

THE COUPLER



He is risen indeed

Long ago, faithful women
Proclaimed the good news
Of Jesus' resurrection,
And the world was changed forever.

Teach us to keep faith with them,
That our witness may be as bold,
Our love as deep,
And our faith as true. Amen.

-- from *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers* © 2002
Consultation on Common Texts admin. Augsburg Fortress.

Dear DC AGO Members,
I hope you all survived the intensity of Holy Week and were able to find moments of joy and beauty as you led your congregations through the annual ritual of the Lenten season and Easter Sunday. We can often push ourselves to the brink during these high-intensity moments, so I also hope you will find time to relax and refresh your minds and bodies in the aftermath.

As we approach the conclusion of another AGO year, we hope you will consider serving your chapter by
Continued on Page 5

APRIL 2024 IN THIS ISSUE



Chapter member 2
John Nothaft
commissioned a
work by Peter
Conte and played
it Easter Sunday.



The Member 3
Spotlight shines
on Peter Dierkes, a
member of our
substitute list.



Eric Plutz plays 6
Vierne's Fifth
Symphony and
other works at the
Basilica on April 7.



Janet Yieh of New 6
York City
performs April 19
at St. George's
Episcopal Church
in Arlington.

Save the date

Nathan Ringkamp performs the
April recital in our chapter's Music
at the Monastery Series.

Page 6

CONTE SUITE DEBUTS ON EASTER

A three-movement *Concert Suite for Organ and Brass Quintet* by David Conte was premiered on Easter Sunday at Lewinsville Presbyterian Church in McLean by organist, chapter member and director of music ministries John Nothaft and brass quintet. A. Scott Wood conducted.

The new first movement was commissioned by the church's Music Fund in memory of benefactor Helen Martin. The current second and third movements were commissioned by the Donald Sutherland Music Ministries Fund at Bradley Hills Presbyterian Church in Bethesda 13 years ago.



JOHN NOTHAFT

- Nothaft said he wrote to Conte last spring to ask for a sample or recording from a two-movement piece for brass and organ available for sale online. Conte responded that he had been working on an additional movement since the other two were premiered at the Peabody Conservatory with Sutherland and the C Street Brass Quintet.

Conte told Nothaft that he did not have a good recording of the first two movements. He added that if Nothaft could provide a good recording, he would dedicate the new movement to the church.

Nothaft is our chapter's membership liaison and the director of the Potomac Organ Institute run by the DC, Potomac and Northern Virginia chapters.

Continued on Page 5



American Guild of Organists
District of Columbia Chapter

DC AGO
Board of Directors
2023-2024

Dean
Paul Byssainthe Jr.

Secretary
Armand Peterson

Treasurer
Rob Church

Membership liaison
John Nothaft

**Web manager/Coupler
editor**
Pat Henry

Members-at-large
Samantha Scheff
Ronald (Trey) Walton
Rebecca Yoder

THE COUPLER

A monthly newsletter
published by the DC chapter
of the American Guild of
Organists.

Send submissions to
dcagochapter@gmail.com.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT ON PETER DIERKES



How did you become interested in the organ?

Like most organists (I expect), I started on the piano. When I was 11 or 12, we played some Bach inventions and my teacher then asked if I wanted to try it on the "king of instruments" -- he had a small electric organ in his house. I used to sit and watch the organist at our local church while my dad sang in the choir, and I'd always been interested in an instrument that seemed so complicated and fascinating (and loud!). So I began taking lessons on both instruments and never looked back!

What is your educational and professional background?

I've been in the Army for 12 years, in various functions. I completed the ROTC program at the University of Rochester, where I was lucky to take lessons at Eastman. The Army has

taken me around the world: Australia, Guam, Okinawa, Latvia, Lithuania, Ukraine, last year in Malaysia, and now this year in DC, studying for a year at Johns Hopkins.

The four best years of my career were spent, though, in North Carolina, where I was fortunate to have time and opportunity to return to the bench most weekends at Brownson Presbyterian, with a lovely and friendly choir, and with (best of all) regular access to practice! North Carolina also has provided an enduring group of wonderful music and organist friends: Stephen, Anne, Homer and Barron.

