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Dean’s Message

Preis und dank!

Welcome, spring. A very happy Passover and blessed Easter to all who celebrate. This is the season when so many of us breathe new life into organs that have for the most part remained subdued since the beginning of Lent. Whether it’s the ubiquitous Widor, a roaring hymn fanfare, or a rousing choral anthem, many of us hold a particular piece dear to our hearts at this time of year. For me, it’s Bach’s Easter Oratorio. First performed in Leipzig on Easter Day in 1725 (and two days after the congregation would have experienced Bach’s St. John Passion on Good Friday), the work is derived from earlier orchestral and cantata movements and went through several revisions before Bach settled on the 1740 version that is most commonly performed today.
The opening movement—a splendid fanfare scored for three trumpets, timpani, oboes, and strings—and the closing chorus, *Preis und dank* (“Praise and thanks”) exude Easter joy in every note. The sinfonia also works very nicely as an organ transcription, with or without trumpets. As with so much of Bach’s music, there is an overwhelming sense of elation and hope. But there is also a distinctly humanistic quality that acknowledges the adversity and struggle that leads to that very joy. When Mary Madelene encounters the disciples Peter and John at Jesus’ tomb, they sing of their *betrübtes Grämen* (“troubled grieving”) and *banges Herzeleid* (“and anxious heartache”), set by Bach as a recitative for the four soloists.

The destabilizing political, religious, and socio-economic aftershocks of the Thirty Years’ War were still being felt in the eighteenth century. Bach experienced tremendous personal grief and loss. Of the twenty children that he fathered, only ten survived into adulthood. His first wife, Maria Barbara, mother of Wilhelm Friedman and Carl Philipp Emmanuel, died suddenly and unexpectedly in 1720. (Bach was away on a trip with his employer, Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Köthen, and returned to find that she had already been buried.) His frustrations with colleagues, students, employers, and society at large are widely documented in publications like *The New Bach Reader*. For Bach, it would seem, one must endure the full gamut of human experience in order to obtain a true understanding and expression of sadness, pain, suffering, excitement, joy, and hope.

I truly hope that none of you have suffered the trial and tribulation that Bach experienced during his life. But the sense of loss—of hope, of employment, of family time, and of so much more—during this Coronavirus period has been overwhelming for many. We have much to which to look forward, including the upcoming elections of the 2021 International Performer of the Year Award. As the health situation begins to heal and the world considers its return to normality, let us remember the importance of music, and Kapellmeister Bach’s universal message of joy and thanks.

With my best wishes,

James Kennerley, Dean

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**Program News**
April Chapter Event

Pipe Organs of NYC

After an hiatus for Lent and Holy Week, this series will resume later this month as submissions continue to be received. All of the prior videos in the series have been archived on our YouTube Channel for later viewing.

Events around Town

Virtual Stations of the Cross

On March 29, Amplify Female Composers, a platform co-founded by NYCAKO member Janet Yieh and Carolyn Craig, presented an hour-long Stations of the Cross featuring reflective Lenten and Holy Week organ music by women composers. The 15 stellar participating organists from across the country included NYCAKO colleagues Diane Meredith Belcher, Chelsea Chen, Nathaniel Gumbs, Bálint Karosi, Colin MacKnight, Jennifer Pascual, and Aaron Tan. The full program is archived and available for listening here.

The Complete Organ Works of Dupré at Saint Thomas Church

(In Person and Virtual)

Saturday, April 24th at 3 PM
Saturday, June 5th at 3 PM

Saint Thomas’s Organist and Director of Music Jeremy Filsell will perform the complete works of Marcel Dupré in a series of six recitals, as 2021 marks the 50th anniversary of Dupré’s death. The events are presented as part of the Concerts at Saint Thomas 2020-2021 season. They are live-streamed at the times above and will remain available on-demand for one month after the performance. For the remaining recitals in this series, a limited number of in-person tickets will also be available; for more information and to view, click here.

