



The Brooklyn Bombarde

The Brooklyn Chapter of the American Guild of Organists Late Winter, 2006

ART — ARCHITECTURE — MUSIC

By Donald C. Barnum, Jr., Dean of the Chapter

I am writing this having just returned from our chapter's annual Martin Luther King Day trip, this year to Philadelphia.

The first stop was Lord and Taylor, *née* Wanamakers, home to the world's largest functioning organ. The building, dedicated by President Taft, the center court, and the organ are all National Historic Landmarks, and the building itself is owned by a real estate conglomerate, so the fate of the organ is relatively secure, no matter who leases the space. Lord and Taylor pays the organist(s) and the curator, and the Friends of the Wanamaker Organ volunteer time and talent, as well as fundraise for its upkeep. They also run tours of the instrument, and our hosts were Wally McClean and Sam Whitcraft.

The group was split in two, to make it more manageable for going into the chambers (string division, and beneath the pedal, where the curators have a complete office right next to the piano played from the console) and the console (yes! INSIDE the console). We also had lunch at the 3rd floor restaurant opposite most of the organ chambers during the luncheon recital, played by Harry Wilkinson, retired Director of Music, West Chester University, West Chester, Pa. and St. Martin in the Fields, Chestnut Hill, and a student (from 13 to 18) of Harry C. Banks, who was organist at Girard College when the instrument was installed. There were others there, obviously enjoying the recital, which ended with a rousing improvisation for MLK Jr. Day on *We Shall Overcome*.

Girard College is a gem. The moment you drive from the rubble-strewn lots across the street through the gates of this neo Greco federal period classical wonderland of a recreated Acropolis, one is uplifted and inspired. The crowning achievement is the Art Deco-take on classic architecture chapel. What a room! It has some of the cleanest acoustics I have ever heard, and 5 seconds of reverb! It used to be more before acoustical tile was installed on the back wall in the 1950's.

According to Mr. Wilkinson, who gave me more than an hour of his time for this article, it was the architect, too, who chose Mr. Skinner as the builder. Others had wanted to put the organ in cases on either side of the pillars in the front (*ed. note: what else is new?*), but E. M. agreed to put the organ in the ceiling in a huge 40' high chamber that also acts as a mixing space before the sound goes down through the grille to the room below. It works spectacularly well, giving the instrument an ethereal yet clear quality that is stunning.

Keith Bigger brought reprints of the description of the chamber and organ placement from Mr. Skinner's book for people to read on the way to Philadelphia. According to host, Bruce Schultz, organist of Girard College, and who played a wonderful demonstration for us, said the aforementioned Mr. Banks, organist of Girard Chapel at the time, wanted E. M. Skinner to design the organ and insisted that E. M. voice the instrument in the room. The specification shows it, and most of Skinner's signature stops are there, as well as a late Skinner diapason chorus. The only change is the Harmonics mixture, which was replaced with a Moller quint mixture in the 70's, later greatly reduced in volume.

If I might digress for a moment, I'd like to mention E. M. Skinner's love of Gustav Mahler. Here was a composer who was a conductor expert at bring out contrapuntal lines. As a composer, he seldom used the massed forces of his symphony orchestra.

(continued inside, page 4)

Officers, Board Members and Appointments,
2005-2006

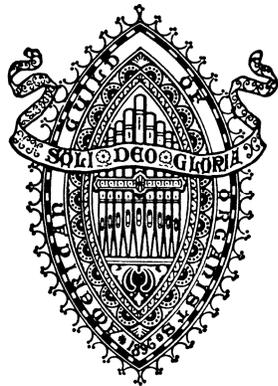
Officers for the 2005-2006 program year:

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Placement: Julian Goodwin, AAGO 718-875-3542
Chaplain: Fr. Thaddeus Grzelak
Webmaster, Newsletter Editor: Jonathan Hall

Class of 2008: Tim Chun, Keith Bigger, Roger Castellani.

Class of 2007: Sylvester Nichols, J. David Williams, Rick Dennen.

Class of 2006: John Cuniffe, Gregory Eaton, Joseph Extejt.



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Published from September to June,
 approximately
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Upcoming and Ongoing

Every Wednesday, 1:10 PM. Free Recital at the Church of Saint Ann and the Holy Trinity, Montague and Clinton, the Heights.

Sun Feb 26, 4 PM. CHAPTER EVENT: Members' Recital—see article this issue!

Mon. April 3, 7:30 PM. Dr. Francis Greene lectures on the Holy Eucharist in Sacred Music and Art. Dr. Michael Kaminski and the St. Francis X. Choir. Saint Francis Xavier Church, 225 Sixth Avenue Brooklyn, NY 11215

Sun Apr. 23 5 PM. Evensong on the Octave of Easter, Christ Church, Clinton and Kane Sts. Cobble Hill Robert Vogel, organist. Choirs of Cathedral Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem, PA, and St. Charles Borromeo.

Sun May 7, 2006 3:00 PM
 The Canby Singers in Concert
 St. Charles Borromeo RC Church, Sidney Place, Heights. Donald Barnum, organist and choirmaster.

