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Dean’s Message

Resolutions?

I’ve never been one for New Year’s resolutions. My own theory is that if one is able to push for extraordinary things in January, why not do that all year? According to popular experience (and this New York Times article), more than half of our New Year’s resolutions fail. Any optimist will quickly point out, however, that the flip side of this is that almost half of them succeed. The key to success, if we are to trust the 1981 the journal, Management Review, is to follow the simple acronym S.M.A.R.T. Our resolutions should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.

Following this advice, I set myself the task of transcribing an orchestral work over the Christmas break (it’s February and it’s still in progress!) Playing through the various Lemare transcriptions of Wagner’s finest opera moments (could there be a more fitting antidote to the previous month’s Advent and Christmas carols?), I came across that chord sequence hallowed by composers,
musicologists, and audiences alike: the “Tristan chord”. The term has always puzzled me: it is far more than just a chord. The effect of those notes (upon which a myriad of books and academic articles galore have been based) relies as much on the three notes that precede it, as well as those that follow. If we are to believe the basic rules of Common Practice tonal harmony, dissonance should have appropriate preparation and resolution.

The commanding notion of the “Tristan chord” lies, therefore, in the ambiguity that it casts on that very conception of tonal harmony. Played in isolation, it can be made to sound more or less indeterminate depending on the resolution one appends (in that sense it makes for an excellent improvisation technique when one is moving between remote keys or musical styles). Wagner, of course, uses this ambiguity to dramatic effect, aided by the rests that follow, to intensify the opera’s sense of yearning, instability, and uncertainty. For a composer often characterized by excess, Wagner achieves remarkable power with great economy.

You might well ask how a chord sequence that has evaded resolution since 1865 is a good model for our current New Year’s resolutions. I am not really sure that it is, and it certainly turns the S.M.A.R.T. acronym on its head, but it did serve to open the floodgates for composers of the late nineteenth century (and well into the twentieth) in the use of extended chromatic harmony all the way to atonality itself. As a concept, it has proved highly adaptable and fruitful, a lesson that we would do well to emulate in our resolutions.

We enter 2022 in the depths of the Omicron surge in New York City and many parts of the Western world. The sense of yearning, of the unknown, has followed us from 2021 and shows little sign of giving up. Thankfully, we have become experts at pivoting, webcasting, wearing masks, testing, and all of that jazz. For many, it has also strengthened our sense of resolve, following through on our promises with measurable actions. The Chapter shared a statement last month, crafted by the Equity in Diversity committee, that crystalized our current thinking on and continuing commitment to making the organ and its music available to as many people as possible. We have already assembled an ongoing list of resources for organ music by African-American composers, and chapter programs this season will feature several African-American performers. Likewise, we have been delighted by the increased attendance of younger members, inspired by the National AGO’s Year of the Young Organist initiative.

Whatever your feelings about resolutions—of the Wagerian or New Year’s variety—I wish you all the very best for a positive, healthy, and musical 2022. At the very least, I hope to see you at our upcoming Presidents’ Day Conference on Monday, February 21st. It promises to be a spectacular event.

With my best wishes, as ever,
James Kennerley, Dean

The “Tristan chord”: evading resolution since 1865 (taken from the opening prelude of Richard Wagner’s (1813–1883) opera, *Tristan und Isolde*, WWV 90).

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**Program News**

**Chapter Events**

**Presidents’ Day Conference: New York Central**

Monday, February 21st – 10 AM–5 PM

[The Brick Presbyterian Church](#)
Park Avenue at 91st Street
Dr. Raymond Nagem, host

10 AM – Improvised Stations of the Cross
*by [David Enlow](mailto:) and [Dr. Kalle Tovio](mailto:)*

*The morning session will conclude with the presentation of the 2021 International Performer of the Year Award to Paul Jacobs.*

11:30 AM – Lunch on your own in the neighborhood

[Church of the Heavenly Rest](#)
1085 Fifth Avenue at 90th Street
Janet Yieh, host

1 PM – Panel Discussion: At the Crossroads of Composition and Improvisation
*with [Dr. David Hurd](mailto:) and [Bruce Neswick](mailto:)*
moderated by Janet Yich

2 PM – Lecture: An Overview of 20th Century Sacred Music in New York
by Dr. Neal Campbell

3 PM – Coffee Break

3:30 PM – Hymn Festival of New York Composers: Our Creedal Faith
by Bruce Neswick

5 PM – Conference concludes

**General Information**
The 2022 Presidents’ Day Conference is being held in person. The registration table will open at 9:30 AM. (There is no pre-registration.) Because of Covid restrictions, breakfast will not be offered this year. The Conference’s events are free for NYCAGO Chapter and dual members. The general public is most welcome and all-day tickets may be purchased the day-of for $40. Public tickets for those attending only the 3:30 PM recital are $20.

