 and first worshipped in a second-floor room on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. In 1868 they built what was then the largest synagogue in America, a building in the Moorish style designed by Leopold Eidlitz and Henry Fernbach on Fifth Avenue at 43rd Street. In the 1920s the congregation consolidated with another great reform synagogue, Temple Beth-El, moving uptown and opening the present Romanesque Revival building by Robert D. Kohn, Charles Butler, and Clarence Stein at Fifth Avenue and East 65th Street in 1929. The 2,500-seat main sanctuary is 77 feet wide, 147 feet long, and 103 feet high, making it one of the largest Jewish houses of worship in the world. Today Temple Emanu-El has a vibrant membership of more than 2,250 households.

**Musical History**
Within the first decade of its founding, the synagogue embraced many musical advances in line with emerging Reform Jewish worship practices, including: the purchase of an organ, the admission of female singers to the choir, and the printing of hymn books in German (the dominant language of the congregation at the time). With the opening of the 1868 synagogue, a four-manual, 83-rank Hall and Labagh organ was installed in the choir loft, boasting what is believed to have been the first 32-foot reed in the City. By the 1890s, the choir consisted of 28 professional singers. Composer and singer Harry T. Burleigh, famous for his arrangements of African American spirituals, sang with the choir from 1900 to 1925. Many esteemed cantors, music directors, and organists have served over the years, including Max Spicker (music director, 1891-1903), Will C. MacFarlane (organist, 1898-1912), Gottfried H. Federlein (organist, 1915-1945), Lazare Saminsky (music director, 1924-1959), Robert Baker (organist, 1945-1961), Herman Berlinski (associate/acting organist, 1954-1963), Lori Corrsin (cantor, 2004-2015 and cantor emerita), and K. Scott Warren (organist and choir director, 2006-2018). The congregation has also commissioned and published works by numerous composers from within its ranks and the wider Jewish musical community.

**Current Music Program**
The Choir of Temple Emanu-El is a 17-voice professional ensemble, singing for the regular weekend Shabbat Friday Evening and Saturday morning services throughout the year, the minor festivals of the Jewish liturgical year, and the High Holy Day services. While the organ and choir provide the backbone of the community’s liturgical music program, guest instrumentalists offer a wide array of musical styles at services throughout the year. For decades the Friday evening services were a regularly
featured broadcast on WQXR, and all Shabbat and festival services are now live-streamed and available for download. Cantor Mo Glazman has served Emanu-El as its cantor since 2016.

Organs
A gift of the Daniel Guggenheim family, the organ in the main sanctuary was installed by Casavant Frères in 1929, Opus 1322, featuring four manuals and 108 ranks in chambers behind and above the Bimah, with an Echo above the Fifth Avenue porch. This instrument was rebuilt by the Austin Organ company in 1956 under the direction of Temple organist Robert Baker. The present instrument was completed by Sebastian Glück in 2002 as his Opus 7, including a new four-manual console. Aiming to return the organ closer to its original symphonic aesthetic, the historic pipework was preserved and restored while much new material was provided, increasing the organ's size to 135 ranks. The main sanctuary organ has been played by such luminaries as Marcel Dupré, George Thalben-Ball (1956 AGO convention) and Jon Gillock (2007 AGO Regional convention). It is the largest pipe organ to be found in any Jewish prayer space in the world.

Temple Emanu-El also houses two additional pipe organs: Sebastian Glück’s Opus 5 (1997) – a three-manual, 35-rank organ in the rear gallery of Beth-El Chapel, reusing pipework from the chapel's previous instrument; and a three-manual, 35-rank 1962 M.P. Möller, substantially rebuilt and revised by Glück in 2007, in the choir loft of the 1,000-seat Lowenstein Auditorium.

(This information graciously compiled by Andrew Henderson.)

Chapter Members at the Temple

Jack Coen was appointed Music Director and Organist at Temple Emanu-El in June 2019. He is also the Music Director and Organist at Church of the Epiphany in Gramercy, where he founded the Epiphany Schola Cantorum, and has interned as organist at the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine. He is also the Director of the CUNY Baruch Undergraduate Chorus and is an adjunct lecturer at Baruch College. As a member of the BMI Musical Theatre Writing Workshop, he was the recipient of the 2018 Harrington award for Outstanding Creative Achievement in Musical Theatre Writing. He is a graduate of the Blair School of Music at Vanderbilt University where he studied music composition and theory.

Andrew Henderson is Director of Music and Organist at Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church in Manhattan where he oversees an extensive liturgical and choral program, including Saint Andrew Chorale, the 180-voice New York City Children’s Chorus, and the Music on Madison concert series. He also serves as the chair of the organ department at the Manhattan School of Music, as the organ
instructor at Teachers College, Columbia University, and as Associate Organist at New York City's Temple Emanu-El. A native of Thorold, Ontario, Andrew holds degrees in music from Cambridge and Yale Universities, and in 2007 he was awarded the Doctor of Musical Arts degree at The Juilliard School. He was a finalist in the international competition Grand Prix de Chartres in France in 2002, and won first prize in the Royal Canadian College of Organists' biennial National Organ Playing Competition the following year. A Fellow of the Royal Canadian College of Organists, his teachers have included John Tuttle, Barrie Cabena, David Sanger, Thomas Murray and John Weaver.

Daniel Beckwith is Principal Organist at the Upper East Side Church of Saint Ignatius Loyola and Associate Organist at Temple Emanu-El. Former church positions include the posts of Assistant Organist at several New York City Landmark houses of worship: The Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church; Saint Bartholomew’s Church, the Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine, and Church of the Holy Trinity (Episcopal).

Mr. Beckwith has conducted in many of the major opera houses throughout North America and Europe, including the Metropolitan Opera (making his house debut with Don Giovanni in 1995), the Glyndebourne Festival, and the opera companies of Arizona, Baltimore, Edmonton, Portland, San Francisco, Seattle, and Vancouver. His has a particular affinity for the Baroque, early Classical, and bel canto repertory, exemplified by his New York City Opera debut in a production of Rameau’s Platée with the Mark Morris Dance Group.

A frequent partner with soprano Renée Fleming, they have performed in concert at Carnegie Hall, Spain’s Santander Festival and television appearances on Good Morning America, The View, and Martha Stewart Living.

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