

The Brooklyn Bombard

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

February 2020



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Dean's letter

Dear Brooklyn AGO Members,

Greetings! I'm pleased to report that we've just successfully completed an especially busy stretch in the Brooklyn AGO's program year. We started off the year with our January Banquet, at which we enjoyed each other's company and some great food, and marked the closing of the old year and the coming of the new. Later in the month we held our second annual Cooperative Choral Sharing Workshop at Vanderveer Park United Methodist Church, in which we gathered together to read through our favorite lesson-known gems of the choral repertoire. It was great to meet some of our newest members at that event. We began February with "Pedals, Pipes and Pizza," our organ introduction event for kids, at All Saints Episcopal Church in Park Slope. It was clear at that event that the love of the pipe organ which motivates us all is alive and well in the youngest generation. Finally, on Sunday, February 9th we hosted a stunning organ recital by the brilliant Dr. David Hurd, who performed at St. Philip's Episcopal Church for the benefit of our George Mathison Memorial Scholarship Competition Fund. We would like to extend our deepest gratitude to Dr. Hurd and to all three churches that have hosted us so far in 2020, as well as all of you who have worked to help make our programs successful.

Coming up around the corner is our fifth annual George Mathison Memorial Scholarship Competition, which will take place on March 14th at Grace Church Brooklyn Heights. (Please note that the competition is not open to the general public.) We're set to host the largest competition in our history, with six applicants hailing from as far away as Kansas, Ohio and Oklahoma, and we'll give our largest prizes to date. We're delighted to have judges Gail Archer, Alcee Chriss III, and Judith Hancock assess this year's competitors. After Easter we'll hold our 2020 Members' Recital at the newly renovated Old First Reformed Church in Park Slope, a beautiful worship space that captured our imagination on our recent "Bach to Brooklyn" visit.

Another activity taking place currently is our effort to assemble a new Executive Board for the coming year. We've established strict term limits on all board members and chapter officers, in order to ensure that the skills necessary to administer our chapter are shared by as many members as possible. My own term as Dean, as well as the terms of several officers and board members, will conclude this coming June. If you would like to serve in the chapter's administration, please let me or another current board member know. Our organization has always depended on the volunteer work of its members, and we would be delighted to have you. Thank you very much for your time and attention.

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

From Our 2019 Person of the Year

Nick Martellacci, our hardworking editor, asked me to provide a bio as recipient of our chapter's Person of the Year Award.

First, I am so grateful to the chapter for giving me this award. And since the chapter is made of members, I am grateful to all of you, for your support of the organ and its music.

Second, here is my story of "how I was bitten by the organ bug." It happened more than once.

My first bite was at First Presbyterian Church of Moorestown, NJ. My parents always let me race up to the choir gallery after the benediction, to watch the organist play the postlude. I can remember feeling frustrated that people stood up and socialized while the piece was performed. How much better it would have sounded with a silent audience.

My mother encouraged me, without success, to study the piano. However, I enjoyed it very much when she accompanied us (her family) on the piano on Sunday nights, singing hymns and popular songs. If not playing with friends or doing homework, I enjoyed working with my father in the basement wood shop. He was a mechanical engineer and I suspect his mechanical influence on me would make me prone for another bite when I saw my first organ mechanism. As a boy I attended the local Friend's School, which included Quaker services every Thursday. No music and mostly silence, but an experience I still am grateful for.

In the eighth grade, I began attending the Wooster School, a college preparatory boarding school in Danbury, Connecticut. Studies were difficult, but I enjoyed the school socially, and did well athletically, winning sports Letters and the Most Valuable Player Award on the varsity soccer team.

After graduation in 1967, I wanted a break from studying. I joined the Army and served in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam and Washington DC. I was awarded the Bronze Star for my service in Intelligence in Vietnam. After leaving the service in 1970, I began working part time and attending college part time in Philadelphia.

My second bite occurred one day while walking down Twenty-Seventh Street, I passed a sign for the United States Pipe Organ Co. Out of curiosity, I walked in. The receptionist said, "The President will see you right away." Surprised, I entered his office and he began chatting amiably. After about fifteen minutes, he asked me when I could begin work. Unbeknownst to me, they had advertised for a Pipe Organ Mechanic's Helper and thought I was applying for the job. I took a semester off from college to work full time, as Fred Sponsler's helper, tuning and servicing organs.

While in college I worked numerous jobs (draftsman, machinist, driving school instructor and cab driver) until receiving a B.S. in Political Science from the University of Pennsylvania in 1977. My thesis was on how the Sunni minority controlled the Shiite majority in Iraq.