Note that there are two locations this year: the morning session will be held at Brick Church and the afternoon sessions will be held at Heavenly Rest. Both churches require proof of vaccination for all attendees and masks must be worn while inside.

**Paul Jacobs in Recital**

*Tuesday, March 29th – 7:30 PM*

**Church of St. Mary the Virgin**
145 West 46th Street

2021 International Performer of the Year Award recipient Paul Jacobs will offer the first of two recitals (the date of the second recital to be announced) in which he will present the complete major organ works of César Franck, whose bicentenary we celebrate in 2022.

**Harlem Organ Tour**

*Saturday, April 23rd – 12 Noon–4 PM*

With Dr. Nathaniel Gumbs as our guide, we will visit three prominent churches within easy walking distance, hearing a brief demonstration-recital on each organ and a presentation about the congregation’s musical, architectural, and religious history.

**Convent Avenue Baptist Church**
425 West 145th Street at Convent Avenue

**Abyssinian Baptist Church**
132 West 138th Street, between Lenox Avenue and Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard

**Mother A.M.E. Zion Church**
146 West 137th Street, between Lenox Avenue and Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard

*Consider adding your events to the Concert Calendar for the season. Email submissions to Sam Bartlett [here](mailto:).

*Email suggestions and comments for the Program Committee [here](mailto:).*

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**Advertising**

**Presidents’ Day Program**

**General Information**

Advertising in the conference booklet is an excellent way to connect with fellow organists and the concert-going community. The professionally-printed booklet, which includes the day’s schedule, performers’ biographies, organ specifications, program notes, etc., is distributed in hard copy to all participants, shared on our Facebook page, and archived on our website.

Consider taking out an ad to promote your institution’s spring events, upcoming recitals, or professional services. Purchasing an ad also financially supports the Chapter and our conference. Advertising in the program booklet is open to all, so forward this on to others who may be interested.

*Please note that this is a different advertising platform than the monthly Newsletter and the recently-solicited Chapter Directory.*

**Advertising Rates**

**Black and white advertisements**
Full page (8.5 x 11) for $120
Half page (8.5 x 5.5) for $60
Business Card for $30

**Full-color, full-page advertisements**
$200 per page

**Deadline for Submission**

Please let James Wetzel know as soon as possible if you would like to place an ad by [emailing him](mailto:). For inclusion, please submit to him a high-quality PDF by
6 PM on Sunday, February 13th. Payment should be made via the Chapter’s Paypal account by clicking 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.

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. Click [here](#) for more information.

If 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.

**Stephens International Organ Competition**

**General Information**

The Music and Arts Program of Peachtree Road United Methodist Church, Atlanta, has announced the first Elizabeth B. Stephens International Organ Competition, June 15–17, 2022. The competition was founded by the family of the late Elizabeth B. Stephens, a great supporter of the arts at PRUMC and throughout Atlanta.

The competition is open to anyone who will be 32 years old and younger on June 15, 2022.

**Prizes**

1st Prize – $12,000  
2nd Prize – $6,000  
3rd Prize – $3,000

**Competition Parameters**

Submissions for the recorded round are now open, and will be accepted until Friday, February 25, 2022, 5 PM Eastern Standard Time.

Candidates will be notified of the result of the recorded round (which will be judged anonymously) on Monday, March 14, 2022.
Six finalists will be invited to Atlanta (all expenses paid) for the final of the competition which will take place on June 15–17, 2022.

Complete details and online application may be found here.

Send Bulletin Board submissions to the editor for publication.

Member News

Appointments

Henry Lee has been appointed Director of Music Ministry at West End Collegiate Church on the Upper West Side, beginning late October 2021. Prior to working at West End, he served for nine years at Grace Lutheran Church in Astoria, Queens, where he rebuilt the choir program and helped the congregation obtain a new pipe organ by Patrick Murphy.

