
THE COUPLER

The Dean's Message



Dear DC AGO Members,

How hard it is to believe that Christmas is once more upon us and that we church musicians are entering the 'crazy' season once again: See you on the other side and good luck in all your musical endeavors over the next few weeks. We are publishing the COUPLER quarterly and are always open to the submission of your written pieces regarding organs, music, churches etc: It is *your* journal. If you would like to, please submit via dcagochapter@gmail.com.

Our year thus far has included the *Pipes Spectacular* evening with Erik Suter playing an epic program at Washington National Cathedral in October and, on the 100th anniversary of the WWI Armistice and the simultaneous 50th anniversary of the death of Jeanne Demessieux, a memorial concert given by Joy-Leilani Garbutt of her organ works along with the Fauré Requiem (sung by *Videntes*) at the Franciscan Monastery in DC. Please do note forthcoming events in your calendars:

- On Monday January 7th the Potomac Chapter sponsors the Annual Tri-Chapter 12th Night Dinner at All Saints Episcopal, Chevy Chase Circle, MD

20815. As usual, Evensong will be sung prior - a 6:30pm Rehearsal for those who wish to sing (7:15pm Service). Dinner will commence at 7:45pm. It is always a splendidly convivial evening when members of all three Chapters congregate.

- Our annual DC AGO President's Day Organ Festival will be on Monday 18th February at St. Paul United Methodist Church, Kensington MD (Please note the change of venue from early advertisement). Starting at 9:30am, we will have workshops on service playing & accompaniment and on Technology for Organists; Setting up and converting Hauptwerk Virtual Organ systems, before Board member Paul Byssainthe, Jr. (a NYACOP Finalist 2018 and DMA candidate at Peabody Conservatory) plays a recital at 3PM (to include Duruflé's *Prélude, Adagio et Choral sur Veni Creator* Op. 4). Our day will be concluded by 4PM.
 - Our monthly 'Studio' meet on second Mondays (with following Social Hour) sadly had to be postponed this month due to a church logistical problem [St. Paul's K Street: December 10th]. We won't meet in January because of 12th Night, but we can re-convene on February 4th (first Monday this time) at St. Paul's K Street again. Please do join us!
 - April 27th: Road Trip to Baltimore. The New York possibility awaits us next year. Some fabulous organs to see and play in Baltimore. More details in the next COUPLER.
 - Looking ahead, DC AGO hosts next year's *Pipes Spectacular* - with International Artist David Briggs playing on Sunday October 13th 2019 at National City Christian Church - a program
-

which will include the première of the winning work in DC AGO's 2018 Composition Competition – a brilliant new Toccata by Christopher Artley.

- Please champion the Potomac Organ Institute (POI) in your locality. The Institute was established in 1988 to encourage interest in the organ and church music for pianists from middle school to adulthood. Auditions for prospective students are held annually, and successful applicants receive one year of free organ instruction from a volunteer Tri-Chapter Guild member with lessons from September through May. Students participate in a master class, a spring recital, become members of their local AGO chapter, and receive a complimentary subscription to *The American Organist* magazine. Many go on to work in local churches, and a few continue to pursue further degrees in organ studies. All students come away from lessons with a deeper appreciation of the organ.

(Dean's Message cont'd on Page 5...)

*In honor of years of service to the American Guild
of Organists*

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The Coupler

A quarterly newsletter published by the District of Columbia Chapter, American Guild of Organists.

Paul Byssainthe, Jr.,
Editor

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or for newsletter
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DC AGO Chapter
PO Box 39179

2018-2019 DC AGO Chapter Schedule of Events

September 10: **STUDIO CLASS & FRATERNITY** [Christ Lutheran 16th St.]

