Gradus ad Parnassum

Since its appearance in 1725, Joseph Fux’s (c. 1660–1741) monumental composition treatise has become the foremost primer in Palestrina-style counterpoint. Translated as “Steps to Parnassus” (so-named for the mountain range in central Greece which was dear to Apollo and the nine Muses), it was used by the likes of Bach (the 1725 Latin edition remains the only surviving theoretical book from his own library), Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, Brahms, Heinrich Schenker, Paul Hindemith, and countless other composers and theorists. I certainly gained a great deal of knowledge from its pages as an undergraduate student, and I imagine that many of our readers did, too. It is a reminder of the almost incalculable influence that a single object—or teacher—can have on generations of students.

In November, we celebrate one of the great teachers and performers in our field. John Weaver died this year at the age of 83. To say that his life, career, and influence were monumental can only be an understatement. Dr. Weaver was director of music at Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York City from 1970–2005, and...
served as head of the organ department at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia 1971–2003, and also chair of the organ department at the Juilliard School from 1987–2004. He was named International Performer of the Year by the chapter in 2005 and held honorary doctorates from Curtis and Westminster College.

I was privileged to last spend some time with him and Marianne at the Kotschmar Organ in Portland, Maine (where I have the distinct pleasure of being Municipal Organist) during a concert by former Weaver student Nathan Laube. John reminded me that he had performed annually on the organ every August—since 1956—an extraordinary and unbroken tradition lasting half a century. What is perhaps most remarkable about John’s life is the number of organ students that he inspired, and the number that they, in turn, have gone on to inspire. John was, literally (thanks to his height!) and figuratively a living example of the concept of Gradus ad Parnassum. It is no coincidence, for example, that John’s successor at the Juilliard School, Paul Jacobs, was voted this year’s International Performer of the Year.

We will celebrate John’s life as part of our program offerings this year, in partnership with his beloved Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church (Dr. Andrew Henderson, host). Before that, Chapter competition winners, Eddie Zheng (2019) and Cecily Demarco (2021) will present a concert at the church of Saint Vincent Ferrer (James Wetzel, host) in conjunction with the National AGO’s campaign, “Year of the Young Organist,” which runs from July 1, 2021–June 30, 2022. During these twelve months, any individual under the age of 30 can become a new member or renew their membership for free. Those eligible can take advantage of this offer by following this link. The AGO offers a wealth of reasons to become part of the organ community, and the vibrancy of the performance programs of the New York City chapter is a particularly good
reason to join. Please forward this message to anyone you think would enjoy the benefits of free membership.

With my best wishes, as ever,

James Kennerley, Dean

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Program News

In-Person Chapter Events Resume This Month!

RCYO Winners Recital

Thursday, October 21st – 7 PM
Church of St. Vincent Ferrer
869 Lexington Avenue

Eddie Zheng and Cecily Demarco, the 2019 and 2021 first-prize winners of the AGO/Quimby Northeast Regional Competition for Young Organists and students at The Juilliard School, will offer a joint recital on the magnificent 86-rank Schantz organ. This recital also celebrates the National AGO “Year of the Young Organist” initiative.

This hour-long program, featuring works of Bach, Duruflé, Elgar, Franck, Schumann, and Widor, is free and open to all. St. Vincent Ferrer comfortably seats 800, so there is no need to be anxious about spacing. Attendees must show proof of vaccination against Covid-19, and all attendees must wear masks. The event will also be live-streamed via the Chapter facebook page.
Memorial Tribute to John Weaver
Sunday, November 14th – 3 PM
Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church
921 Madison Avenue at 73rd Street

MAPC’s Saint Andrew Music Society and the NYCAGO are cosponsoring an organ recital performed by students of Dr. John Weaver, featuring Alan Morrison, Chair of the Organ Department at the Curtis Institute, Richard Elliott, Principal Organist of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, and New York City organists David Enlow and Andrew Henderson.

Admission is free (at the door) for all NYCAGO Members and is $25 for the general public ($20 for students and seniors). Attendees must show proof of vaccination against Covid-19, and all attendees must wear masks. For more information, click here.

