

THE BROOKLYN BOMBARDE

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

May 2019



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Dean's Letter

Dear Brooklyn AGO Members,

Greetings! With Holy Week, Easter and Passover now behind us, many of us are now winding down our music programs for the Summer, and another year of Brooklyn Chapter programming is winding down as well. It's been a busy year for us, with a series of chapter events spanning performance, education, community outreach and fellowship. We enjoyed recitals by our members and friends, taught kids about the organ at "Pedals, Pipes and Pizza," awarded scholarships to promising students for the fourth year running, and shared our favorite repertoire with one another in concerts and workshops.

Although Summer may seem like a period of inactivity for the Brooklyn AGO, in fact it is a crucial time for us to chart our future course. With our election recently concluded (thank you for voting!), various subcommittees of our Executive Board will be meeting in the Summer months, such as the Budget Committee, Calendar Committee and Operating Procedures Committee. As these committees get to work, we'd like to solicit thoughts and ideas from all our members, particularly regarding services or programs you'd like to see the chapter offer. We've found that every member looks to our organization with different goals in mind: some are interested in performing under our aegis, some look to the chapter for professional training or advice, and others are simply interested in spending time with like-minded organ aficionados. If you have a great idea for an event that you've never seen us offer, please pitch it to me or any other board member! I can assure you that nothing is too silly for us to seriously consider.

Likewise, we're always on the lookout for those who would like to become more involved in the life of the chapter, and this involvement can take many forms. The Brooklyn AGO is more than a century old, having survived by being passed on from one group of passionate volunteers to the next. Our operating procedures ensure that this process continues, mandating term limits for all board positions and encouraging members to serve in different capacities at different times. Volunteering could be as simple as attending a barbecue or writing a column for the *Bombarde*, or as elaborate as putting on a full-length recital. When I was first asked to serve on the Board in 2011, I had no idea how deep my involvement in the Brooklyn AGO would eventually become. But I've consistently found my engagement with the Chapter to be fulfilling and worthwhile, and I know others feel the same. Membership in the AGO is more than just a matter of paying your dues in exchange for some job listings and a magazine! I hope you'll join us in fully exploring everything this fine organization has to offer.

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

Bach is Back in Brooklyn!

On Saturday, September 7th, our chapter will host our annual "Bach to Brooklyn" bus tour of historic churches and organs. It will be led, as always, by Andrew S. Dolkart, Professor of Historic Preservation at the Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture. We will be visiting churches in Sunset Park, Park Slope, and Bedford-Stuyvesant. Mark your calendars now.

Keith Bigger

Election Results

The ballots have all been tallied in the Brooklyn AGO's 2019 election of board members and officers. We had close to 50% participation in the vote. 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 2022 (three year term):	Lana Krakovskiy Alex Violette (open seat)

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 Nick Martellacci, Paul Richard Olson, and Raymond Trapp. 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!

Dr. John A. Wolfe

The 2019 George R. Mathison Memorial Scholarship Competition

Congratulations to the winners of the Brooklyn AGO's 2019 George R. Mathison Memorial Scholarship Competition! This year's competition took place at Grace Church Brooklyn Heights on Saturday, March 2nd. 1st place: Eddie Zheng, The Juilliard School / 2nd place: Sam Scheff, Rutgers University / 3rd place: Hannah Lingen Cen, Manhattan School of Music. Pictured left to right: Competitor Samuel Kuffuor-Afriyie, competitor Hannah Lingen Cen, Chapter Dean John A. Wolfe, competitor Sam Scheff, judge Frank Crosio, judge Gregory D'Agostino, judge Kalle Toivio. Many thanks to our competitors and judges for making this year's event a success!



June Potluck

This year we'll be gathering at St. John's Episcopal Church in Park Slope on Friday, June 21st at 6 p.m. Along with the good food and fellowship, we'll have the installation of officers and awarding of our Person of the Year. If you're wondering what to bring or worried you'll walk in with the seventh box of Entenmann's Chocolate Donuts, just check in with Nick Martellacci (nm11201@aol.com). He has offered to keep a list of what everyone's bringing.