After taking off my cap and gown at graduation, the mother of my former boyfriend called and asked me to go to New York, as her son was very sick. I made the trip up to find Louis had a cold. I decided to stay with him for a couple of weeks to enjoy New York. Then I decided to stay in New York. Having some organ work experience, I was quickly able to get work. When the Kilgen Organ Service Co. of New York, my employer, was sold, I was laid off. At that point, I had one customer of my own and have stayed busy ever since. My work is a hobby that pays.

I fell in love with Vincent Taylor in 1986. We registered as Domestic Partners in 1997 and married in 2015 at City Hall. We live in a pleasant co-op apartment in the Bronx, because Vincent, an interior designer, designed a pleasant home.

Although not an organist, I am fascinated with organ mechanisms and enjoy listening to organ music. I have been granted the honor of serving in several positions in the Brooklyn Chapter: Secretary, Treasurer, Dean, and Board Member. My AGO membership is a source of friendship and an opportunity to provide service to our cause. I am proud of our work as a chapter, and our endeavors together, to promote the pipe organ and support organists.

Thank you very much for this award,

John



John Klauder receiving the Person of the Year Award from Dean Dr. John Wolfe at last June's Potluck

Yes, Blanche... St Olaf Really Exists!!

On Friday night February 7 I joined my volunteer choir, Pastor Jeanne, and several parishioners from Grace Lutheran to attend a concert by the St. Olaf Choir at Carnegie Hall. Back in 2010 I attended with choir members from St. Stephen's. My reason for encouraging choir attendance was simple. To understand the fundamentals of good choral singing, you need to experience to good choral singing. And the St. Olaf Choir certainly delivered!

The program was varied including pieces both classical and modern and paying tribute to the school's Lutheran roots (music of Bach, an anthem based on a Scandanavian folk tune, etc.) but also selections in Hebrew and Arabic honoring the current ethnic diversity of the student body. One piece I found especially touching was *When Memory Fades*, based on a poem by Mary Louise Bringle. The lyrics are a prayer of hope in the face of Alzheimer's Disease/dementia. My best friend's mother suffered from Alzheimer's at the end of her life. She no longer recognized Michael as her son. But she did enjoy visits from the nice young man who stopped by to feed and bathe her.

Back to the real world. No, my five-member volunteer ensemble composed mainly of untrained voices owned by adults past their prime can't sustain a long legato line in the same way as a choir with eight to ten voices on each part. But I hope that hearing perfect intonation, clear diction, and the ability for multiple voices to blend into one unified sound will suddenly help all my weekly lectures begin to make sense.

Nick Martellacci

Pedals, Pipes & Pizza - 2/1/2020

The day at All Saints Episcopal Church in Park Slope, Brooklyn started with Ellen Wright and Dr. John Wolfe demonstrating the various colors of the Delaware pipe organ, an instrument with ornately painted façade pipes. The youngsters then were invited to come try the pipe organ. Children were excited to try using the different timbres and improvised or bravely played their piano pieces.

After the pizza part of the program, the group moved on to an exciting build of the OrgelKids USA pipe organ kit, led by FREQ* director Jared Lamenzo. For the frame assembly, kids competed with their parents. Adults couldn't keep up with the children who swiftly completed this task! Everyone was engaged and clamored to help sort and install the keys, trackers and pipes.

Local organ master John Klauder showed the kids the different kinds of organ pipes in his display case, and various types of organs, from Victorian parlor pump organs to theatre organs. He told stories of his many years of work as an organ technician, having to crawl up precarious ladders into tight spaces.

There was plenty of time for everyone who wanted to try playing the pipe organ. Several kids were quite accomplished at the piano and tried their pieces with various timbres at the organ, while others were happy to improvise and explore the sonic possibilities. The chimes proved to be one of the popular stops on the organ!

Lana Krakovskiy

**Friends of the Erben Organ*



(1) Dean John Wolfe demonstrates the All Saints Organ; (2) Pedals, Pipes, and Pump Organs with John Klauder; (3) Console tour with host Ellen Wright; (4) Jared Lamenzo demonstrates OrgelKids; (5) Passing the torch to a new generation!

Dr. David Hurd in Concert

Review by John A. Wolfe

On Sunday, February 9th, the Brooklyn AGO had the privilege to host Dr. David Hurd in concert. Dr. Hurd has enjoyed a tremendous career over many decades as a church musician and composer, making him one of the most decorated and accomplished figures in our field nationally, and he's currently serving as Organist and Music Director at the Church of St. Mary the Virgin in Manhattan. He also has deep roots at St. Philip's, having attended the church as a child, and as he was practicing for the concert he regaled me with stories about the church's various extended families and its unique artwork and architecture.

