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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Dean's Message
OrganFest!

August is usually a lull for us organists. The hype of the July convention has started to subside, repertoire is being planned for the following season, and vacation time beckons. But, as with just about everything else these past few months, things could not be more different. Some of us have lost work, or at least significant parts of it. Others are struggling to come up with new ways to keep our craft alive in a time when so much of the future remains up in the air. I hope that being part of an organization like ours and being able to share (albeit not in person right now) a common interest with others provides you with a sense of comfort during these uncertain times.

On a distinctively positive note, I hope that you all watched the magnificent OrganFest 2020 performances last week. Thanks to the magic of the internet you can watch (or rewatch) them here. I cannot imagine how much planning, work, and creativity went into producing such an entertaining set of videos in such short time (all amidst the backdrop of a canceled convention, which itself took many months to plan). Bravo to the AGO for attaining such heights of artistic and digital prowess, and bravi to all the talented performers, composers, presenters, and everyone else who made it such a resounding success. I found it deeply rewarding to see so many members and friends of the NYC Chapter involved in the OrganFest. It is a particular testament to the relevance and necessity of an organization like ours, particularly in times of physical separation.

Your newly elected chapter board is busy preparing a fabulous slate of programs and events that will continue to engage, educate, and fascinate all of us who love the organ and its music. We look forward to seeing you online in September, and in person in due course! Thank you for your continued membership and support.

Until then, please have a safe and restful remainder of the summer.

With my best wishes,
Membership Directory Advertising

Support the Chapter and place your advertisement today

The 2020-2021 Membership Directory will be published in early September to coincide with the beginning of the program year. The Directory of the Chapter membership, with promotional messages from a select group of advertisers, will reach over 700 professional organists, church musicians, and people in related fields. The Directory will circulate throughout the metropolitan New York area, as well as most of the fifty states and several foreign countries through the Chapter’s dual memberships.

You are invited to take advantage of the opportunity to reach this large and influential market by placing an advertisement in the Directory of the New York City Chapter. An advertisement will bring your message to a wide readership and simultaneously support the Chapter by helping to defray the cost of the Directory. Advertisers who purchase 1/2 page or more will be entitled to five copies of the Directory, upon request.

The rates and terms are provided on the order form available HERE.

All materials and payments are due by August 10, 2020 (extended deadline)

2020 Price List
Professional card @ $55.00
1/8 page (horizontal) @ $65.00
1/4 page @ $85.00
1/2 page @ $140
Full page @ $250
Center spread @ $450
Inside front cover @ $525 (full color)
Inside back cover @ $525 (full color)
Back cover @ 600 (full color)
Thank you in advance for supporting the Chapter. Please send an email with any questions.

NYCAGO Chapter Board

**Dean:** James Kennerley  
**Sub Dean:** James Wetzel  
**Secretary:** Raymond Nagem  
**Treasurer:** Patrick Kreeger  
**Registrar:** Larry Long  
**Auditors:** Paolo Bordignon and Andrew Henderson

**At-large (Class of 2024):** Loraine Enlow, Nathaniel Gumbs, Bernadette Hoke, Colin MacKnight, Jared Lamenzo, and Lena Tharp.

**At-large (Class of 2022):** Sam Bartlett, Gregory D'Agostino, Donald Meineke, William Randolph, Jason Roberts, J. David Williams, and Janet Yieh.

The new board's term began July 1st. The biographies of the board members are provided [here](#).

Coronavirus Relief Fund

The Chapter is providing an emergency relief fund for current members of the Chapter (all categories, including dual membership) financially affected by the Coronavirus and its aftermath. Funds will be allocated on a first-come basis up to a total of $350 per person. **Applications and disbursements will be handled as discretely as possible.** Please email Claudia Dumschat with your request.

Classified

For sale: collection of organ music. All classical/sacred; approximately 40 volumes plus some single pieces; most are used. $1 per volume. Highlights include: Bach (8 volumes), Buxtehude (4), Stanley (3), Franck (3), Willan (2),
Brahms, Bruhns, Lubeck, Mendelssohn, Sweelink, Widor, and more. Ideal for a church organist or an organ student. Cash and pick-up only. For inquiries, email Chapter member Eric Daffron.

From the Editor

Where the Heart Is

Returning Home
St. Paul Cathedral in my hometown of Pittsburgh houses a landmark Rudolph von Beckerath organ from 1962, and I spent a good deal of my teenage years sitting on its bench. (To say that this instrument is the reason I became an organist is hardly an exaggeration.) Every summer for decades now, St. Paul's has held a series of Sunday afternoon recitals. I last played on the series in 2010, but usually spend an afternoon with my old friend every time I am in "the Burgh." As most things under the sun were being canceled for the foreseeable future, I assumed that my recital this summer would be nixed as well. Incredible though it may seem to New Yorkers for whom the return to public performances is proving to be excruciatingly protracted, the show is going on. And while I would have enjoyed the recital under any circumstances, I am now all the more appreciative of such an opportunity because of its rarity.