Born in Taiwan and raised in Southern California, Henry holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in political economy and music from the University of California, Berkeley, and a Master of Music degree in organ performance from the Manhattan School of Music. He is also currently the music teacher at Astoria Lutheran School where he works with students from kindergarten to eighth grade; and he is the concert manager for Music Before 1800, the longest-running early music concert series in New York City.

[Link](westendchurch.org)
[Link](NYCAGO Organ Project)

Buck McDaniel has been appointed Director of Music at the Roman Catholic Church of Our Saviour, Murray Hill, and the Chapel of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, Kips Bay.

An undergraduate student of David Enlow at Hunter College, McDaniel has given recitals across the United States including Heinz Memorial Chapel (Pittsburgh), Saint John’s Church (Greenwich Village), Trinity Cathedral (Cleveland), and the Cathedral of Saint Peter the Apostle (Jackson, Mississippi). During his time as Organist and Director of Music at the historic Saint Andrew’s Episcopal Church in Cleveland, the choir was invited to perform at the 2018 Evangelism Matters Conference, a national convening of the Episcopal Church with Presiding Bishop Michael B. Curry. Other notable performances with the Saint Andrew Choir include Cleveland Public Theatre’s
annual Underground Railroad commemoration, Station Hope. As a composer, McDaniel’s works have been performed internationally in venues ranging from the Belfast Pipeworks Festival (Ireland), the Tanglewood Music Festival (USA), and Lincoln Cathedral (UK). Earlier this season, his chamber work *Memory Ground*, commissioned by the Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn to commemorate the 20th anniversary of 9/11, was featured in the *New York Times*, *Time Out New York*, and WNYC. His *Psalm Preludes* have entered the repertoire of Saint Thomas Church, Fifth Avenue, and his collaboration with producer Jacob Kirkwood, *Landscape Piece*, debuted at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art in 2019.

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**Eva Sze** has been appointed Director of Music at St. Agnes Church in Midtown Manhattan where she will work with a professional Schola which sings for two choral Masses each Sunday. Holder of the FAGO Diploma, Eva is serving her second term on the AGO's Committee for Professional Certification. Her principal organ teacher was William Enriken, but she has also studied with Gwendolyn Toth. Eva performed in masterclasses taught by Dennis Keene and Jon Gillock.

Prior to this appointment, Eva held positions at Roman Catholic churches in the Bronx and Queens; and also served as the organist for the Carmelite Order and the Franciscan Friars/Sisters of the Renewal. Eva is also an active choral singer. In addition to her church work, she is a music theorist and is currently on faculty at New York University. She studied composition at the University of Toronto and music theory, in particular Schenkerian analysis, at the CUNY Graduate Center.

stagneschurchnyc.org
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*Submit news items (professional appointments, retirements, marriages, births, obituaries, etc.) to the editor for publication.*
From the Editor

Presidents’ Day

Instead of an editorial this month, I would like to offer a narrative about our upcoming congress on Monday, February 21st. I hope that it will encourage you to attend what promises to be a wonderful day of music making. Entitled “New York Central,” the day will focus on composers, improvisors, and performers associated with the Big Apple. Please do consider posting an announcement in your church’s bulletin or sharing the information personally on social media.

From PLaza and RHinelander

The Chapter’s annual Presidents’ Day Conference has long been the keystone in the arch of our programming year. By showcasing the magnificent instruments within our City and by presenting local and guests artists of the highest caliber, it always draws people from up and down the East Coast. In the past three years – my term as chair of the Program Committee – we have enjoyed the gracious hospitality Saint Thomas Church and Saint Patrick’s Cathedral (2019); Temple Emanu-El (2020); and Saint Bartholomew’s and Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church (attended virtually, 2021).

Finding a venue (or several venues) for such a day is no easy feat, and it requires a great deal of time from the host organists. I am exceedingly grateful for the generosity that all of my colleagues, and their clergy and facilities managers by extension, have shown in these conferences, and indeed in all other events we have offered over the course of my term.

Things like accessibility (Is it in a part of town which is appealing and convenient?), availability (Is the inflexible date free on the calendar?), economy (Can we afford the janitorial and security costs?), and suitability (Is the space large enough to accommodate our merry menagerie?), as well as the more aesthetic factors such as the quality of the organ (Do we actually want to hear it?) and the beauty of the architecture (Does the building have an appeal of its own?) all must be accounted in some reasonable balance.