Please email suggestions and comments for the Program Committee here.
 Bulletin Board

Organ Available

The First Moravian Church at 154 Lexington Avenue and 30th Street is willing to donate their 1840 Henry Erben organ to a qualified party.

Anyone who is interested in the offer should email organ builder Anthony Meloni of Meloni and Farrier who provided the following information:

The 1840 Erben organ was originally installed at the Huguenot Church near Wall Street. After that church closed, the organ was sold to the Moravian Church in 1863. In 1906, an organ builder named Thomas Wood was contracted to modernize the organ. The original keydesk and vertical stop jambs were replaced with a protruding console and oblique stop knobs typical of the period. The keyboards and Choir windchest were also cut down to eliminate the bottom four notes (GGG, AAA, AAA#, BBB) making it a CC compass. All of this required some redesigning of the tracker and stop actions.

Meloni and Farrier restored the instrument in 2015, returning the keyboards and Choir windchest to their original dimensions. The stop jambs and console were built new out of mahogany in the original style. Wind chests and tracker system were restored. Approximately 70% of the pipework is original.

The First Moravian Church has made an arrangement with a developer to sell their property on Lexington Avenue, with a plan to replace the present building with a high-rise, with Moravian Church receiving a new sanctuary on the first floor. The architect and church members want a new instrument, designed to fit the space in the chancel, which will be built by Meloni and Farrier.

NYCAGO Organ Project

Send Bulletin Board submissions to the editor for publication.
Member News

Appointment

Dr. Nathaniel Gumbs

has recently been appointed Interim Director of Music of the Episcopal Church of the Heavenly Rest on Fifth Avenue at 90th Street, succeeding Mollie Nichols whose retirement was announced last month. Dr. Gumbs is also a new member of the roster of Karen McFarlane Artists, Inc.

Submit news items (professional appointments, retirements, marriages, births, obituaries, etc.) to the editor for publication.

From the Editor

What Did You Expect?

The Boss

I am not terribly up to date. More often than not, my wife has to explain to me just who or what is breaking the internet this week. But I do know who Bruce Springsteen is, thank you very much.

I make this declaration because Rolling Stone recently published an article in which the author, a conservatory-trained violinist, wonders how it is possible that she was able to graduate without being taught who Mr. Springsteen is. (Mind you, the question is not how she got through life not knowing who he is, but how school did not teach her about him.) A predictable disquisition then ensues. The outmoded course of study spent too much time with Bs like Bach and Beethoven when, to use the modern patois, Beyoncé and The Boss are “where it’s at”. If classical music is going to save itself, bolster ticket sales, become less elitist, exclusionary, purist...This exhausting litany of woe has been chanted with such repetition that it finishes itself.

Ne nos inducas in tentationem

I have often been tempted to devote this column as a return volley to such arguments, correcting their skewed perception of history or refuting their
destabilizing prescription for the future. But then I would be indulging in the same regurgitative self-gratification of which I have just accused so many others of being guilty: for this topic is not only exhausting, but is well and truly exhausted.

**A Higher Level of Abstraction**

That being said, over the course of this and several successive columns, I will seek to address the *overarching* question: just why are these arguments so frequently made, so intractably cemented, so untraceably old? And the answer (or at least *an* answer) is: expectations.

There is a great and growing disparity between one’s expectations and reasonable results. This leads to personal dissatisfaction, of course, but also to an institution’s defensive calcification or to the sort of rapid, inorganic change that can often have the opposite effect of the one intended and bring the whole enterprise crashing down. And since Covid’s lockdown and the slow emergence from it provide ample opportunities to dig in your heels or to kick off your shoes completely, the timing for such a discussion is at hand.