What are the organ's biggest challenges and joys for you?

With a career that is not locationally stable, the biggest challenge is finding opportunities to practice and play. The joy was first reaching a point where I started to enjoy playing and practicing, learning pieces I wanted to learn rather than seeing practice as a drag. Second, having pieces (especially around Christmas) that make the season or event especially real when you get to play them.

Why are you an AGO member?

I've been an AGO member since I was ... 12? I read TAOs to compile a never-ending list of new
Continued on Page 4

From Page 3

stop names. Our local organist, Gerry Troy (also an AGO member), used to take me to organ concerts. Later, I'd attend AGO Pipe Organ Encounters, getting to study under organists who, looking back, were incredibly generous with their time. My excellent and supportive teacher through high school, Dennis Elwell, was also a member and encouraged my participation.

What do you like to do when you are not on the bench?

I enjoy playing competitive (but not TOO competitive) sports with a few beers after. I picked up Gaelic Football and Aussie Rules Football in Malaysia and hope to find a club in DC for this year. Otherwise, a beer garden with friends, house projects or yard work are always entertaining weekends.



What's an interesting fact you would like people to know about you?

Besides being an excellent wiffleball pitcher, I'd be remiss if I didn't mention my family. I'm the oldest of eight, and between the eight, we have the foundations of an orchestra ... piano, organ, trumpet, trombone, violin, flute, clarinet and cello. A credit to my mom for ALL the lesson rides. My brothers also play the organ and have carved out quite a little playing niche in Philadelphia!

Tell us a funny/odd thing that happened when you were on an organ bench?

After I graduated college and started in the Army, my younger brother

Andrew (who bears a passing resemblance) assumed many of my summer sub positions. I was back in town, he was double booked, so I returned to a place I'd played for a few years to cover for him. After I finished, an older lady approached the bench and thanked me, saying it was good and "one day I'll even play like my older brother" (or something to that effect). Given I WAS the older brother, it's stuck with me ... one day, I'll play like me.

Editor's note: Peter is on our substitute list at dcago.org.

Conte commission performed at Lewisville Presbyterian

From Page 2

Conte (b. 1955) has composed more than 150 works. He lived and worked with Aaron Copland after receiving a Fulbright Fellowship for study with Copland's teacher Nadia Boulanger in Paris. Conte is professor and chair of the Composition Department at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. He received the Raymond Brock commission from the American Choral Directors Association, one of the nation's highest honors in choral music. He is the American Guild of Organists' "Distinguished Composer of the Year" for 2024.



DAVID CONTE

The work's first movement, "Prelude," begins with a fluttering, quasi-birdsong motif in the organ, accompanied by a chorale texture in the brass, which is interspersed with a chant-like motive in the trombone. The recitative character of the music steadily grows to stately and declamatory music at the climax.

The second movement, "Ostinato," is a passacaglia in F minor built on a three-measure bass line first stated in the organ pedal which includes all 12 tones of the chromatic scale. The mood of the movement is predominantly solemn and serious, though there is a recurring contrasting section based on a more lyrical, expressive theme. The variations on the ground bass become progressively more rhythmically animated, leading to a climax featuring the second melodic idea. The work ends solemnly.

The third movement, "Fanfare and Scherzo," opens majestically and is built on a series of imitative entries in the brass with flourishes in the organ. This texture is reversed as the phrases unfold in this opening section. This gives way to a brief lyrical transition, leading to a sudden change of tempo in the Scherzo, which is an energetic and graceful Allegro dominated by fleeting triplets in all instruments. After rising to a climax, the opening music returns in a more rhythmically active texture, concluding with a brief return to the Scherzo music.

Dean's Message

From Page One

running for a seat on the executive board for the 2024-26 term. It takes many hands to run a chapter, and there is great joy in collaborating on exciting projects with your colleagues.

Our nominating committee will be reaching out to individuals in the next few weeks as they put together a slate for our upcoming elections. If you are interested in serving in a specific capacity, we'd love for you to contact via our chapter email at dcagochapter@gmail.com. For inspiration, see Page 11.

