THE BROOKLYN BOMBARDE

The Newsletter of the Brooklyn Chapter of the American Guild of Organists August 2018



Mosaic depicting the Wurlitzer Theater Organ at the Brooklyn Paramount This artwork is located at the DeKalb Avenue subway stop

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Dean's Letter

Dear Brooklyn AGO Members,

Greetings! I hope you've had an enjoyable and revitalizing Summer, preparing you well for the busy season laying just around the corner! Our chapter has spent the Summer planning another action-packed program year, and we're pleased to use this Bombarde to announce several upcoming events.

For our first event of the program year, we'll be taking a guided trolley tour of Greenwood Cemetery, the historic resting place of such luminary figures as Leonard Bernstein, Elliott Carter, Henry Steinway (founder of Steinway Pianos), and painter Jean-Michel Basquiat. The cemetery is a place of astonishing natural beauty amid the urban landscape, and a wonderful site for reflection, meditation and learning. The tour will take place on Saturday, October 6th from 11:00AM to 1:00PM, and the flyer included in this Bombarde contains further details on how to sign up.

Please note that we are offering this event this year in place of our typical early Fall event, the "Bach to Brooklyn" church tour. After much consideration, we've elected to give our "Bach to Brooklyn" organizers the year off this year, so that they can bring you an especially worthwhile tour in 2019. Thank you very much to the many of you who have made "Bach to Brooklyn" such a successful event for our chapter to date. I hope you'll find the Greenwood Cemetery tour to be a fascinating event as well!

Next up, St. Augustine's Episcopal Church will host a choral conducting workshop by Dr. Dennis Keene, on the evening of Monday, October 22nd. We're honored to have Dr. Keene join us for a workshop that will focus specifically on choral conducting as it pertains to the church organist. Dr. Keene is one of the most esteemed choral conductors in America, leading the Voices of Ascension ensemble based in Manhattan's Church of the Ascension.

This program year will include the fourth occurrence of our annual George Mathison Memorial Scholarship Program, which will take place on March 2nd, 2019 at Grace Church Brooklyn Heights. To help raise money for the prize pool, our member Dr. Michael Kaminski has generously arranged to perform a benefit organ recital. This will take place on Sunday, October 28th at 5:00PM in Brooklyn's St. Francis Xavier Roman Catholic Church, and it promises to be a fabulous performance!

2019 will kick off with a pair of educational events, one for kids and one for adults. Once again All Saints Episcopal Church in Park Slope will host "Pedals, Pipes and Pizza," and later in January we'll put on a cooperative choral reading workshop, where you can share your favorite anthems with your fellow chapter members.

Please note that this set of announcements and the calendar included in this Bombarde are incomplete. There will be a number of additional events this program year that are still in the planning stages, and not quite ready to be announced at this time. These include the usual suspects, like our annual Members' Recital, as well as some novel new program ideas we're working on. Please stay tuned and check our chapter website often!

Finally, as many of you already know, this June we lost one of our dearest and longest-serving members, Sophie Williams Johnson. In our last Bombarde, we thanked Sophie for her term of service on the Executive Board, which had just come to an end. In this issue, we thank her one last time. Sophie was a wonderful, amazing woman, who was so encouraging to me and to so many others. Rest in peace, Sophie.

Very truly yours,
Dr. John A. Wolfe
Dean, American Guild of Organists Brooklyn Chapter

In Memoriam



Good evening! I'm Ellen Wright, past-Dean of the Brooklyn Chapter of the American Guild of Organists and a friend and colleague of Sophie's. I have been asked to share with you some measure of our Chapter's gratitude for Sophie's contribution to our profession. Let me first say, of our own sorrow at her passing, that we offer to Sophie's family and to her other friends our heartfelt condolences.

The presence of several AGO members here is a tribute to Sophie's importance to the Chapter's work. Until the AGO national headquarters converted our finances to a central computerized system, Sophie was the Chapter's registrar. She would come to meetings, pulling a little cart behind her with all her records, and methodically recount from them who-all had joined, who had renewed their membership, etc. I remember one occasion when some of our members had not paid up and were, furthermore, trying to fudge and pretend they had paid, we discussed how or whether we could convince them to pay. Well Sophie went home, on her own initiative, called them all up personally, and I am here to tell you, by the next meeting, every one of them had paid.