Housekeeping
St. Paul's is a soaring Gothic building that, even with its reduced capacity, can easily accommodate an organ recital "crowd" several times over. Plus, the Cathedral's acoustics are so generous that you can sit anywhere in the nave and appreciate the sound. Many pews are tastefully roped off, the instructional signage is professionally displayed, and in every other way the staff and volunteers have made the Cathedral inviting and comfortable without compromising the restrictions set forth.

Household Accounts
All clergy and musicians are searching for a balance among the sometime-conflicting needs of the people they serve: to worship; to experience beauty; to gather and socialize; to preserve the public health and observe the law; to
remain financially solvent so that their work may continue. We musicians have our own needs: to practice the craft we have spent a lifetime refining; to offer our gifts to our fellows (and, for some of us, to God); to ensure that our art form remains culturally relevant; all the while supporting ourselves economically. St. Paul's, as with countless other churches and public institutions around the country, is trying to function as normally as possible in decidedly unusual times, and I applaud this reasonable equilibrium. For those who feel it is still unsafe or who are unable to journey out, numerous web-based resources are provided. And for those who, out of religious piety or artistic desire, decide to attend in person, they can in a manner not completely dissimilar to what they have known. In other words, whether on a couch or in a pew, one is made to feel at home.

**Feeling at Home**
A home feels like home because of the habits we form and practice within it. (The place where you leave shoes, "your" chair at the dinner table, etc.) For me, the interruption of habituation in our public life is the most alarming aspect of this whole ordeal. Traditions and institutions that have functioned through war, depression, and pestilence have been disrupted. Will the season ticket subscriber, having gone without for a year, remember to renew? Will the faithful usher be interested in returning? Will the dependable donor still be dependable? Without some return to public life soon, these seemingly trivial, localized discontinuities, will, I fear, cyclone up into more institutional-level failures, and it is on those generous individuals and cultural organizations that our artistic survival depends.

My hopeful enjoiner this month is to strive for normalcy in whatever way possible. For some, that may mean practicing on a keyboard in an apartment because there is not access to an organ. For others, that may mean compiling a choir in Garageband instead of in stalls. While for some of us, it means making public gatherings as welcoming and safe as possible so that those continuing to support us feel inclined so to do, and in turn truly feel comfortable welcoming others when they decide to venture out as well.

Submitted for our mutual enrichment in these days, may I remain,

Sincerely,

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

Westward the sun sinks, grave and glad; but far
Eastward, with laughter and tempestuous tears,
Cloud, rain, and splendor as of orient spears,
Keen as the sea’s thrill toward a kindling star,
The sundawn breaks the barren twilight’s bar
And fires the mist and slays it. Years on years
Vanish, but he that hearkens eastward hears
Bright music from the world where shadows are.
Where shadows are not shadows. Hand in hand
A man’s word bids them rise and smile and stand
And triumph. All that glorious orient glows
Defiant of the dusk. Our twilight land
Trembles; but all the heaven is all one rose,
Whence laughing love dissolves her frosts and snows.

~Algernon Charles Swinburne

Getting to Know You

The Riverside Church
490 Riverside Drive at 122nd Street
Christopher Johnson, Director of Music and Organist
Editor's note: For many years, many locals, myself included, have enjoyed spending summer Tuesday evenings up at Riverside Church, sitting outside in the park listening to the carillon and then cooling off inside for the organ recital. Because this year's series was canceled due to the quarantined, I thought it would be an appropriate way of paying tribute to this long-standing tradition in which so many local organists have participated by having Riverside Church be the August feature.

General Information

The Riverside Church is a neo-Gothic landmark located in Morningside Heights between 120th and 122nd Streets, and its immediate neighbors are Columbia University, the Interchurch Center, Manhattan School of Music, Union Theological Seminary, International House, and Grant's Tomb. The congregation traces its history from the earliest days of New York City, beginning with the establishment of the First Baptist Church in lower Manhattan around 1762. The cornerstone of the current edifice was laid November 27, 1927. Construction proceeded rapidly over the next three years, and the church was dedicated on October 5, 1930. Riverside celebrates its 90th anniversary this fall.

Financed with gifts from members of the church including the industrialist and philanthropist John D. Rockefeller Jr., the architects based their design on mainly French Gothic structures, especially the Cathedral at Chartres, which included commissioning glass makers from France for the magnificent stained glass windows. Various figures both biblical and secular are integrated into the statuary of the church, including Charles Darwin, Albert Einstein, Michelangelo, Johann Sebastian Bach, Abraham Lincoln, Florence Nightingale, and Louis Pasteur.

The exterior of Indiana limestone conceals the building's steel frame which supports the immense weight of the seventy-four-bell carillon housed in the tower's upper stories, donated in honor of Laura Spelman Rockefeller. The 20-ton bourdon bell remains the largest tuned bell in the world. In the late 1950s the seven-story south wing was added, today known as the Martin Luther King
Jr. Wing, which houses additional office and meeting space.