We also hope you will once again save the date for our Annual Juneteenth Festival on Wednesday, June 19. It will be a wonderful day of informative workshops, music and fellowship with your colleagues. Stay tuned for more details.

Grace & peace,
Paul Byssainthe, Jr.

ORGAN EVENTS

Plus see Music at Midday on Page 7

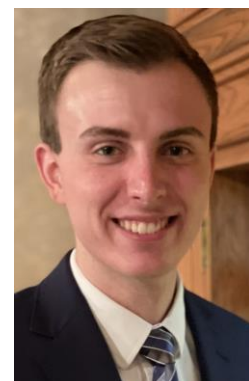
Wednesday, April 3, 12:15 pm: Recital by Brent Erstad, St. John's Lafayette Square, 1525 H St. NW. Works by Bach, Böhm, Mendelssohn and Linker.



Sunday, April 7, 6 pm: Eric Plutz, left, plays the annual Octave Day of Easter recital at the National Shrine of the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, 400 Michigan Ave. NE. Plutz will play the entire Fifth Symphony of Louis Vierne as well as works by J.S. Bach and Gerald Near.

Monday, April 8, 12:10 pm: The Bach Consort presents *Ich lebe, mein Herze, zu deinem Ergötzen*, BWV 145 and organist John Walthausen performs as part of St. Mark's Capitol Hill Downtown Cantata Series. **The program repeats Tuesday, April 9, 12:10 pm at Church of the Epiphany, 1317 G St. NW.**

Sunday, April 14, 4 pm: Nathan Ringkamp (St. Dominic Church, DC), right, performs as part of Music at the Monastery, the members' recital series of the DC AGO chapter. Franciscan Monastery of the Holy Land at 1400 Quincy St. NE.



Sunday, April 14, 7 pm: Benjamin LaPrairie plays an Easter-themed program on the new Kegg organ in Christ the King Chapel at Christendom College, Front Royal, VA, as part of the college's Beato Fra Angelico Fine Arts Series. Works by Bach, Duruflé, Franck, Langlais and Messiaen.



Friday, April 19, 8 pm: Janet Yieh, CAGO, left, performs on the Pasi organ at St. George's Episcopal Church, 915 N. Oakland St., Arlington, VA. Northern Virginia AGO chapter event.

Sunday, April 21, 3 pm: James O'Donnell, organist emeritus at Westminster Abbey in London, performs on the 2009 Letourneau organ at 3 pm and conducts Choral Evensong at 4 pm at Emmanuel Church, 811 Cathedral St. in Baltimore. Repertoire for Evensong includes Benjamin Britten's cantata *Rejoice in the Lamb* and James MacMillan's *Who Shall Separate Us?* Free-will offering. emmanueldowntown.eventbrite.com

Wednesday, April 24, 5 pm: Potomac Organ Institute end-of-year recital at St. George's Episcopal Church, 915 N. Oakland St., Arlington.

Sunday, April 28, 4 pm: Sean Burns performs as part of the Dr. Lawrence P. "Lon" Schreiber Organ Recital Series at First Baptist Church, 16th and O streets.

MUSIC AT MIDDAY

National City Christian Church presents Music at Midday on Fridays from 12:15 to 1 pm. The church is at 5 Thomas Circle NW in DC. Donations are gratefully accepted.

April 5: Organist Joby Bell and pianist Ling Yu Hsiao perform a program of duets, including works of Denis Bédard, Leo Sowerby and Joel Raney.



April 12: Baltimore pianist Chad R. Bowles performs romantic music from Eastern Europe, including works of Nikolai Medtner and Franz Liszt.

April 19: Organist Zacchaeus Lock (Brookfield, CT), left, performs works of Eugene Thayer, Charles Ives, J.S. Bach and Arvo Pärt, concluding with the world premiere of his own original composition.

April 26: In a program titled "New Offerings from North America," organist Carol Feather Martin (Arlington, VA) performs recent works by North American composers Angela Kraft Cross, Gwyneth Walker, Leslie Adams and Rachel Laurin.