**My First Example**

Returning to the *Rolling Stone* article above, a graduate should not expect the college curriculum to have imparted every last bit of knowledge needed for a career to flourish. I have the utmost admiration for the education that Juilliard, my own alma mater, tried to bestow on me. Not because it was perfect – it certainly was not – but because it was as good as (really, better than) what was reasonable to expect. While admittedly my history of music courses did not include Bruce Springsteen, they also did not mention Bairstow and gave only a cursory nod to Byrd. Exposure to these Bs would have had decidedly more application and relevance in my immediate field than to The Boss. But it would have been irrational to assume an exhaustive survey of all music, especially *non-classical* music, in the span of a four-year program from a *classical* music conservatory, which in any case by its very nature does not principally focus on academic work, but rather the technical and artistic mastery of an instrument.

I might expect Westminster Choir College or Yale’s Institute of *Sacred* Music to devote a little more general study to Byrd, just as I might expect Berklee College of Music to offer a little more in the way of Bruce, but I chose to attend Juilliard, and so did the author from *Rolling Stone*. Choices should inform expectations.

What is more, I deliberately said “tried to impart” because I certainly was not as attentive, inquisitive, or studious as I might have been. I recognize that, whatever may have been flawed in my *received* instruction, much more was lacking in my *applied* scholarship. Inputting should inform intaking.

To be continued.
Submitted for your consideration,

Sincerely,

James D. Wetzel, Sub Dean

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**Getting to Know You**

**The Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine**

1047 Amsterdam Avenue at 112th Street

*Editor’s note: I am grateful to Dr. Raymond Nagem for compiling the information below.*

**General Information**

The Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine, the mother church of the Episcopal Diocese of New York, is chartered as a house of prayer for all people and a unifying center of intellectual light and leadership. Its cornerstone was laid in 1892, and construction continued steadily until 1941, when the Nave was dedicated just a week before Pearl Harbor. Since then, a small amount of work has progressed on the towers and west façade, with about two-thirds of the planned structure now complete. Official seating capacity depends on configuration but is well over 2,000; overflow events have packed many more into standing room.

The Bishop of New York since 2013 is the Right Reverend Andrew ML Dietsche, and the Right Reverend Clifton Daniel III has served as Dean since 2017. The Cathedral’s resident congregation, the Congregation of Saint Saviour, was founded in 1992 and is currently led by the Reverend Steven Lee, Canon Pastor and Vicar. Other notable clergy in the Cathedral’s history include Bishops William T. Manning and Paul Moore, and Dean James Parks Morton, the
“Green Dean” who spearheaded many of the interfaith dialogues and artistic residencies for which the Cathedral is well known today.

**History of the Music Program**

The first Organist and Choirmaster was Miles Farrow (1910-1931); he was succeeded by Norman Coke-Jephcott (1932-1953) and Alec Wyton (1954-1974). Wyton was one of the guiding forces behind the Episcopal Church’s *Hymnal 1982* and whose hymn tunes and service music are still in wide use today. Wyton also wrote a significant body of organ music, including *Fanfare*, which was meant to display the Cathedral’s State Trumpet, and a beautiful arrangement of Billy Strayhorn’s *Lotus Blossom*. David Pizarro, who had studied with both Coke-Jephcott and Marcel Dupré, served from 1974-1977. He was followed by Paul Halley from 1977-1990. Halley’s compositions, a blend of the English cathedral tradition and jazz harmony, with the Cathedral organ’s lush strings serving as the accompaniment, created an instant sonic signature for the Cathedral. The post of Cathedral Organist was held by Dorothy Papadakos, known for her thrilling improvisations, from 1990-2003, and by Timothy Brumfield from 2003-2009.

After a period of time when the positions of Organist and Choirmaster had been separated, Bruce Neswick was appointed Director of Cathedral Music in 2008; he continued the great tradition of improvisation at Saint John the Divine, while adding a great deal of contemporary music, including many of his own choral works, to the Cathedral’s repertoire.

**Current Music Program**

Kent Tittle’s tenure as Music Director, since 2011, has seen the re-establishment of the Great Music in a Great Space concert series and the continued growth of the choral program, which now includes 18 professional singers, 33 choristers from the Cathedral School, and 30 volunteer singers. Special mention should also be made of two Artists in Residence, saxophonist Paul Winter and organist David Briggs.