Pipe Organs of NYC
Last season’s ten episodes of Pipe Organs of NYC, as well as the presentations from the 2021 Presidents’ Day Conference, are available for viewing on the Chapter’s YouTube Page.

Events around Town
**Charlie Chaplin’s *The Kid***

**Thursday, October 14th – 7 PM**  
*Basilica of Saint Patrick’s Old Cathedral*  
*261 Mott Street*

The Friends of the Erben Organ present **Peter Krasinski**, acclaimed silent film accompanist, in a celebration of the iconic film’s centennial. This will be the first time the historic 1868 Henry Erben organ has been used for a silent film accompaniment. For more information and to purchase tickets, click [here](#).  

The [Concert Calendar](#) is up and running. Please consider adding yours to it for the upcoming season. Email submissions to Sam Bartlett [here](#).

*Please email suggestions and comments for the Program Committee [here](#).*  

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**Bulletin Board**

**AGO Year of the Young Organist**

**Investing in the Future**

The AGO National Council is committed to membership recruitment, retention, and growth within our organization. During the Year of the Young Organist, July 1, 2021–June 30, 2022, any individual under the age of 30 can become a member or renew her/his membership for free as part of this program.

Do you know of a young organist in New York City who is not a member of the Guild? Please reach out or let us know.

The Year of the Young Organist will provide opportunities for both personal and professional development. Programs will include master classes and webinars on a wide variety of topics including:

- Organ Maintenance  
- Insurance  
- Retirement and Healthcare  
- Conducting  
- Video Recording  
- Vocal Pedagogy.

Click [here](#) for more information.

**Pogorzelski-Yankee Memorial Organist Scholarships**
Young organists are encouraged to apply for the Pogorzelski-Yankee Memorial Scholarships, which are presently awarded for a period of up to four years to four undergraduates. Next year (2022), the AGO will increase the number of scholarships and award two scholarships. One entering college freshman and one college student currently enrolled at either the freshman, sophomore, or junior level will be awarded for the 2022–2023 academic year ($15,000 annually). Each award is renewable if requirements are met.

Click [here](#) for more information.

**In memoriam**

**Edith Ho**, long-time Organist and Choirmaster of Boston’s Church of the Advent’s died on July 30th following a long illness. She was 88. A Requiem Mass was offered at the Advent on Saturday, November 11th. Tributes by Mark Dwyer, Ross Wood, and Katelyn Emerson may be found [here](#).

A memorial service for the late **B. Michael Parrish**, known to many in the NYCAGO Chapter, will take place on Monday, October 18th at 11 AM at Christ Church, Georgetown (31st and O Streets, NW, Washington, D.C. 20007). Michael was a church musician in the Washington, D.C. area and the longtime Organist and Choir Director at Washington Hebrew Congregation. He held positions in the AGO, District of Columbia Chapter, from 1981–2004, including Dean from 1995–1998. He passed away on December 14, 2020.

*Send Bulletin Board submissions to the editor for publication.*

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**Member News**

**Appointments**

**Christopher Creaghan** has been appointed Interim Director of Music for the Riverside Church in the City of New York as of August 1st, where he has been Associate Organist for the past ten years. He has long been active in the New York City region as a recitalist, accompanist, and church musician. He has performed recitals on many of New York's largest instruments including the organs of Saint Bartholomew’s Church, the Church of Saint Mary the Virgin, and Saint Patrick’s Cathedral, and has performed with such groups as The Collegiate Chorale, The New York Virtuoso Singers, The Desoff Choirs, at the Berkshire Choral Festival, and with the American Symphony Orchestra at the Bard Music Festival and Carnegie Hall. Christopher is a graduate of the Manhattan School of Music where he
studied with McNeil Robinson and whose works he often performs. An active member of the American Guild of Organists for many years, he is a past Dean of the New York City Chapter. He is married to composer and mezzo-soprano Nancy Wertsch.