New anthem by Ken Lowenberg suitable for Mothers' Day



Longtime local AGO member Kenneth Lowenberg, FAGO, has composed an anthem to be published by [Augsburg Fortress](#).

Titled "Mothering God," it is due to be released April 5, just in time for your choir to learn it by Mother's Day, Sunday, May 12.

Using the hymn text of the same title, it emphasizes the nurturing qualities of God: "Creator, source of every breath, offering your food of life, hold me in your arms as I root and grow."

The scoring is for SAB choir with organ accompaniment. The tune is "Norwich" by Carolyn Jennings, 1995.

BASILICA *of the* NATIONAL SHRINE
of the IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
America's Catholic Church



Octave Day of Easter

FREE ANNUAL CONCERT

in the Great Upper Church

Sunday, April 7, 6 p.m.



Eric Plutz, ORGANIST

University Organist
Princeton University

The Basilica invites you to a free concert given by Eric Plutz, University Organist at Princeton University. This annual concert in joyful celebration of our Lord's Resurrection is performed each year by Guest Musicians on the Octave Day of Easter, also known as Divine Mercy Sunday. **The Concert will feature the complete Fifth Symphony of Louis Vierne, as well as works by J.S. Bach and Gerald Near.**



Scan the QR code to see the full schedule of events happening during the Easter Season.

400 Michigan Ave NE, Washington, DC 20017 | www.nationalshrine.org | (202) 526-8300



THE EMMANUEL CHOIR

Maryland's premier liturgical chamber choir



Organ Recital & Choral Evensong featuring

JAMES O'DONNELL

Organist Emeritus of Westminster Abbey

for 22 years, James O'Donnell directed music in historic Westminster Abbey, including the Royal Wedding of Prince William & State Funeral of Queen Elizabeth II

hear this world-class organist perform on Emmanuel's majestic Létourneau pipe organ and lead the choir in a transcendent program of Choral Evensong

April 21 at 3pm
free admission

TICKETS & INFORMATION



**emmanueldowntown.
eventbrite.com**

Music at Emmanuel is grateful for the support of the **Maryland State Arts Council**, the **William G. Baker, Jr. Memorial Fund**, creator of the Baker Artist Portfolios, www.BakerArtist.org, and Emmanuel's **Friends of Music**.

811 Cathedral Street
in the heart of Mt. Vernon
Baltimore

Emmanuel Episcopal Church.
All are welcome. All are loved.

JOB OPENINGS

DC

Organist: Georgetown Visitation Monastery, 1500 35th St. NW. Sundays and possibly special Feast Days and/or holidays. Rodgers Inspire 227 organ. Contact Alicia Quick at 202-337-3350, Ext. 2311.

Maryland

Director of music and arts: Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church, Bethesda. \$70,000-75,000 annually. Click [here](#) for details from agohq.org.

Organist: Grace United Methodist Church, Gaithersburg. \$13,500-14,000. Click [here](#) for details from agohq.org.

Director of music: Our Lady of Visitation Catholic Church, Darnestown. Full-time. Click [here](#).

Organist: Grace Lutheran Church, Fort Washington. \$10,000 to \$15,000 annually. Click [here](#).

Organist/pianist: Holy Cross Catholic Church, Garrett Park. \$22,000-30,000 annually. Click [here](#).

Director of music: St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Waldorf. \$21,000-24,000 annually. Three-manual Rodgers Trillium 927 organ. Click [here](#).

Minister of music: Episcopal Church of the Ascension, Gaithersburg. Casavant pipe organ. \$20,000-24,000 annually. Contact the church for details.

Music director/pianist: Channing Memorial Church, Unitarian Universalist, Ellicott City. 6'3" Yamaha C3 grand piano. \$12,000-14,000 annually. Click [here](#).

Director of music: Holy Redeemer Catholic Church, College Park. Full-time. From \$50,000 annually. Click [here](#).

Music director: First Baptist Church of Suitland, District Heights. Part-time. \$18,000-20,000 annually. Click [here](#).

Virginia

Organist/director of music: First Presbyterian Church, Annandale. \$20,000-25,000 annually. Click [here](#) for details from agohq.org.