**Organs of the Cathedral**

The Great Organ of the Cathedral was built by Aeolian-Skinner as Op. 150-A, a rebuilding and expansion of Op. 150 (1911) by the Ernest M. Skinner Co. It contains 146 ranks, playable from a four-manual console. The instrument includes the famous State Trumpet on 50 inches of wind pressure, located at the West End some 500 feet from the console.
On December 19, 2001, just over eight weeks after 9/11, a five-alarm fire broke out in the North Transept of the Cathedral, in what was then the gift shop. A full restoration of the building required seven years, and in some ways its condition was significantly improved. Ceiling tiles were sealed with epoxy, helping to clarify the Cathedral’s famously vast acoustic. The organ was dismantled for the first time since the 1930s and was fully cleaned. A new console with solid-state relays and 512 levels of memory was built, and several stops prepared for in the 1954 specification were added: some using vintage pipework, and others built precisely to Aeolian-Skinner patterns. All in all, the Great Organ was restored to better-than-new condition. This mammoth project was done by Quimby Pipe Organs of Warrensburg, Missouri, and Cathedral Organ Curator Douglass Hunt, and completed for the rededication service on November 30, 2008.

On Palm Sunday, April 14, 2019, the Cathedral suffered a fire in a storage room in the crypt. Thanks to the quick response of the New York Fire Department, the fire was extinguished quickly, and the Cathedral suffered no structural damage. However, as in the 2001 fire, a layer of smoke and grime settled on every exposed surface, including inside the organ. Since then, the Great Organ, along with the instrument in Saint James Chapel, has been silenced until a thorough cleaning can be accomplished. In the meantime, a digital instrument from Walker Technical Company is in use for services and concerts.

In addition to the Great Organ, two smaller Aeolian-Skinner organs are located in Saint Ansgar Chapel (1956) and Saint James Chapel (1961). Also in regular use are a Flentrop portative, gifted by Carnegie Hall, and a three-rank Schlicker organ in a music studio space, gifted by Dr. Stephen Hamilton. Synod Hall, on the corner of 110th Street and Amsterdam Avenue, contains what is probably the oldest Skinner organ in unaltered condition, built in 1913. However this instrument is currently unplayable and is archived in place until funding for its restoration can be found.

Chapter Members at the Cathedral

Kent Tritle is one of America’s leading choral conductors. Called “the brightest star in New York’s choral music world” by The New York Times, he is Director of Cathedral Music and Organist at the Cathedral; Music Director of the Oratorio Society of New York, the acclaimed 200-voice volunteer chorus;
and Music Director of Musica Sacra, New York’s longest continuously performing professional chorus.

In addition, Kent is Director of Choral Activities at the Manhattan School of Music and is a member of the graduate faculty of The Juilliard School. An acclaimed organ virtuoso, he is also the organist of the New York Philharmonic and the American Symphony Orchestra and on the organ faculty of the Manhattan School of Music.


[ktorntitle.com](http://ktorntitle.com)

**Dr. Raymond Nagem** is Associate Director of Music and Organist of the Cathedral and a member of the organ faculty at Manhattan School of Music where he teaches organ literature, service playing, and improvisation. He completed his D.M.A. at The Juilliard School in May 2016, where he was a student of Paul Jacobs.

A native of Medford, Massachusetts, Dr. Nagem attended the Boston Archdiocesan Choir School and began organ lessons there with John Dunn. He earned his B.A. from Yale University in 2009, as a double major in Music and Psychology, and studied the organ with Thomas Murray, and his M.A. in 2011 from Juilliard. He has worked since 2010 at Saint John the Divine, where he has primary responsibility for service playing and choral accompaniment and frequently conducts the cathedral’s several choral ensembles. In addition to these duties, he performs in recital both in New York and across the country. Dr. Nagem’s album *Divine Splendor* is available on the Pro Organo label.