During time the Sophie and I both served on the Executive Board, the Chapter steadily evolved more and more in the direction of a service organization. This was in no small part due to her influence. She was always a staunch advocate for her many students and her young choir assistants. Our Pedals, Pipes and Pizza program, which introduces young piano students to the pipe organ, always burgeoned with her students who clambered, one by one, onto the organ bench to try out their piano pieces on the King of Instruments. She also devoted enormous time and attention to researching sources of scholarship assistance so under-served youth could attend Pipe Organ Encounters nation-wide, and, eventually, our own Pipe Organ Encounter in the summer of 2015, where her granddaughter, Fofie was in attendance.

At our most recent Pedals, Pipes and Pizza event back in January, which was held at All Saints' Church in Park Slope where I am organist, Sophie gave a spectacular performance of Daniel Burton's "Rex, the King of Instruments," on our modest, little organ, and, with very little preparation, she was able to elicit and astonishing amount of orchestral variety from it – and was all the while most gracious and complimentary to me about the instrument despite its limitations.

I have to say this graciousness was one of my favorite qualities of Sophie's. You can see that I am an old lady. I'm old enough that, twelve years ago when I first met her, I was still an old lady. But because Sophie was an even older lady, she always took the stance of a kindly senior colleague, encouraging, complimenting, uplifting. She was never patronizing. Just uplifting. It may be what I will miss most about her.

I know that in many areas of arts administration and neighborhood development, Sophie was a pioneer. She was a pioneer in our profession as well. Until I came on the Brooklyn AGO Board, she was the only woman on it — and had been for a while. Her welcoming attitude was a comfort to say the least. She was also a pioneer in performance. It was always a treat when she was able to find time to play in our Chapter recitals — always in her gold organ shoes. Not only

was she an accomplished virtuosa of a performer, but she often made a point of playing compositions of African-American composers, educating her audience beforehand with charming and informative historical commentary.

Because I work across the street from Methodist Hospital where Sophie was cared for during her final illness, I was able to stop by a few times to see her. It was my great pleasure to meet both Monica and Shellman whose devotion was aweinspiring, but it broke my heart to see Sophie shrunken and unable to speak. By the grace of God, she was fast asleep every time I stopped by. I can only say I am grateful that, after a lifetime of service to music and to her colleagues, to the next generation of church musicians, she is enjoying a well-earned rest. May God grant that it be a peaceful and joyful one.

Remarks delivered by Ellen Wright during the Memorial Service for Sophie Johnson on June 26, 2018 at St. Paul's UME Church, Brooklyn, NY

SOPHIE DOLORES WILLIAMS JOHNSON SUNRISE OCTOBER 28TH, 1935 - SUNSET JUNE 15TH, 2018

A TRUE RENAISSANCE WOMAN:
MUSICIAN, CULTURAL AND COMMUNITY ACTIVIST, ARTIST, EDUCATOR AND TRAILBLAZER

OBITUARY

Sophie Dolores Williams Johnson was a native of Baltimore, Maryland; born to Amelia and Maurice B. Williams along with her brother Maurice Williams Jr., and sister Cecilia Williams. Baltimore is where she met and married her musical partner Shellman D. Johnson Sr. Together they had two children, Shellman DeWitt Johnson Jr. and Monica Celeste Johnson.

Sophie and Shellman D. Johnson Sr., who would later become her first pipe organ instructor, became life-long musical partners on an adventurous journey of arts, culture and activism. At the age of six years, Sophie joined the Junior Choir of Sharp Street Methodist Church and sang a solo. Her first music teacher was Margaret Rusk Franklin, who prepared her for the recitals and scholarship offerings of the National Association of Negro Musicians, which ensured the continuation of her piano studies. At church, the sister of Cab Calloway offered children free violin lessons, which Sophie eagerly accepted, and then she moved on to play in the Youth Orchestra of Mr. Young and the string class of Booker T. Washington Junior High School as well as playing piano for the school operettas. Before becoming her husband, Shellman DeWitt Johnson provided her first musical job as accompanist for his Young People's Community Choir, which toured other schools and appeared on the Chuck Richards Television Show, featuring Sophie as a piano soloist.