The Cathedral of St. John the Divine has appointed Daniel Ficarri as the next Associate Organist, following in the footsteps of Raymond Nagem. Daniel earned his bachelor’s and master’s degrees from The Juilliard School, where he studied with Paul Jacobs. Previously, Ficarri served as Organist at the Church of Saint Paul the Apostle near Columbus Circle and as Organ Scholar at Hitchcock Presbyterian Church in Scarsdale. Named one of the top “20 under 30” organists by The Diapason magazine, Ficarri has performed in Carnegie Hall and Alice Tully Hall under the batons of Marin Alsop, Itzhak Perlman, David Robertson, and James Gaffigan. Also an avid composer, Daniel recently composed works for Choir and Organ magazine, the Madison Symphony Orchestra, Christ Cathedral in Garden Grove, California; and several of his works are available through MorningStar and E. C. Schirmer.

Dr. Raymond Nagem has been appointed Minister of Music of The Brick Presbyterian Church on Park Avenue, leaving the Cathedral of St. John the Divine where he served as Associate Director of Music and Organist since 2011. He is a member of the organ faculty at Manhattan School of Music, where he teaches organ literature, service playing, and improvisation. 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, studying the organ with Thomas Murray, and his M.A. in 2011 and D.M.A. in 2016 from Juilliard, where he was a student of Paul Jacobs.

Organ Historical Society Recitalists

Chapter members Dr. Paolo Bordignon (August 1), Nathaniel Gumbs (August 1), Joshua Stafford (August 15), and Eric Plutz (August 29) were featured recitalists for the Organ Historical Society’s Kaleidoscope of Colors: A Festival of Pipes which aired in August and is still available for viewing online here.

Submit news items (professional appointments, retirements, marriages, births,
From the Editor

Beating Time

Those with Ears Ought to Hear
The Covidial break from turning out weekly voluntaries (which for me lasted from mid-March to mid-June of 2020) was an opportunity to reevaluate the quality of the organ music I offer from my perch on Lexington Avenue.

I am immensely proud of Saint Vincent Ferrer’s professional Schola. We sing an immense amount of repertoire to an exacting standard; indeed, the singers are expected to be essentially note-perfect all the time. So in last year’s unanticipated free time, I was forced to asked myself: Is my organ playing on par with the choral music (or the stained glass, the woodwork, etc.) on offer? Surprise, surprise, my answer was no. And for a further dose of humility, I knew that it was not the result of simple technical inability (although there is plenty of that), but rather a deficiency in discipline.

How Do You Get to Carnegie Hall?
Paul Jacobs, the winner of the 2021 International Performer of the Year Award, is legendary, especially among his pupils, for his consistently meticulous preparation and the exacting standard to which he holds himself. Without making light of the natural talent with which he was doubtless born, I would argue – and certainly do mean as a great compliment – that Paul has achieved so much because of his unflagging work ethic. Bluntly, he practices a lot and it shows.

Now as for me, I never used to practice. And, O boy, it showed. I shudder to think of the people who heard me on the countless occasions where my eagerness to present the repertoire I wanted to play (or thought I should be playing) outpaced my willingness to actually learn it well. But during Covid, I was amazed to discover that it was not too late for this old dog to learn new tricks or to break (alright, maybe just attenuate) long-ingrained bad habits.
Over the next few months, I propose to explore the ways by which we can strive to improve the quality of our offerings on the bench, whether our career path is concertizing or church work, or somewhere in between. How can we maximize that most precious of our resources: time.

Submitted for your consideration,

Sincerely,

James D. Wetzel, Sub Dean

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**Quote of the Month**

Some pumpkin spice flavored food for thought.

*Knowledge is good, method is good, but one thing beyond all others is necessary: and that is to have a head, not a pumpkin, on your shoulders, and brains, not pudding in your head.*

~A.E. Housman (1859–1936)

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**NYCAGO Chapter Information**

**General Inquiries**

[Chapter Contacts Page](#)
[Chapter Committees and Appointments](#)

**Newsletter**

James D. Wetzel, *editor*

The newsletter is published at the beginning 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, Jared Lamenzo, and Lena Tharp

At-large (Class of 2022): Sam Bartlett, Gregory D'Agostino, 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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