September 23: **Tri-Chapter Installation Service** [7.30pm St. Luke's Episcopal Alexandria]

October 14: **PIPES SPECTACULAR** (Hosted by Potomac Chapter): Erik Suter in recital
[5.15pm Washington National Cathedral]

October 8: **STUDIO CLASS & FRATERNITY** [St. Andrew's College Park/Milk House Art Bar]

November 11: **Jeanne Demessieux Memorial Concert** (marking the 50th anniversary of her death) with Joy-Leilani Garbutt (organ): **VIDENTES** sings the Fauré Requiem

November 12: **STUDIO CLASS & FRATERNITY** [Franciscan Monastery, Quincy Street, WDC]

November 16/17: **THIERRY MECHLER** (Hochschule für Musik, Köln) weekend in Baltimore [Friday Recital 7.00pm at Cathedral Mary our Queen; Saturday 10.00am Masterclass at Peabody Conservatory] (sponsored by Baltimore Chapter & Peabody Conservatory)

December 10: **STUDIO CLASS & FRATERNITY** [St. Paul's K Street/Foggy Bottom]
POSTPONED

January 7: **Tri-Chapter 12th Night Dinner** (sponsored by Potomac Chapter) [All Saints Episcopal, Chevy Chase Circle, MD 20815]

6:30pm – Rehearsal; singers are attendees; 7:15pm – Service: 7:45pm – Dinner

[See below for further details on registering]

February 4: **STUDIO CLASS & FRATERNITY** [7pm St. Paul's K Street/Foggy Bottom]

February 18: **PRESIDENT'S DAY MEET** at St. Paul's United Methodist, 10401 Armory Ave, Kensington, MD 20895

9.30: Coffee & Registration

10.00: Workshop on service music/selection/accompaniment (Jeremy Filsell)

12-1pm: Lunch

1.00pm: Technology for Organists; Hauptwerk systems, their conversion and installation (Tom Pullum)

3-4.00pm: Organ Recital by Paul Byssainthe, Jr. (NYACOP Finalist 2018)

March 4: Jeremy Filsell Piano & Organ Recital of music by **FRANCIS POTT** [7.00pm Peabody Conservatory, Mt. Vernon Square, Baltimore: Launch of CD of piano music]

March 11: **STUDIO CLASS & FRATERNITY** [St. Patrick's Catholic, G Street/Fire & Sage]

April 8: **STUDIO CLASS & FRATERNITY** [Washington National Cathedral/Cactus Cantina]

April 27: **DC AGO Road trip** to Baltimore. (Details TBC)

May 13: **STUDIO CLASS & FRATERNITY** [St. Vincent's Chapel, CUA/Brookland Pint]

June 10: **STUDIO CLASS & FRATERNITY** [St. Columba's Episcopal/TBD]

Monday evening
January 7, 2019

Twelfth Night Celebration and Dinner
All Saints Episcopal Church,
3 Chevy Chase Circle, Chevy Chase, MD 20815

6:30 p.m.—rehearsal—attendees are singers
7:15 p.m.—Evensong service
7:45 p.m.—dinner

Cost: \$35.00, of which chapter will subsidize \$15.00, and the member will pay \$20.00.
This price is good for member and one guest.
Further guests are \$35.00.

MENU

Spinach and Artichoke Dip with Crostini
Artisinal Cheese Platter w/Nuts and Dried Fruit
Braised Beef Short Ribs
Oven Roasted Potatoes with Herbs and Garlic
Oven Roasted Salmon
Wild Rice Pilaf with Dried Cranberries
Mixed Greens Salad with Goat Cheese and Pecans
Assorted Dressings
Roasted Acorn Squash with Sriracha Yogurt
and Toasted Pumpkin Seeds
Rustic Bread and Butter
Chocolate Mousse Cake
Old English Trifle

Register at this link:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfsMFj8KTzk6NWSly8qMRpWx9G8KqkfWgf5s6GNWiIyDoFJcQ/viewform?usp=pp_url

or

Email John Widmann at JWidmann@yahoo.com

Answering these questions:

1. Are you coming alone, or with one guest, or with more than one guest?
2. Your name (first and last) and name(s) of any guests?
3. Which Chapter? DC? Northern VA? Potomac?

(Dean's Message, cont'd from Page 2...)