When the Peabody Conservatory of Music refused to extend musical studies to Black students, African American Musicians of Baltimore founded the Institute of Musical Arts on the grounds of the former Radio Station WBAO. During this time, Professor Herman Swartz was her piano instructor. He was a Holocaust survivor during World War II. At Frederick Douglass High School, Sophie played piano and timpani for the school orchestra and played the cymbals for the marching band and piano in the student-formed jazz band. At the age of fifteen years she represented Baltimore at the NANM's Eastern Regent Piano Competition held in Washington D.C., and won first place honors. Upon graduation from High School she was awarded scholarships to Fisk University and Howard University. Unfortunately a family matter prevented her accepting those college offers.

Both Sophie and her husband Shellman Johnson were among the first participants of the Minister of Music Certification Program instituted by the Methodist Episcopal Church under the leadership of Bishop Austin E. Lovelace, noted hymnist and choral conductor born in 1919. In Baltimore, Sophie held the position of Organist at St. Pious Roman Catholic Church and joined Shellman at Bethel AME Church, where he was choral director and she became organist. They also worked together at Union United Methodist Church. Later, they were invited to New York City to serve at Janes Methodist Church, subsequently serving at many other denominational churches throughout New York City. She served many years at Calvary & St. Cyprian's, with her longest tenure being at St. Paul's United Methodist Church, where she served for over 30 years up until her passing.

Sophie Johnson was the Executive Director of the Magnolia Tree Earth Center of Bedford Stuyvesant for environmental/cultural education for eight years. She served as a founding board member of the New Muse Museum, and headed its Cultural Arts Department for several years. She served as the Assistant Manager for Community Programs at the Brooklyn Museum for eleven years. An interest in research led to positions with the Institute for Educational Development and the Institute of Museum Services, Washington, D.C. as an evaluator. Ms. Johnson held the position of Program Coordinator for Cross Section Afro-American & Caribbean Fine Arts Association Inc. During these years, she also maintained a private music studio, training numerous young people in piano technique encouraging the appreciation and love for classical music. As the recipient of numerous awards for community service, Sophie founded a Music Arts Settlement House in 1964 to bring arts education to young people in the community.

Mrs. Johnson produced a Black classical music radio show in 1978 and 1979 and performed piano and organ works by Black composers. Her musical compositions include a liturgical Mass and two musicals and her poems are published in *Poets in Motion: An Anthology, Sehal Press.*

Sophie Johnson was the accompanist for the Fine Arts Singers of NY for twenty years and served six years as Registrar for the American Guild of Organists Brooklyn Chapter. She performed solo piano and organ concerts throughout New York City and beyond. She provided private instruction of piano and organ for youth, creating the Sophie W. Johnson Music Studio. Several of her students have performed and participated in NANM Concerts. Sophie has served as Minister of Music/Organist/Choral Director in numerous churches throughout New York City, serving at St. Paul's United Methodist Church in Brooklyn from 1986 until her passing. Sophie was a board member of NSUMA, Brooklyn National Association of Black Musicians for seven years, also serving as their accompanist. She was in the process of completing a book on her family history, *A Ripe Harvest*. It is nearly complete and will be completed by members of the family.

Sophie is survived by her daughter Monica Celeste Johnson, her partner Bill White, son Shellman Dewitt Johnson Jr., brother Maurice Williams and his children Jacqueline Tayburn, Stephanie Dukes Williams, Maurice B. Williams III, her nieces and nephews, and his grandchildren, her grandson Kwabena Sheldon Johnson, his wife, Thembeka Amen, his mother Nana Ama Nsia Agiriwah Willock, her husband and her children and family members - her great grandchildren, Fofie, Osei, Akosua, Kwadwo and her late sister's son Cecilia Williams Burley, nephew Dwight Burley and his children and grandchildren, her brother-in-law Kelvin Johnson and sister-in-law Ruth Payne and a host of nieces and nephews, great nieces and great nephews and cousins from both sides of her family, and numerous friends, musicians, artists and colleagues.

Election Results

The ballots have all been tallied in the Brooklyn AGO's 2018 election of board members and officers. The results are as follows:

Dean (one year term): Dr. John A. Wolfe

Sub-Dean (one year term): Thomas Hobson Williams

Registrar (one year term): Gary Di Franco
Secretary (one year term): Maria Rayzvasser

Treasurer (one year term): Eric Birk

Class of 2020 (two year term): Rasaan Bourke

Class of 2021 (three year terms): Robert Frisby, Samuel Kuffuor, Phillip Lamb

If you have any questions about the election process or results, please feel free to contact Chapter Dean John A. Wolfe at dean@brooklynago.org.