My section titles refer to the old alphanumerical telephone exchange names of our venues. It used to be that you could tell the location of a residence or business – and therefore could infer a lot about it – by its phone number, as
explained and lamented here and here. Over my term we have inadvertently been making our way uptown, from one revered East Side exchange to another. I did not set out to locate these four consecutive Presidents’ Day Conferences in such a geographically tight area; but, as I noted above, the calculus is complex, and this is simply how it worked out.

**To ATwater**

This year, we will gather (in person, thank heavens) at two churches on (or, idiomatically, “in”) the Upper East Side’ Carnegie Hill, so named because Andrew Carnegie built his mansion on Fifth Avenue at East 91st Street. That building is now occupied by the Cooper Hewitt-Smithsonian Design Museum; its last entrance of Presidnents’ Day is at 5 PM in case you would like to extend your cultural holiday.

The Brick Presbyterian Church and the Episcopal Church of the Heavenly Rest are two landmark buildings in the neighborhood, and both have newly-appointed organists: Raymond Nagem and Janet Yieh. Ray and Janet have been dear friends for years, and it has been a privilege to collaborate with them on this project. Architecturally, Brick and Heavenly Rest (Celestial Snooze) could not be more different, although they are equally compelling in their own way. The organs are perfectly suited to the programs to be played on them.

**Good Connections**

There are several things I would like to highlight regarding the line-up of artists for Presidents’ Day 2022.

David Enlow and Kalle Tovio’s Improvised Stations of the Cross has been rescheduled several times due to Covid from its initial date in March, 2020. It is admittedly a little odd to offer a Via Crucis in a church that does not actually have a set of Stations, but it otherwise fits perfectly within the theme of the day, and in any case is not a liturgical service. The Casavant organ at Brick is so well-suited to French style improvisation; and coincidentally both David and Kalle play Casavants at their resident churches: Opus 665 (1916) in the Church of the Resurrection and Opus 1047 (1924) in the Church of Notre Dame. I am delighted that we can finally hear these two renowned improvisers, and on an instrument that should feel like home!

Ray and I served as Bruce Newsick’s assistants at the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine during his tenure, so it is a personal joy for us to welcome him as our afternoon recitalist. Bruce has poured an incredible amount of thought into his program; his encyclopedic knowledge of and his own contributions to the American hymn repertoire have enabled him to construct a festival of such broad scope that we will all leave whistling a new tune. The singing of the congregation will be enhanced by an octet of professional singers: four from Brick and four from Heavenly Rest.
Two mid-afternoon lectures will be as engaging as the bookending performances. Although David Hurd has spent most of his career in New York, as a composer, conductor, lecturer, and recitalist he serves as an well-traveled ambassador for this City and Chapter. Can you imagine two musicians better qualified to speak to the American school of composition and improvisation than David and Bruce? And guiding their conversation will be Janet, whose work with the Guild, especially in coordinating so many initiatives during the pandemic, has demonstrated her gift for insightful commentary and collaboration.

Finally, the NYCAGO welcomes back Neal Campbell, known to many of us for his illuminating articles and biographies of New York organists. His lecture will examine some of the composers we will hear in Bruce’s recital, tying the day together very neatly.

Despite the many hurdles, delays, and uncertainties put in our path due to Covid, I am thrilled that the day is almost upon us, and I am looking forward to greeting you there in person.

Submitted for your consideration,

Sincerely,

James D. Wetzel, Sub Dean

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**Quote of the Month**

*Improvisation is too good to leave to chance.*  
~Paul Simon (b. 1941)

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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 to *the editor* by the 24th of the preceding month. To advertise in the Newsletter, please *email* ad coordinator Lena Tharp.

**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 2022):** Sam Bartlett, Gregory D'Agostino, Angelina Oh, Jason Roberts, J. David Williams, and Janet Yieh

**At-large (Class of 2024):** Diane Meredith Belcher, Loraine Enlow, Nathaniel Gumbs, Bernadette Hoke, Jared Lamenzo, and Lena Tharp

The biographies of the board members are provided [here](#).

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Visit the NYCAGO Chapter website by clicking [here](#).

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