POI Auditions for 2019-2020 will be held in late May/early June, and any interested potential students are invited to check out the website for more information and submit applications starting in March 2019. If you know of anyone who might benefit from this program, please direct them to <http://www.potomacorganinst.org/>.

Please bear in mind that if you wish to 'raise your game' through AGO certification, be in touch with us for any support and guidance. The DC AGO Chapter remains keen to help financially those for whom AGO Certification fees are steep.

Lastly, some of you will know that I recently accepted an invitation to move to New York to take up the reins as Organist & Director of Music at St. Thomas, 5th Avenue. It will be a huge honor and privilege to follow in some illustrious footsteps, and I shall look forward to continuing an important legacy bequeathed in recent years by Gerre Hancock, John Scott and Daniel Hyde. Sadly, it means that I will have to relinquish my term as DC AGO Dean rather earlier than anticipated. We will thus lose a Board member spot, so please – as always – consider how you might be able to serve in any capacity in which you feel able; the health of the Chapter and its activities relies upon the service and participation of its membership.

Please be in touch with us if we can be of help, with ideas, articles, and information on the Monday Studios. We would love to see you. Meanwhile, included below is an inspiring New York Times piece, which may be of interest if you've not seen it, by emerging and exciting American composer Nico Muhly.

Jeremy Filsell (Dean)

Nico Muhly on Why Choral Music Is Slow Food for the Soul – April 1 2017 – New York Times. Available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/01/arts/music/nico-muhly-andrew-gant.html>

After Andrew Gant's book about choral church music, *O Sing Unto the Lord*, came out in England two years ago – it was published in America last month – I saw it in a bookshop window in London, and immediately my mind started playing for me Purcell's anthem of the same name. It begins with a symphonia – a 90-second instrumental introduction – and then a single bass voice sings the text in a scattered, crabwise way: *O, sing unto the Lord, sing unto the Lord, sing unto the Lord a new song, sing, sing unto the Lord a new song*. The choir jumps in with a merry Alleluia in an entirely new tempo, and thus begins a multimovement, many-sectioned anthem lasting a quarter of an hour.

In a flash, I recalled the visceral thrill of learning and singing this complicated anthem when I was 11 in Providence, R.I. My choirmaster was an incredible force: charismatic, disciplined, intense and possessing the sort of persuasive rigor it takes to coax music out of a handful of schoolboys. The music, though, is what really grabbed me: a giant, centuries-old library that exists in a completely different universe than the traditional pedagogical classical music repertoire. I was not a particularly skilled pianist and was resistant to the kind of practicing it takes to become one. I loved that instead of the linear narrative

designed to developing pianistic skills — starting with Czerny études and moving ever upward toward grotesque Lisztian showmanship — the choral tradition operated in a series of interlocking cycles based on the liturgical year, with the music and the musicians playing a role in a larger drama.

We live in a time of chaotic global ever-availability: I was served asparagus on a plane in January and, in the same month, saw depressing-looking corns on the cob in a rural Icelandic grocery store. But English choral music is not about instant gratification. It's reminiscent of deeply seasonal and regional food: a kind of cake baked only on Advent Sunday (Byrd's spiky *Laetentur coeli*), or a damson that ripens only on the seventh Sunday after Easter (Tallis's glossolalic *Loquebantur variis linguis*). While most music in my life can be (and is) listened to on a quick, recurrent schedule — it is not physically possible for me to cook without "Graceland" on — for choral music you have to wait, and I find myself looking forward to a work's annual visits as I would the arrival of a long-distant friend.

English choral music was originally meant for worship and would be heard in a state of quiet meditation. Indeed, this music would have been performed (and often still is) by a choir divided in half — facing one another, rather than the congregation. In my own practice writing this sort of music, this is an important distinction: It is an observed private ritual. Nobody is meant to clap, and the music is not presented to an audience for approval; rather, it is meant to guide the mind out of the building into unseen heights and depths. It was not originally intended to happen at 7:30 at night for the pleasure of an audience coming from work, with just enough time for a rushed Chablis before the warning gong goes off, quickly checking ticket stubs and crawling over other patrons' coats.