Riverside, an ecumenical church with its roots in the Baptist faith, is currently dually-affiliated with the United Church of Christ and the American Baptist Churches USA. Its history reflects the modernist religious theology of its founding pastor, Harry Emerson Fosdick, and continues his mission of being "interdenominational, interracial, and international.” It stands on a legacy of commitment to social justice advocacy; Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela, and Desmond Tutu have all spoken from its renowned pulpit. (source: Landmarks Preservation Commission May 16, 2000; Designation List 313 LP-2037)

**History of the Music Program**

The music department has enjoyed a long and continuous evolution since the founding of the church. During the tenure of Virgil Fox, the Aeolian-Skinner organ was built to his design. The instrument achieved international renown through Fox's concertizing and regular broadcasts on the church’s own radio station WRVR. The tenures of Directors of Music Frederick Swann and John Walker saw further development of the organ at the hands of Anthony Bufano (longtime curator of organs), which resulted in the instrument that we know today.

Further tonal refinements by Robert Pearson, the church’s organ curator since 1995, helped better match the organ to significant acoustical adjustments made to the Nave during the late 1990s. It was also during this period that many of the musical traditions of the church were established, including the annual Candlelight Carol Festival; the New Year’s Eve organ and carillon recitals and Watchnight service which culminates in a swinging peal of the tower bells at midnight; the Annual English Handbell Festival, a massed gathering of ringers from around the country; and the Annual Series of Summer Organ Recitals.

Two bronze plaques, commissioned from the estate of long-time congregant and music lover John Robison, commemorate the organists and carillonneurs since the founding of the church, and were dedicated in 2018 and installed in the South Hall Lobby. Each plaque is inscribed with the first phrase of the hymn “God of Grace and God of Glory” - the text written in 1930 by Harry Emerson Fosdick for Riverside’s dedication.
Current Music Program

The Riverside Church is home to a robust and multi-faceted music program, made up of some 160+ musicians who share in the program’s almost year-round music-making. With two organists, six choir directors, daily office staff, carillonneur, full-time organ curator, and a staff of organ and piano technicians, the program is humming round the clock.

Nine ensembles comprise Riverside’s choral offerings which include opportunities for volunteers, professionals, and children of all ages. Genres spanning traditional choral music to spirituals and classic/contemporary gospel. Instrumental offerings including strings and handbells. The Riverside Choir – the church’s principal choral ensemble – is a semi-professional choir of 40, leading worship for all Sunday morning Services of Worship from mid-September through early June, as well as for other major non-Sunday liturgical celebrations. Singing traditional choral music from several centuries, with a particular knack for beautifully rendering African American Spirituals, the choir, as well as its smaller version – the Riverside Chamber Singers – can also be heard in several concerts and Services of Choral Evensong throughout the year.

Riverside Organists

Dr. Harold Vincent Milligan (1930-1940)  
Frederick Kinsley (1940-1946)  
Virgil Fox (1946-1965)  
Frederick Swann (1966-1982)  
Dr. John C. Walker (1983-1992)  
Dr. Timothy Smith (1992-2008)  
Christopher Johnson (2009-present)

Riverside Carillonneurs

Kamiel Lefévere (1930-1960)  
James R. Lawson (1960-1989)  
Joseph Clair Davis (1990-1998)  
Dionisio Lind (1999-2019)  
Charles Semowich (2019-present)
The Organ

Much has been written about the famous “Riverside Organ” – the large and renowned Aeolian-Skinner built in the early 1950s made particularly famous in its earlier days by musicians like Frederick Swann and Virgil Fox. A comprehensive description and history can be found at the on The New York City Organ Project. In addition to this well-known instrument, Riverside is also home to two Austin organs from the 1960s, both of which are also described on the aforementioned webpage. The 200-ton Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial Carillon is housed in the upper reaches of the iconic tower and is played regularly for Services of Worship and in recital. The church also houses more than 20 pianos, including several fine large concert instruments by both Steinway and Mason & Hamlin.

Chapter Member at the Church

Christopher Johnson serves as Director of Music and Organist at the Riverside Church and as Director of Chapel Music at The Interchurch Center. A native of Tulsa, Oklahoma, he completed undergraduate and graduate studies at the Cleveland Institute of Music, Manhattan School of Music, and Yale University, where he was a student of Thomas Murray. An orchestral musician by training, he performs as a flutist with The Knights, an exceptional Brooklyn-based orchestra that tours extensively and has to its credit a number of recordings. A former prizewinner at both the San Marino and National Association of Negro Musicians organ competitions, Chris presents recitals throughout the United States and Europe. An enthusiastic and avid flyer of airplanes, he is also a type-rated commercial pilot and flight instructor.

Christopher Creaghan is currently Associate Organist at the Riverside Church. In addition to service playing and accompanying the Riverside Choir webcast live each Sunday, he collaborates with the administration of the music program. He has long been active in the New York City region as a recitalist,
accompanist, and church musician. He is a graduate of the Manhattan School of Music where he studied with McNeil Robinson, is a former board member and Dean of the NYCAGO, and is married to choral composer and contractor Nancy Wertsch.

Visiting Online (and eventually) in Person
Church Website
Music Page

The church is currently offering a Sunday service via webcast at 10:45 AM.

Joke of the Month

What's the difference between a viola and an onion?

No one cries when you cut-up a viola.

Visit our amazing website!