2019 Members' Recital

This year's recital took place on Sunday, May 5 at the San Damiano Mission in Greenpoint, Brooklyn. Here's the program:

Symphony No.5 in F Minor, Op. 42, No. 1:

II Allegro Cantabile

Charles-Marie Widor (1844-1937)

Maria Rayzvasser

From Pièces dans Différent Styles:

Reverie (from Book 14, Opus 70)

Tempo di Minuetto (from Book 12, Opus 45)

Alexandre Guilmant (1837-1911)

Thomas Hobson Williams

Trois Pièces pour Grande Orgue:

II Cantabile

César Franck (1822-1890)

Phillip Lamb

Pictures at an Exhibition:

Promenade

Tuileries

The Great Gate of Kiev

Modest Mussorgsky (1839-1881)

Aaron Comins

Erbarm dich mein, O Herre Gott, BWV 721

Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott, BWV 720

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Ellen Wright

Prelude and Fugue in A Major, BWV 536

Herr Christ, der einge Gottes-Sohn (Lord Christ, the Only Son of God), BWV 601

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Dr. John A. Wolfe

Things Your Liturgy Professor Never Told You...

At a recent Board Meeting, one member voiced discomfort with the idea of hosting a Halloween-themed organ recital because he didn't like the idea of promoting witchcraft. While Christianity does not promote or condone witchcraft, what many people may not realize – and what seminary training failed to teach me - is that much of the structure of the Christian calendar was designed to ease the transition from polytheistic paganism to the new monotheistic faith.

The journey of Christianity from the discovery of the Empty Tomb to the year 2019 has been anything but a smooth glide. As the old hymn tells us, the Christian faith has survived in spite of dungeon, fire, and sword. True, the Jews at the time of Christ were longing for a Messiah and were more receptive to the teachings of the early believers. But contemporaneous non-Jews - like pagans throughout the ages - were comfortable with their religion and their gods. These people had little desire to change their lives based on stories of a first-century rabbi returned from the dead.

So how does one win hearts and minds? Rather than tear down pagan holy places and thereby turn the anger of the locals against Christianity, the early bishops consecrated these shrines to Christ. They kept usable structures (e.g. Rome's Pantheon – originally a shrine to honor all the gods) or built new churches over former pagan sacred sites. According to TV coverage at the time, Paris' Notre Dame Cathedral - which burned on April 15 - was built atop the ruins of a temple of Jupiter, the king of the Roman gods.

Not only were pagan sites coopted into the new religion, but pagan feasts were also christened. Bible.org states that the birth of Jesus probably took place in spring - a time of year when shepherds more likely "watched their flocks at night all seated on the ground." The celebration of the Nativity was moved to December to coincide with pagan celebrations of the Unconquered Sun – the Winter Solstice when the days once again begin to lengthen. Just as the Sun is reborn at Yule bringing the promise of spring and another year's harvest so now at Christmas the Son is born in Bethlehem (which translates to "House of Bread") promising spiritual nourishment.

A former pagan attending a high church Easter Vigil and seeing the celebrant plunge the Paschal Candle (phallus) three times into the baptismal font (womb) and dripping some of the hot wax into the font (you can figure out that imagery all on your own) would recognize the sympathetic magic of the Sacred Rite of Beltane (May Day festival) which represents the conjoining of the God and Goddess in order to encourage the crops to grow. Going back to the Feast of the Resurrection, the word "Easter" comes from Oestre – the name of the German goddess of spring whose sacred animal was the rabbit - *Oestre's bunny!*

The All Saints/Souls feasts of Christianity equate to paganism's Samhain – when the veil between the living and dead is thin and the deceased can easily pass between the worlds. The veil is thin because the Harvest God, having fed his people, has passed from this world into Summerland (a sort of pagan heaven) awaiting rebirth at Yule. When you think about this, doesn't it sound a bit like what happened after Jesus' death when the veil of the Temple was torn from top to bottom, graves were opened, and the bodies of the dead began to walk about? Modern Halloween masked revelry grew out of a more superstitious time. If you're out and about on a night when spirits roam freely, a mask insures that the ghost of a dead neighbor whom you might have wronged won't recognize you and take revenge! Today in Latin America you'll still find people gathering at the family graves on the Day of the Dead to enjoy a picnic of the deceased's favorite foods in the presence of their departed loved ones.