When I compose, I find myself returning to this tradition, particularly as it relates to creating musical drama without a Romantic sense of ebb and flow leading to a climactic moment. You can have a thrilling 90 seconds with roller-coaster harmonies focusing on two words only, followed by a single line of plainchant, followed by counterpoint outlining harmonies completely at variance with what we would understand to be the rules.

Having the music be a meditative space, with micro-narratives and different areas of intensity, feels more intimately communicative than expecting everybody to agree: "Ah, that was the sad bit," and "That was the climax right there."

One of the most moving things about this musical tradition is happening upon it: walking through London and ducking into St. Paul's Cathedral, for instance, and hearing the buttery luxuriousness of one of Herbert Howells's canticles (a pair of texts sung, in the Anglican tradition, during Evensong), standing up the whole time. You'd be amazed how the body perceives musical detail when standing up: The difference between unison voices and voices in harmony, the length of line, subtle dynamic shifts — all hit you directly in the gut rather than in the sometimes detached concert muscle.

It is important to note, though, that this music is now actively performed and recorded in nonliturgical settings. Some of the more obscure 15th- and 16th-century large-scale choral works that would be awkward to include in modern worship (those of Cornysh, Fayrfax and Browne jump to mind) have been preserved almost entirely by excellent groups like the Tallis Scholars or Stile Antico. *O Sing Unto the Lord* calls attention to these more obscure composers, and in my fantasy world, everybody who reads it will immediately seek out as many recordings as they can find.

(Cont'd on Page 10...)



A Baroque Christmas

featuring

Sunday, December 9th
4:00PM
Franciscan Monastery of the Holy Land in America
1400 Quincy St NE, Washington, D.C.

Kimberly Hess, organ
Sarah Noone, soprano
Jeffrey Newberger, violin
Siena Baker, violin
Timothy Thulson, cello

Friday, December 21st
12:15PM
National City Christian Church
5 Thomas Circle, Washington, D.C.

Join us for an afternoon recital of instrumental and vocal Christmas masterpieces by Handel, Corelli, Bach, Vivaldi, and Scarlatti, presented twice in December!

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St. Ann's Church at Tenley Circle

We are celebrating our 150th anniversary next year. Outside of the many events that will be happening, are three outstanding organists that will be performing at St. Ann's. They are:

Vincent Dubois, Tuesday Evening, @ 7pm, March 19, 2019

Nathan Laube, Sunday, @ 3pm, April 28, 2019

Oliver Lantry, Sunday, @ 3pm, November 17, 2019

A champagne reception will follow given by Ridgewell Caterers. Admission is open to the public. St. Ann's is one block south of the Tenleytown/AU red line subway stop.

Robert Bright
Director of Music
St. Ann's Church at Tenley Circle
Wisconsin & Yuma N.W.
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Washington, DC 20005
Free admission; donations accepted

Detailed information at www.nationalcitycc.org or (202) 797-0103

Upcoming Concerts: December 2018

December 7: The organ and piano duo of Chuyoung Suter and Erik Wm. Suter will perform Edvard Grieg's Piano Concerto in A minor, followed by the final two movements from Louis Vierne's Organ Symphony No. 3.

December 14: Organist Michael Britt (Baltimore, Maryland) will demonstrate both his classical and theater organ prowess in a concert of seasonal music, featuring works of Max Drischner, Purcell J. Mansfield, Pierre Cochereau, Sid Tepper, and Leroy Anderson, and including several of Michael's own arrangements.

December 21: Organist Kimberly Ann Hess will be joined by soprano Sarah Noone and a string ensemble to present "A Baroque Christmas," including two arias from Handel's *Messiah* and compositions by Arcangelo Corelli and Alessandro Scarlatti.

There will be no Music at Midday concerts on December 28 or during the month of January. Performances will resume on Friday, February 1, 2019.



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(Cont'd from Page 6...)

