Visit the NYCAGO Chapter's website.

Help us grow our local audience.
Explore events presented by your friends and colleagues
and include your own on
the member-curated Concert Calendar of our Chapter.

Please submit all material for the newsletter
by the 24th of the preceding month.

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In last month's article, I wrote that the realities of the COVID-19 virus were becoming clear in Europe but things felt different here. Perhaps it is an offshoot from that endless optimism that is the American Dream, but I had a very hard time imagining how the U.S. would suffer the serious consequences then experienced by our European colleagues. That column looked forward to the various summer performance and study programs for organists and lovers of organ music. This message was due to speak about our intense preparation for Holy Week and Passover services, times when our vocations as organists are most visible to the communities that we serve. In the current climate, however, it is difficult to think of much else besides what next week, or tomorrow, will hold.

The realities of self-isolation, loss of work, and the sudden displacement from our physical community are real. I am sure that many of you are experiencing a profound sense of unrest and uncertainty. It may be of little consolation, but approximately a third of the world’s population is sharing that very experience. In that sense we can at least appreciate a sense of strength and unity through our shared adversity. I want to assure you that the AGO is here for you. Our greatest asset is our sense of community, and to that end I thought it would be helpful:

1. **Let us know your news.** What are you doing to pass the time? Do you have access to a practice instrument? Have you sorted and catalogued that dusty pile of sheet music you’d been saving for a rainy day? Has your church been holding services? Pre-recording them for online viewing?
How has that experience been? Email us your thoughts and experiences [here](#).

2. **Keep in touch** using [Zoom](#) and [Skype](#). These are two excellent and free ways to maintain audio and video contact with your family, friends, and colleagues. Zoom allows for multiple video contacts to speak on one call and works very well for work meetings of family calls.

3. **Read, listen, and enjoy.** YouTube is an extraordinary resource. Search for a familiar video and allow yourself to be drawn down the rabbit hole from there. There are some extraordinary performances and masterclasses available. A tenor colleague of mine, Zach Finkelstein, has an excellent blog, [middleclassartist.com](#), with articles that focus on exactly how the current situation has affected artists country-wide, as well as musings on what’s to come in 12 or 18 months.

4. **Let us know how we can help.** Your Board is busy discussing ways in which we can be most helpful to you. Please see James Wetzel’s column below about an upcoming survey that seeks your input.

The road ahead is uncertain. Challenges and adversities that would have seemed unimaginable in January are now the reality of the lives of so many of us. It is the sincere hope of this Chapter that we can be present for you as a community devoted to the performance and study of music for that King of Instruments, the pipe organ.

With my very best wishes,

[Signature]

James Kennerley, *Dean*
From the Executive Board

Claudia Dumschat, a current Auditor of the Board, has been appointed Newsletter Ad Coordinator. If you are interested in taking out an ad in this monthly publication, please write to: newsletterads@nycago.org.

Benjamin Sheen recently relocated to Oxford where he now serves as Sub-Organist of Christ Church Cathedral, and therefore has resigned from the Board. Colin MacKnight has been named to fill Mr. Sheen's position as a member of the Class of 2020 and has also been appointed Exam Coordinator.

Janet Yieh, a member of the Board's Class of 2022, has been appointed Chair of the Nominations Committee. Janet has subsequently formed said committee and will present a ballot in a forthcoming separate email. All the Officers' positions are up for election and the new Class of 2024 needs to be appointed.

The annual Membership Directory has been published in previous years at the beginning of the calendar year. The Board has decided that it would be
more advantageous to publish henceforward at the end of the summer, in anticipation of the program year. Material, including member information, ads, and programming, will be collected over the coming months.

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**Program News**

**See You Next Year**

All further anticipated events for the remainder of this season have been canceled. The Program Committee is preparing a slate of events for the 2020-2021 season, and we hope to be able to announce at least some of those planned events in the June newsletter. Ideas and suggestions are always welcomed by the Committee and may be submitted [here](#).

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Register for all choir dates [here](#).

Register for drop-in dates [here](#).
Quote of the Month

*But let my due feet never fail
To walk the studious cloister's pale,
And love the high embowed roof,
With antique pillars massy proof,
And storied windows richly dight,
Casting a dim religious light.
There let the pealing organ blow,
To the full-voic'd quire below,
In service high, and anthems clear,
As may with sweetness, through mine ear,
Dissolve me into ecstasies,
And bring all Heav'n before mine eyes.*

~from *Il Penseroso* by John Milton

From the Editor

**The At-Home Edition**

**Redeem the Time**

*How much of our professional life has become a Groundhog Day: creatively moribund, predictable, and boring?* A veritable lifetime has passed since that question was posed in last month's column, and any notion of predictability is risible now. How many of us who begrudged some mundane task of only a
fortnight ago would pay handsomely to have its security restored?

While it would be all too easy to call this time in quarantine a curse to be endured, and while it might be delusional to call it a gift to be appreciated, it is nevertheless an opportunity to be utilized. Which begs a new question: how should we pass this interim?

Fear not, I am not about to pat you on the head with an irritatingly banal bromide—some patently obvious remark about how we should read a book, call a friend, or cook a new dish. George Banks's riposte about going to fly a kite comes to mind.

The Best Plans
Those who know me personally will all too readily attest to my penchant for planning and my disposition for orderliness. These traits, although hopefully not with my particular idiosyncrasies or compulsions, are found in many organists and are ones that help us navigate the multifaceted nature of our duties. So I am certain that I am not the only church musician out there who is tempted to spend this quarantine designing next season in minute detail—a joy to which my early summer is usually dedicated. But with the future so unknown, with previously stable (or in some cases, already attenuated) resources now in question, I have to acknowledge that such a task is probably not the best allocation of my day. That is not to say that I should not plan at all, but to acknowledge that the future may not follow the old pattern.

It's Déjà Vu All Over Again
I am working out a routine that takes advantage of the singularity of this moment by engaging in things from which I will benefit, professionally and personally, no matter the particulars of six months hence. For me, this means neither rigidly keeping as close to my old schedule as possible (new wine into old wineskins), nor completely starting from scratch. Rather, I am maintaining known pursuits, such as running, emailing, and editing editions, while trying foreign ones, like practicing the organ. So my aim is to sustain some semblance of normalcy and to engage in salutary things for which I routinely have failed to make time. And fine, if these projects include reading, calling, and cooking, bon appetit.

Through a set list of tasks, I hope to prevent one day spilling into the next in some different form of Groundhog Day than the one we discussed last month. (I fully acknowledge this partially stems from my unfamiliarity and perhaps even discomfort with free time.) Without exchanging business for mere busy-ness,
one might consider this a period of research, of gathering as much information and assessing as many potential outcomes as is conceivable, of preparation more than of planning. Thus may we come out of this quarantine a better person for whatever future awaits us.

**How Is It for You?**
All the above demonstrates my great ability to offer unsolicited advice; what about your experience? We know that the ever impecunious arts are especially vulnerable in these times, but Guilds such as ours were formed to be of professional guidance in these critical circumstances: to be a forum through which individual voices are heard, common concerns are discovered, and successful remedies are universalized.

This week, the National Headquarters arranged a virtual meeting of Chapter officials from across the country to address the virus's artistic and financial implications, and the results of which will be conveyed to you.

Locally, our Chapter is composing an e-survey. Through it we will gather information from you so that we will know how best to be of assistance. Over the next few days, please write to me with any questions you would like to see asked on the survey and any concerns you would like to share.

Grateful for your attention, I am,

Sincerely,

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

In these times, love like Jesus, but wash your hands like Pontius Pilate.

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