Thank you very much this year's Nominating Committee, consisting of Jared Lamenzo, Nick Martellacci and Bruce Oelschlager, and to Gary Di Franco and Thomas Hobson Williams for their additional assistance. Thank you also to all those who voted in this year's election and expressed confidence in this slate. We'll be working hard to bring you another great program year!

From the Nominating Committee

Yes, the current issue of the Bombarde is announcing the results of the 2018 elections. Why, then, are we now soliciting names for the Class of 2022 to be voted on in 2019? According to the newly minted Operating Procedure document that was approved at the end of the 2017-2018 season, we need to hold our election in time for our June Banquet and Installation of Officers. To make this deadline, we need to get names now so we can announce the slate early in 2019 and mail the ballots in April. If you're interested in serving on the Board, please let me or Paul Olson us know.

In case you **don't** want to serve on the Board please consider joining the Nominating Committee. We need a third person to join us.

Nick Martellacci

Scholarship Competition

The Brooklyn AGO is pleased to announce the fourth annual George R. Mathison Memorial Scholarship Competition

The chapter has established its annual George R. Mathison Memorial Scholarship Competition in honor of our late member, friend and colleague, George R. Mathison. The purpose of the competition is to encourage excellence in the performance of organ music and to inspire, educate and nurture future generations of organists.

The 2019 competition will take place on March 2nd, 2019 at Grace Church Brooklyn Heights, where our competitors will play the church's 69-rank 2001 Austin pipe organ. The chapter is now accepting applications, with a cutoff date of February 2nd, 2019. The prize pool totals \$2,000, with a first place prize of \$1,000, a second place prize of \$650, and a third place prize of \$350.

For more information, including eligibility and repertoire requirements and the application form, please visit the competition web page at https://www.brooklynago.org/2019-scholarship-competition/.

Dr. John A. Wolfe

Improvisation as a Teaching Tool

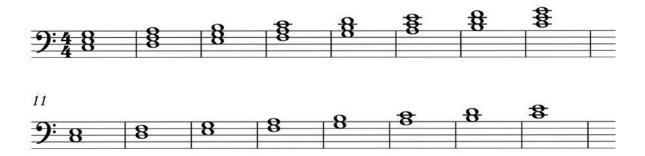
Remember the original *Karate Kid* movie? Daniel Russo wanted to learn karate. But Mr. Miyage made Daniel paint his fence and wax all his cars. After those two long exercises, Daniel goes to Miyage in frustration and repeats that he just wants to learn karate. Miyage then shows him that the brush strokes and wiping moves taught his body how to defend against an opponent's strike.

We all know how many tasks the needs student needs to accomplish: controlling the fingers, counting rhythms, reading music on a single staff, and – finally –reading two staffs at the same time when each hand is each doing something different from the other. But the student just wants to make music!

Improvisation is a way to hold the student's interest while he goes about mastering the tasks required to play the piano. Believe it or not, you can start the students improvising at the very first lesson!

Getting Started - The piano's black keys constitute a pentatonic scale. Just about any combination of tones will sound good on the black keys. So toward the end of the first lesson I ask the student to simply use one finger on each hand to pick out melodies. I then tell him that he should do a little improvising after he's finished his exercises for the day.

This overly simplistic exercise gets the young fingers comfortable playing on the black keys which are MUCH narrower than the white keys. (Think of Madame Duruflé navigating the pedal board in spike heels!) As I already said, just about any 2-note combination in a pentatonic scale will be acceptable to the ear – so the student's family members won't be shrieking in agony in the next room. Plus, your student is making music.



Level I – A little later, when the student can handle double notes (or chords) I expand the exercise as follows:

- 1 The left hand plays a scale-based skeleton.
- 2 As the left hand holds down one of the skeleton chords, the right hand is free to wander for a few seconds.
- 3 Left hand moves to the next chord and the right hand continues wandering.

Level II - After a few weeks of getting comfortable with this level we move on as follows: everything stays the same; the left hand goes up the skeleton as the right hand wanders. But now the right hand must begin and end each melody fragment on one of the notes in the chord being played by the left hand.

Starting and ending the melody on the left hand notes will make the listener think that they're hearing actual music – not just a random plunking of notes. Starting and ending on a chord tone builds the student's discipline.

Level III - Now that the improvisation is sounding more and more like tonal music, the time has come to introduce rhythm. The player must continue to follow the rules of Level II. But now, rather than hold the left hand chord for an indeterminate amount of time while the right hand wanders, the left hand keeps a steady 3/4 or 4/4 pulse as the right hand creates a melody.