One of the small frustrations I had with the book is Mr. Gant's tendency to offer what can feel like unnecessary superlatives, like "Thomas Tallis is easily the best composer in this story so far, and one of the two or three best of all." (He then goes on to enumerate all of the ways in which Thomas Tallis is inarguably a fantastic composer.) Of Britten's choral writing, he claims that the "Missa Brevis" is "the best of [his] commissioned liturgical works" – I found myself whimpering into the pages, "But what about 'A Hymn to the Virgin,' with that macaronic text and that Jacob's ladder up to the lines 'Of all thou bearest the prize, Lady, queen of paradise?'"

To be steeped in this tradition is to have one's strange, private favorites based on nothing more than instinct. This is especially true with music learned in childhood: Sometimes it's a little turn of phrase in a set of Lamentations by Mundy (circa 1529-1591), or an outrageous chord progression in a Stanford (1852-1924) motet. To start ranking composers working in this tradition does a small disservice to the countless moments of accidental transcendence that are possible not just in the writer's hand, but in the buildings for which the music was written, in the subtle personal intimacies of a small choir's members looking at one another directly in the eye across the chancel.

Whenever I read about Byrd or Tallis and the political complexities of their day, I laugh thinking about the luxury we have as composers now to be almost entirely free of this sort of top-down stylistic rule-making. We read about it happening to composers living in the Soviet Union with a historical distance, and living artists older than I have been through difficult periods of navigating their own musical pleasure within the exigencies of making a living.

But it certainly wasn't the case that a despotic president suddenly informed everybody one day, as Robert Horne, Bishop of Winchester suggested in 1571, that "in the choir no more shall be used in song that shall drown any word or syllable." Mr. Gant writes, of this intervention from above: "The Tudor musician, ever the pragmatist, did his best to carry on being true to his inheritance and beliefs, while at the same time not getting into trouble, at least until the next change came along."

The whole time I was reading *O Sing Unto the Lord*, I was making copious notes to go and rediscover some forgotten anthem. Time after time, passing references to pieces I've sung and loved brought me sharp pangs of nostalgia, followed by a sense of gratitude that this tradition has been such an important part of my musical world.

A LOWENBERG COMMISSION and PREMIERE

On Sun., Nov. 11, 2018, a new composition by Kenneth Lowenberg (long-time AGO member and local, regional, and national officer) for organ and SATB choir received its premiere performance at Immanuel Presbyterian Church, McLean, VA. Commissioned by the church to celebrate the 20th anniversary of Brian Wilhour as Director of Music/Organist, the text is a poem written by choir member Barbara L. Nealis, titled "A Gift from Above."

The church managed to keep it all a secret from Brian by not indicating it in the printed bulletin, by having Lowenberg make mp3 recordings of the music to distribute to the choir for their learning convenience, having Lowenberg conduct the choir in several clandestine rehearsals at the church at times that Brian was known to be elsewhere, and by having Lowenberg sit in the back row of the balcony (out of sight lines of the organist) at the service, until the Pastor called Brian forward. The honoree was indeed taken quite by surprise when Ken conducted the choir from the console in the new anthem!

A joyful reception to honor Brian followed the service.

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US *A Child*
IS BORN

ISAIAH 9:6

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL'S
The Messiah

SATURDAY, DEC 15 AT 5PM



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TONA BROWN
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TENOR



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Organ Dedication and Blessing:
Sunday, November 18th at 3:00pm

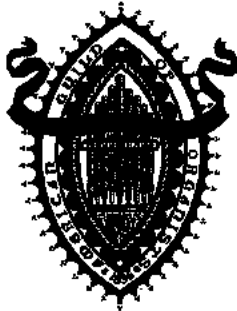
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The Annapolis Chapter of
The American Guild of Organists

2018 - 2019 Events

You are invited to join us!

October 5, 2018, 7:00 PM: MEMBER RECITAL
Location: St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church
1800 Seton Dr., Crofton, MD

We are looking for more performers. If you would like to play, contact Brendan Walls by September 12 at Brendan.walls@seaseton.org or call 410-721-5770 extension 231.