For his program on the church's 1999 Guilbault-Thérien pipe organ, Dr. Hurd prepared a program including a wide cross-section of repertoire from France, Germany and the United States. He began with Nicolaus Bruhns's *Praeludium in G Major*, a virtuosic but light-spirited work showcasing fluid technique with some difficult double-peddaling. This was followed by Dr. Hurd's own composition, *Four Spiritual Preludes*, which sets African American spirituals in a modern style that nonetheless bears resemblance to the Baroque chorale prelude form. Rounding out the first half of the program was Bach's powerhouse *Praeludium and Fugue in B Minor*, a late-period masterpiece composed around the same time as the famous "Wedge" prelude and fugue. Another prelude and fugue pair brought us into the world of Gregorian chant, but with a modern twist: Maurice Duruflé's *Prélude sur l'Introït de l'Épiphanie*, Op. 13 and *Fugue sur le thème du Carillon des Heures de la Cathédrale de Soissons*, Op. 12.



Following the intermission, Dr. Hurd performed Alexandre Guilmant's *Seconde Sonate pour le grand Orgue en Ré Majeur*. This lively work gave him the opportunity to transform the St. Philip's organ into a French cathedral organ, by means of some very clever registrations. The remainder of the program consisted of Dr. Hurd's own compositions. Before performing his prelude on *Fantasia on Wondrous Love*, he noted movingly that his parents, to whom the piece is dedicated, had been married in the St. Philip's chapel. Perhaps the most virtuosic and flashy piece of the entire evening was his *Toccata*, which prompted a standing ovation even before the concert was done. To close out the recital, he performed a deft improvisation on three hymn tunes: *Great Is Thy Faithfulness*, *O Master Let Me Walk with Thee*, and *Alleluia, Sing to Jesus*. He skillfully wove these timeless tunes into a smooth musical tapestry, making use of an expansive harmonic palette and a fine ear for registrations, from the loudest roar to the quietest murmur. It was clear throughout the evening that Dr. Hurd has maintained incredible technical chops, but even more clear was his deep musicality. His playing possesses a fluidity and effervescence that can only a lifetime of study and immersion can bring about.

The concert was a tremendous success from every point of view. 119 people were in attendance, including numerous members of the St. Philip's congregation and the Brooklyn AGO, and we raised about \$1,300 towards our Scholarship Competition prize pool. We cannot overstate our appreciation for David Hurd and his contribution, and we hope we'll have the opportunity to cross paths with him again soon.

Cooperative Choral Reading Workshop

On Monday evening, January 27 Brooklyn chapter members along with several guest singers met at Vanderveer Park United Methodist Church in Brooklyn. Four members – John Wolfe, Kurleigh, Lowe, Thomas Hobson Williams, and myself - led the assembled singers through previously unknown choral gems.

Only one of the singers was a non-presenting Chapter member. The rest of the singers were non-members who love to sing and who read about the event online. So a big thank you to everyone who advertised links to the event on social media!

Our host, former Dean Raymond Trapp, spent the night nursing the flu. But the virus did not stop him from arranging for people to open the church for us and provide delicious snacks to enjoy after the singing. Bravo Raymond!

Nick Martellacci

Calendar

Dr. Judith Hancock, Organist

3/3/2020 12:30 PM

Grace Church Brooklyn Heights

Board Meeting

3/10/2020 7:30 PM

Baptist Temple

Dr. Stephen Rapp, Organist

3/10/2020 12:30 PM

Grace Church, Brooklyn Heights

Scholarship Competition

3/14/2020 11:00 AM

Grace Episcopal Church, Brooklyn

Dr. Paul Martin Maki, Organist

3/17/2020 12:30 PM

Grace Church, Brooklyn Heights

Dr. Michael Szostak, Organist

3/21/2020 7:30 PM

Old St. Patrick's Cathedral, New York, NY

Dr. William F. Enriken, Organist

3/24/2020 12:30 PM

Grace Church, Brooklyn Heights

James D. Wetzel, Organist

3/31/2020 12:30 PM

Grace Church, Brooklyn Heights

Paul Richard Olson, Organist

4/7/2020 12:30 PM

Grace Church, Brooklyn Heights

Members' Recital

5/17/2020 5:00 PM

Old First Reformed Church, Park Slope

Jazz Vespers

6/7/2020 4:00 PM

Grace Lutheran Church, Forest Hills, NY

Aaron Comins, Organist

6/26/2020 12:15 PM

National City Christian Church, Washington, DC

flyers



Dr. Michał Szostak

International
concert organist
from Warsaw,
Poland



Recital to Benefit the Erben Organ

Saturday, March 21, 7:30 PM

Tickets: <http://erbenorgan.showclix.com>

JAZZ VESPERS

SUNDAY
JUNE 7, 2020
4:00 P.M.

MUSIC WILL BE
PROVIDED BY
BILL GATI
&
FRIENDS

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH
103-15 UNION TPK
FOREST HILLS, NY 11375
718-268-6189



Light refreshments to follow

~ COMMUNITY <FAITH> GROWTH ~