Enough on this topic. If you want to read more you can pick up a copy of *Christianity, the Origins of a Pagan Religion* by Philippe Walter.

A quick word about witches. Many medieval villages had a “hedge witch” - a person who lived on the outskirts of the town and studied the healing properties of plants. People visited the local witch in secret when they needed a love charm or the cure for a toothache. After the publication of the *Malleus Maleficarum* (Hammer of the Witches) in 1487, the Inquisitors added witches to the list of heretics they needed to eradicate to protect the communities of the faithful. During the 16th and 17th centuries, approximately 100,000 witches were put to death. Since approximately 75% of the witches killed were females, the persecution of witches was another example of Christianity’s misogynistic bias that dated back to Genesis’ blaming of humanity’s expulsion from Eden on Eve’s eating the apple. In the US, the land and possessions of the dead victims went on the auction block and the funds went into the local coffers – making these killings more about finance than faith.

A final thought – according to *God Against the Gods* by Jonathan Kirsch, when pagan armies conquered a new country they didn’t suppress worship of the local gods. The conquerors simply insisted that *their* gods be added to the pantheon of the conquered. One of the great sins I believe Christianity committed was that in their early zeal to spread the Gospel believers destroyed the writings of many earlier cultures. What if – during the Protestant Reformation - pious Roman Catholic soldiers had marched into Leipzig and burned the scores of that Lutheran heretic Bach? Imagine the loss we’d feel if searching through the archives of the Thomaskirche we found only a few surviving fragments of the Master’s music.

Nick Martellacci

Calendar

6/2/2019 - 4:00 PM

Jazz Vespers

Nick Martellacci Organ
Grace Lutheran Church
Forest Hills, NY

6/21/2019 - 6:00 PM

Potluck Supper

St John's Episcopal Church
Park Slope

6/28/2019 – 12:00 PM

Aaron Comins in Recital

National City Christian Church
Washington, DC

9/7/2019

Bach to 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 2020:
Anthony Labella
Kurleigh Lowe, CAGO
Rasaan Bourke

Class of 2021
Robert Frisby
Samuel Kuffuor
Phillip Lamb

Class of 2022
Lana Krakovskiy
Alex Violette
(vacant seat)

Substitute List

Don Barnum (summer Sunday AM only) | (917) 689-2953
Samantha Bassler | (570) 594-1066
Rasaan Bourke | (646) 318-6714
John Collis (no Sunday AM) | (718) 797-5473
Gary Di Franco | (917) 626-7760
Nicholas Martellacci (no Sunday AM) | (718) 624-5665
Maria Rayzwasser (no Sunday AM) | (347) 598-4571
Alex Violette | (718) 873-5912
Robert Vogel | (917) 242-6745
Thomas Hobson Williams | (404) 403-7492
John A. Wolfe (no Sunday AM) | (717) 253-2886
Ellen Wright | (917) 693-7158

Flyers



**Sunday
June 2, 2019
4:00 p.m.**

**Grace Lutheran Church
103-15 Union Turnpike
Forest Hills, NY 11375
718-268-6180**

**Featuring:
Bill Gati & Lydia Picano**

Vespers

*The American Guild of Organists
Brooklyn Chapter Invites You To Our*

JUNE 2019 POTLUCK DINNER



FRIDAY, JUNE 21ST, 2019 AT 6:00PM

***St. John's Episcopal Church Park Slope
139 St. John's Place, Brooklyn, NY 11217***

Join us in the church's lovely garden as we celebrate the conclusion of our program year, install our Board and Officers, and honor our 2019 Person of the Year, John Klauder.

Those wishing to bring a dish should coordinate their selections with Nick Martellacci by emailing him at nm11201@aol.com.



Pedals, Pipes & Peals

A summer music experience for kids



For kids in grades 1 through 8, discover instruments through the lens of our incredible 1868 Erben organ

What: Learn chimes, violin, keyboard, history & even build your own pipe organ modeled on the monumental Erben; kids get to see the Erben from the inside-out.

When: July 22-26, 2019 9AM-1PM; festive performance & reception Sunday July 28

NEW! Drop-in days Tues.-Thurs. & instrument petting zoo

Scholarships include **Charles & Catherine Scorsese** Music Scholarships

Contact: music@erbenorgan.org & see <http://erbenorgan.org/education>