November 12, 2018, 7:00 PM: CHRISTMAS MUSIC SHARING AND PARTY
Location: Gloria Dei Lutheran Church
461 College Parkway, Arnold, MD.

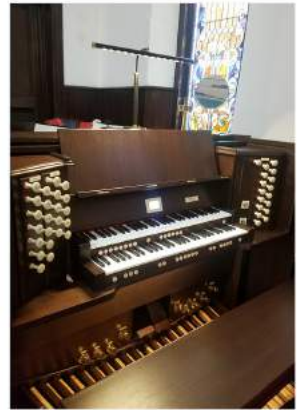
Join us for an early Christmas celebration. Bring up to three pieces of choral and/or organ music to share with colleagues, or just come ready to enjoy music of your colleagues. You are also welcome to bring along finger snacks such as cookies.

January 14, 2019, 7:00 PM: A TOURING CHOIR AND A LOCAL PIPE ORGAN
Location: First Presbyterian Church
171 Duke of Gloucester St., Annapolis, MD.

Bob Muckenfuss will demonstrate the church's Zimmer/Walker pipe organ, which has 23 ranks of pipes and 62 ranks of digital augmentation. He will also tell us about his choir's recently completed two-week tour of Europe. *Snow date is January 28.*

March 25, 2019: 7:00 PM: CHORAL MUSIC READING SESSION
Location: Woods Memorial Presbyterian Church
611 Baltimore Annapolis Blvd., Severna Park, MD.

JoAnn Kulesza will present recently published sacred choral music. Stay tuned for information to register in advance for \$12 or to register that day for \$15. Invite your choir members to join us. All attendees will receive a packet of music to keep.



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Music @ the Monastery

Located on 42 acres, the Franciscan Monastery of the Holy Land is a beautiful architectural gem hidden in the northeast corner of Washington, D.C. Dedicated in 1898, the church is in the shape of a Jerusalem Cross in neo-Byzantine architectural style. The church and extensive contemplative gardens include full-size replicas of shrines from the Holy Land (the Franciscans have ministered there for 800 years), plus catacombs and a Lourdes Grotto. The monastery also has two hermitages for personal retreats. The Monastery's Lively-Fulcher pipe organ was built in 1998 and contains forty ranks of pipes over three manuals and pedal.

Together with the Franciscan Monastery, the DC AGO is proud to support a series of community outreach musical events titled, "Music @ the Monastery". These events are free of charge and take place on the second Sunday of each month at 4pm, followed by a reception. All are welcome!

2018 - 2019 Recitalists

- September 10 *Dudley Oakes (Shenandoah University)*
October 14 *Jeremy Buckler (National Symphony Orchestra), Trombone, with Russell Weismann (Saint Jane Frances de Chantal, Bethesda, MD), Organ*
November 11 *Paul Byssainthe, Jr. (Sligo Seventh-day Adventist Church), Organ*
December 9 *Kimberly Hess (Memorial Chapel, Fr. Myer, Arlington, VA), Organist and Instructor of Music, Marymount University*
January 13 *Dan Miller (First Baptist Church, Winchester, VA), Organ*
February 10 *Gregory Hooker (St. Mary's Episcopal Church, Arlington, VA), Organ*
March 10 *Brass of Peace Ensemble, Sylvia Alimena, Director, with Lisa Galoci, Organ*
April 7 *Georgetown University Chamber Choir, Fred Binkholder, Director*
April 28 *Choral Festival, First Presbyterian Church, Arlington, Adam Graham, Director and Trinity Presbyterian Church, Arlington, Carol Feather Martin, Director*
May 5 *Stefan Donnor (Saint Leopold Church and Schönbrunn Palace Chapel, Vienna, Austria), Organ*
May 19 *Choir and Organ, All Hallows Parish Church South River, Edgewater, MD, Carl Schwartz, Organ*

THE COUPLER

District of Columbia Chapter
The American Guild of Organists

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