Level IV - The student can now produce tonal music, in rhythm, based on a scale progression provided by the left hand. Now you can get rid of the training wheels provided by the scale pattern and let the student make melodies based on more interesting harmonies. I'd suggest the 50s/60s rock standard of C - Am - F - G^7 . The pattern will repeat and eventually end up on C major.

From here you can take the student wherever your imagination and his skills will permit.

Nick Martellacci

Centered in Song

The Hymn Society in the United States and Canada is holding a special event at Plymouth Church in Brooklyn, on Saturday, October 6, 2018. This event is part of the launch of The Society's new resource and programmatic arm *The Center for Congregational Song*. The full day program will feature a presentation entitled "Let Justice Roll Down" led by Mark Miller (www.markamillermusic.com), worship and a breakout session led by Ana Hernandez (anahernandez.org), and a presentation about the Center for Congregational Song by Center Director Brian Hehn, among other offerings. The day will wrap up with a rousing hymn festival in the Plymouth sanctuary, led by Mark Miller and Brian Hehn. Admission to the all-day event is free, but registration is required (www.congregationalsong.org/event/centered-in-song-brooklynny/). The hymn festival, which will begin at 5 pm and will focus on "Singing Justice," is open to the public and all are invited. Please plan to attend either or both, and please share this information with your congregations and fellow sacred music professionals.

Jacque Jones

Choral Sharing Workshop

We all have at least one in our repertoire – a choir anthem that's near and dear to our hearts – but one that no one else in the organ world seems to know about. The purpose of this workshop is to share those gems with your fellow chapter members. Here are some guidelines for the workshop:

- The anthem presented must still be in print. No sense getting us all excited about a piece of music we can't purchase!
- The person offering the anthem gets to accompany and lead the rest of us through the piece.
- Participants will serve as the ad hoc choir when not presenting.

The date chosen by the Calendar and Events Committee will be Tuesday, January 22, 2019 (the day after Martin Luther King Day). Our Registrar, Gary Di Franco, has obtained St. Finbar's as the space for the event. We discussed the topic of copyright and decided to use original copies of each anthem rather than illegal photocopies. To keep costs down we're asking participants to bring copies of the anthem from their libraries. In that same vein, we're asking participants to bring snacks to share.

We will be conducting an online survey to get your feedback on this idea. I will be coordinating the event and tracking the survey responses. If you already know you want to participate, please email the name and author of your anthem to nm11201@aol.com.

Nick Martellacci

ALCM Workshps

On September 29, 2018, Frank Martignetti and Deanna Witkowski will lead two workshops for NYC area church musicians as part of a day-long event at Advent Lutheran Church sponsored by the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians.

Read full session descriptions, presenter bios, and register online at https://alcm.org/event/new-york-upper-west-side-ny/

Jazz Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs: Resources for the Church Musician, with Deanna Witkowski

Learn how to integrate jazz in worship in an organic way that encourages congregational song, whether or not you're a jazz musician! Keyboardists will be provided with piano scores in addition to lead sheets (chords and melody) to use in their respective congregations.

Recharge and Rebuild Your Choir (and You!), with Frank Martignetti

Whether we have been in a particular position for two years or twenty, it's all too easy to focus only on preparing that *Sunday's* anthem. But if we do this, our choir will never grow, and we will grow stale and perhaps burn out. At this workshop, you'll leave with a variety of pedagogical tips, tricks, ideas, and perspectives to enliven your rehearsals and your worship. Suggestions for accessible, quality repertoire will also be shared.