[raymondnagem.com](http://raymondnagem.com)

**Samuel Kuffuor-Afriyie** is Organ Scholar of the Cathedral. A native of Brooklyn, he is currently an M.B.A. candidate at Syracuse University and earned his B.M. in organ performance, with a minor in Economics, from Syracuse University in 2020, studying with Dr. Anne Laver. Samuel is a recipient of the Brooklyn Chapter American Guild of Organist Scholarship and the Gregory R. Keefe Memorial Scholarship by the Syracuse Chapter, and he
was also an E. Power Biggs Organ Fellow through the Organ Historical Society.

Samuel previously served Saint Leonard’s Anglican Church and Ghana Wesley United Methodist, both in Brooklyn, as well as Grace Episcopal Church and the Syracuse University Catholic Campus Ministry in Syracuse.

David Briggs, Artist in Residence of the Cathedral, is an internationally renowned organist. He has also become one of the foremost organ transcribers of symphonic works and frequently performs improvisations to silent films.

At the age of 17, David obtained his F.R.C.O. (Fellow of the Royal College of Organists) diploma, winning the Silver Medal of the Worshipful Company of Musicians. From 1981-1984 he was the Organ Scholar at King’s College, Cambridge University, during which time he studied organ with Jean Langlais in Paris. The first British winner of the Tournemire Prize at the Saint Albans International Improvisation Competition, he also won the first prize in the International Improvisation Competition at Paisley. Subsequently David held positions at Hereford, Truro, and Gloucester Cathedrals in the UK and was Artist-in-Residence at St James Cathedral, Toronto. He is also a prolific composer and his works range from full scale oratorios to works for solo instruments. He has recorded a DVD, and 30 CDs, many of which include his own compositions and transcriptions. 
david-briggs.org

Other Musicians of the Cathedral

Bryan Zaros, Associate Choirmaster
Christina Kay and Jie Yi, Music Administrators

For more information:
Cathedral Website
NYCAGO Organ Project

The Cathedral is open for sightseeing in addition to prayer, meditation, and reflection. For the time being, all services remain virtual.
Tuesdays at 6
Every Tuesday at 6 p.m.

Raymond Nagem, organ
David Briggs, organ

Tuesdays at 6 is a weekly organ recital series presented by the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. It began as an early response to the coronavirus pandemic and has blossomed into an already beloved Cathedral tradition. Concerts, which run about 45 minutes, are presented at 6 p.m. each Tuesday and are free to the public. They can be accessed on the Cathedral’s YouTube and Facebook pages. The series features Raymond Nagem, Associate Director of Music and Organist, and David Briggs, Artist in Residence.

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Quote of the Month

Salve, festa dies

Thou, of life the Author, death didst undergo,
Tread the path of darkness, saving strength to show.
Come, then, True and Faithful, now fulfill thy word;
‘Tis thine own third morning—rise, O buried Lord!
"Welcome, happy morning!" age to age shall say;
Hell today is vanquished, heaven is won today!
~Venantius Fortunatus (c. 530-609)
translated by John Ellerton (1826-1893)

Note from the Editor

This newsletter is usually published on the first of the month or on the Monday thereafter if the first is on a weekend. But with April 1st falling during Holy Week, I decided to give some distance between the holidays and this publication, assuming that if it went out sooner, few would read it in the email purge that inevitably follows. (Not to mention the breathing room a later date it gave the editor.) Happy Easter! ~JDW

NYCAGO Chapter Information

General Inquiries

Chapter Contacts Page
Chapter Committees and Appointments

Newsletter

James D. Wetzel, editor
The newsletter is published on the first of every month. Please submit all material (advertising, announcements, classifieds, etc.) to the editor by the 24th of the preceding month.

Executive Board

Dean: James Kennerley
Sub Dean: James D. 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 biographies of the board members are provided here.
Visit the NYCAGO Chapter website by clicking here.

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