Director of music/organist: Old Presbyterian Meeting House, Alexandria. Full-time. \$82,000-88,000 annually. Click [here](#) for details from agohq.org.

Continued on Page 11

JOB OPENINGS

From Page 10

Director of music: Rock Spring Congregational United Church of Christ, Arlington. \$69,000 - \$74,000 annually. Click [here](#).

Music director/organist/pianist: Roberts Memorial United Methodist Church, Alexandria. \$40,500-51,300 annually. Click [here](#).

Organist/pianist: Walker Chapel United Methodist Church, Arlington. Send an email to pastor@walkerchapel.org.

Organist: St. John's Episcopal Church, Arlington. \$10,800-13,500 annually. Contact the church for details.

Music director: Friendship United Methodist Church, Falls Church. Part-time. Click [here](#).

Ceremonial organist: Fort Myer. Part-time. Click [here](#)..

The Value and Benefits of Serving as a Chapter Leader

Serving in a leadership position for your chapter can support both personal and professional development and recognition. As a chapter leader, your responsibilities when working with other board officers will require:

- ✓ Perseverance
- ✓ Optimism
- ✓ Integrity
- ✓ Respect
- ✓ Transparency
- ✓ Collaboration
- ✓ Optimism
- ✓ Energy

Most importantly, collaborate to support your chapter and AGO through its:

Mission: To foster a thriving community of musicians who share their knowledge and inspire passion for the organ.

Vision: to engage, support, and uplift every organist. You will have the ability as part of a team to guide and inspire fellow musicians, fostering a community that respects, engages and uplifts.

Above all, you will have fun working together as volunteers to achieve some really awesome things!

THE COUPLER

Promote your event, product or cause with an advertisement in *The Coupler*, the official publication of the District of Columbia Chapter of the American Guild of Organists.

Rates: full page (4 issues), \$100; half-page (4 issues), \$50; quarter page (4 issues), \$25.

Email advertising requests to dcagochapter@gmail.com with "The Coupler" in the subject field.

Make checks payable to DC Chapter, American Guild of Organists and send them to DC AGO, c/o Robert Church, 3562 13th St NW, Washington, DC 20010.

LIFE MEMBERS

Blanche Curfman

Nancy Dodge

Robert Grogan

Eileen Guenther

Irv Lawless

Kenneth Lowenberg

Donald Sutherland

David Hearn (deceased)

Albert Russell (deceased)



Acoustical Design
Collaborative Ltd

Acoustic Design Services

Acoustical Design Collaborative, Ltd is an independent consulting firm specializing in ecclesiastical spaces where natural acoustics for music and unobtrusive amplified speech are essential for traditional worship celebration. Services provided to building committees, architects, and organ builders include:

- **Acoustic & Audio-Visual Systems Design**
- **Room Reverberation Enhancement**
- **Choir & Organ Space Planning**
- **Speech Intelligibility Assessment**
- **Sound System Tuning & Adjustment**
- **Expert Opinion, Peer Review & Client Advocacy**

We strive to provide professional advice based on prudent design criteria, cost-effective solutions, clear concise recommendations, and open communication, delivered in a timely and economical manner.

A strong personal involvement characterizes our services. After understanding the design issue, we use a systematic technical approach, tempered with practical experience to provide a range of options factoring budget and aesthetic concerns that are concisely summarized to facilitate informed decisions.

Your acoustic challenge may be one we have already solved. Please contact us to see how our combined 45 years of consulting and university acoustics teaching can improve your house of worship.

Tel: 410.821.5930

Your Sound...Our Passion

info@akustx.com

SINGLE
SOURCE
SOLUTIONS

We service most brands of digital church organs and have hundreds of parts for sale on our web site for Rodgers, Johannus, Roland, Allen, Galanti and other brands.



R.A. Daffer Church Organs, INC.
ESTABLISHED 1977

is a full-line representative for pipe, digital, and hybrid organ solutions.



THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE, WASHINGTON, D.C.



LOCAL REPRESENTATIVE

Randy Sheets, Sales Representative | RSheets@DafferOrgans.com | 540-842-4450

www.DafferOrgans.com | 410-792-2252