Calendar

8/29/2018 - 7:30 PM

Sure On This Shining Night

583 Throop Ave, Brooklyn

9/18/2018 - 7:30 PM

Board Meeting

Baptist Temple

9/29/2018 - 9:00 AM

ALCM Jazz & Choir Workshops

Advent Lutheran Church, NYC

10/6/2018 - 11:00 AM

Greenwood Cemetery Tour

10/6/2018 - 5:00 PM

Centered in Song

Plymouth Church, Brooklyn

10/9/2018 - 7:30 PM

Board Meeting

Baptist Temple

10/22/2018

Conducting Workshop with Dennis Keene

St Augustine's Church, Brooklyn

10/26/2018 - 8:00 PM

Hunchback of Notre Dame

583 Throop Ave, Brooklyn

11/13/2018 - 7:30 PM

Board Meeting

Baptist Temple

11/30/2018 - 7:00 PM

NAKED with Beverly "Song" Burton, Vocalist

St Peter Claver Church, Brooklyn

12/4/2018 - 12:30 PM

Advent Noontime Recital

Paul Richard Olson, Organist Grace Church, Brooklyn

12/9/2018 - 4:00 PM

Community Carol Sing

Grace Lutheran Church, Forest Hills

12/11/2018 - 12:30 PM

Advent Noontime Recital

Craig Whitney, Organist Grace Church, Brooklyn

12/18/2018 - 12:30 PM

Advent Noontime Recital

Judith Hancock, Organist Grace Church, Brooklyn

Board and Officers

Dean Dr. John A. Wolfe

Sub-Dean Thomas Hobson Williams

Treasurer Eric Birk, FAGO
Secretary Maria Rayzwasser
Registrar Gary Di Franco

Executive Board

Class of 2019:

Keith Bigger Nick Martellacci

[Vacant]

Class of 2020:

Anthony Labella Kurleigh Lowe, CAGO Rasaan Bourke

Class of 2021

Robert Frisby Samuel Kuffuor Phillip Lamb

Substitute List

Don Barnum (summer Sunday AM only) 917-689-2953

Samantha Bassler 570-594-1066

Rasaan Bourke (no Sunday AM or Saturday evening)

646-318-6714

John Collis (no Sunday AM) 718-797-5473

Nicholas Martellacci (no Sunday AM) 718-624-5665

Maria Rayzwasser (no Sunday AM) 347-598-4571

Mark Victor Smith 917-502-5761 Alex Violette 718-873-5912

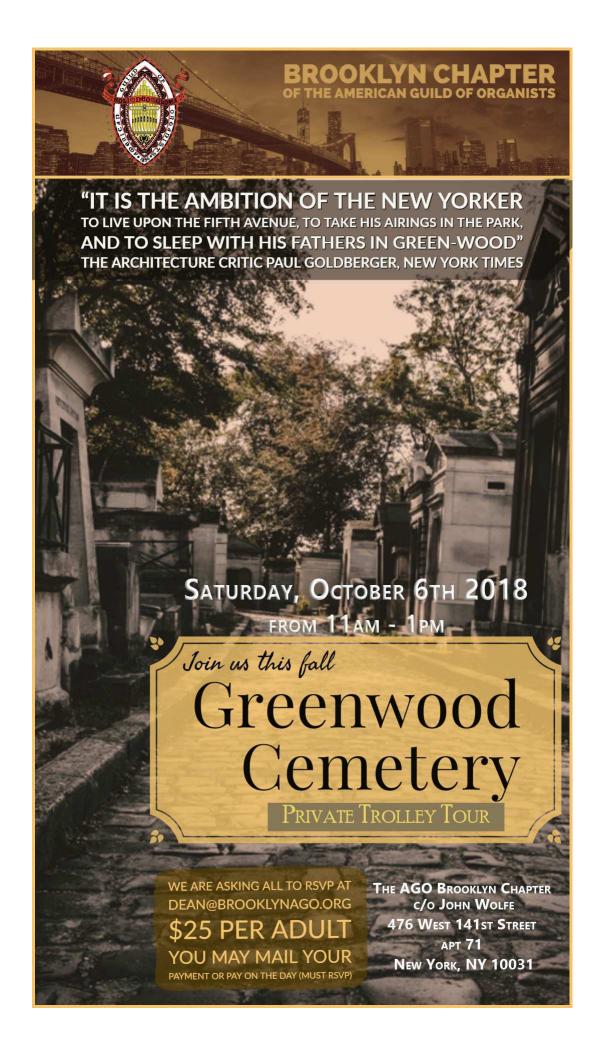
Thomas Hobson Williams (no Sunday AM)

404-403-7492

John A. Wolfe (no Sunday AM) 717-253-2886 Ellen Wright (no Sunday AM) 917-693-7158