Mon May 15 7:30 PM. Organ recital: An Evening of Old Favorites and Transcriptions. Michael Kaminski, organist. St. Francis Xavier, 225 Sixth Ave. Brooklyn, NY 11215. Contact 718-836-6872 or 718-638-1880 for further information. Or e mail MKorganist@aol.com.

New Members, Reduced Rates!

NEW MEMBERS only can join the AGO from now through March 31 only at a reduced rate. So if you're reading this, please do two things: recruit a few new members, and refer them to the Dean or Registrar to join for the balance of the year at a discount.

Get Ready, Get Set, ChicAGO!

Are you planning on attending the National AGO convention in Chicago this July? You should. The Chicago Chapter is bigger than Brooklyn’s, but has a similar feel of friendliness, Gemutlichkeit, and all that. They’re a nice bunch, and the Windy City is a nice place. Make your plans now to Chica-GO!

“In Perfect Peace” Compact Discs— Still Available!

Don Barnum’s magnificent CD “In Perfect Peace,” which demonstrates the 1880 Odell organ of which we’re so proud, is still yours for the buying. Cost is \$15. Please pick up several! You never know when you need a hostess gift, and in France it’s rude to give her wine. Give her *Dans une Paix Parfaite* instead.

Substitute List

Direct all inquiries and corrections for this list to Julian Goodwin, Placement Officer, at 718-875-3542. No exceptions, please—including for any changes in status. For permanent positions, see the National website, www.agohq.org.

- Ellen Wright 718-625-3903
- Julian Goodwin 718-875-3542
- Mark Victor Smith 718-728-7038
- Sylvester Nichols 718-493-0445
- Roy Prescod (no Sun.) 718-253-8498
- Robert Vogel (no Sun.) 718-727-9864
- Andrew Violette (no Sun. AM) 718-821-6055
- Jonathan Hall (no Sun. AM) 917-596-4002

An Update on Our Website

Our current website is meant to be temporary. It has been up for about two years now, on space donated by our current webmaster (/newsletter editor/Sub-Dean). Recently, the Board has been working with Tim Chun to develop a better and more permanent website, and to register our own domain. We are not quite ready to unveil it, but look for it by the end of this program year, if not sooner. In the meantime, go to <http://www.agohq.org/chapter/brooklyn>.

Although Tim is donating his time and skill to set up a design for us, your current Webmaster will remain in that capacity and will be responsible for all content. **Please contact me with any and all program announcements and other updates.**

If you choose to email me a list of programs, in hopes that they’ll be posted, would you also be so kind as to include a note to me to that effect? I am on countless mailing lists and can’t be expected to read your mind if all you send is a blank email with an attachment—! Just add something politely bland, like “Please consider the following (or the attached) for the Brooklyn Chapter website and newsletter. Thank you.” And sign your name. They say in Spanish: *Cortesía de boca, poco cuesta y mucha vale*. Thank you!

Members' Recital!

It's almost time for our annual MEMBERS' RECITAL. Come experience a magnificently restored organ in a glorious space, and revel in the musical gifts of your colleagues! Our host this year is Gregory Eaton.

TIME: Sunday, February 26, 2006, 4 PM. Reception follows.

PLACE: Saint Ann and the Holy Trinity, corner Clinton and Montague.

COST: None! Zip! ¡Nada! *Gornisht!*

RSVP: Don Barnum—DCBjr1@aol.com or call 212-799-6944.

Are You Called to Serve?

The Chapter's Nominating Committee will soon be considering names for leadership positions in the 2006-2007 program year. If you are interested in holding chapter office, please speak to a board member soon.

END-OF-THE-YEAR BANQUET: SUNDAY, JUNE 5, 2006

That's **Pentecost Sunday** for you gentiles out there! As of this writing, there are very few other ideas out there, so we will almost certainly be going to a DIFFERENT La Sorrentina's than last year. We'll be going to their flagship location near Regina Pacis. It looks much nicer, and is more conveniently located and more private than last year's spot. Plan now for the evening of June 5. It's so close to your Sub-Dean's home, who knows, he might hold an after-banquet Cordial Hour. If you're good.

The Brooklyn Chapter Accepts Donations!

Of course, we accept donations! Won't you consider supporting your Chapter above and beyond the call of due-ty?

What do we do with the money? Well, when we have it, we pay for programs even when they don't break even. We are able to help worthy people with dues or program attendance when \$\$\$ is a problem, as it so often is in this remarkably heartless city. We do advocacy, we do outreach, and we mean to do more all the time!

By the way, if you still haven't paid your dues yet, it's never too late. Why not pay up, and *round up* while you're at it? Joe Extejt and/or Steve Danziger can't wait to hear from you, and we can't wait to welcome you into fellowship.

RETURN ADDRESS:

Jonathan Hall
4916 11th Ave.
Brooklyn, NY 11219

MAIL TO:

Put this on your fridge with a magnet!

MEMBERS RECITAL, February 26, St. Ann and the HT.

Chapter Elections: Coming Soon to Your Mailbox!

Chapter Banquet, June 5.

ChicAGO National Convention, July 2006.