Flyers







LET JUSTICE ROLL DOWN

A HYMN FESTIVAL WITH



AND

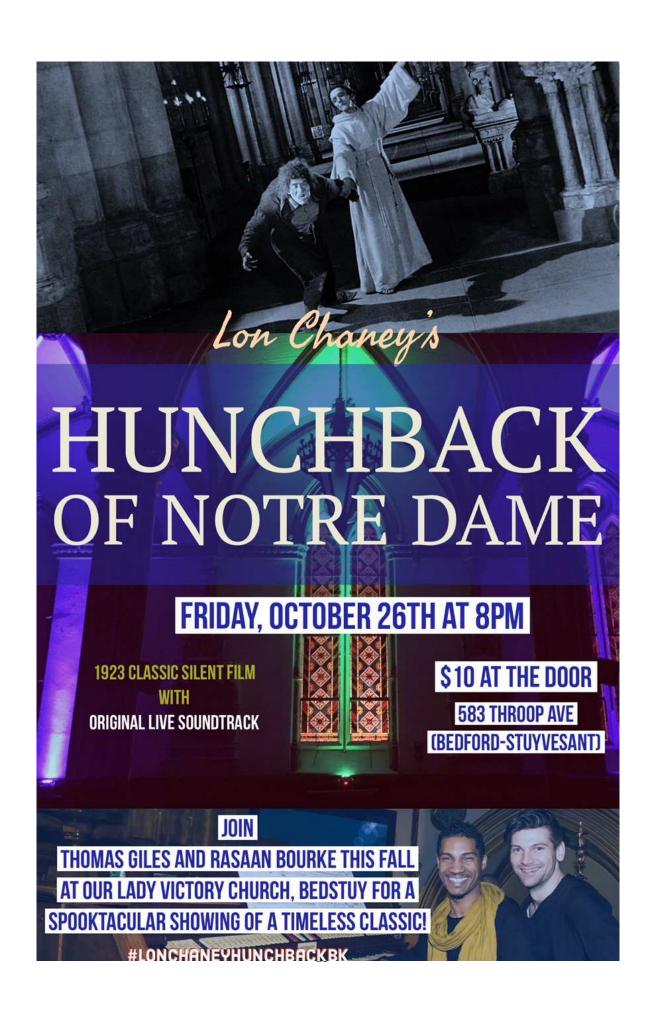
Brian Hehn

October 6 2018
5 PM
PLYMOUTH CHURCH
BROOKLYN, NEW YORK
ADMISSION FREE

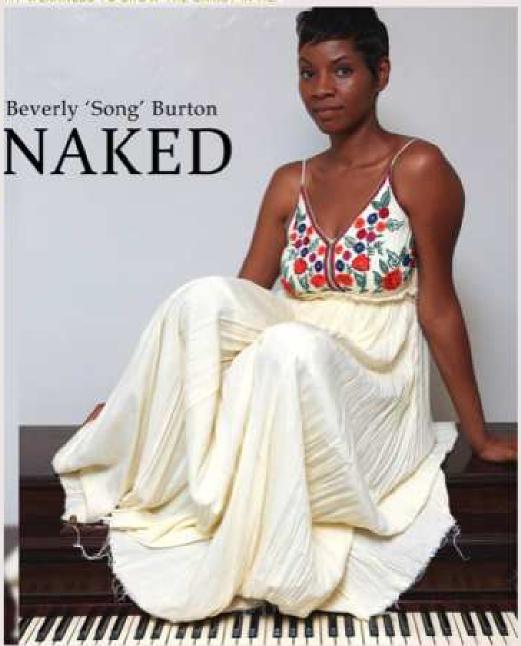




HOSTED BYPlymouth Worship & Arts Ministry





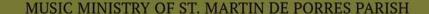


FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 30TH AT 7PM

St. Peter Claver Church 29 Claver Place (between Jefferson and Fulton) Brooklyn, NY smdpp.org | info@smdpp.org

Rasaan H. Bourke, pianist Joseph P. Murray, pianist





Presents

LET OUR PRAISE

ARISE

In Celebration of our Blackness

FEATURING
ST. MARTIN DE PORRES PARISH CHORUS
THE WIND ENSEMBLE AT NAZARETH REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, EAST FLATBUSH

TIMELESS MUSIC BY FR. CLARENCE RIVERS, GRAYSON W.
BROWN, ANDRÈ CROUCH, KURT FRANKLIN AND MORE

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 10TH 2019 AT 4PM

TICKETS ARE \$20
SOLD AT THE RECTORY AND AT THE DOOR

ST. PETER CLAVER CHURCH
29 CLAVER PLACE
BROOKLYN, NY
718-574-5772
SMDPP.ORG

