



THE BIRMINGHAM CHIFF ...off the old blockflute

The Birmingham Chapter of the American Guild of Organists

March 2016

A Word from the Dean

Greetings friends and colleagues,

Can you believe we are already in the middle of Lent, and that Easter will have come and gone by the end of the month? The first two months of 2016 have certainly flown by. Our Birmingham AGO meeting at Cathedral Church of the Advent on February 8th was a great evening of fellowship over a delicious meal, followed by a very practical and informative session led by Fred Teardo. The session, while titled Choral Accompanying in the Anglican Tradition, was most helpful for anyone who accompanies *OR* directs choirs. In addition, the music library donated by Linda Gill's family was available for purchase with the proceeds benefiting our chapter. There is no set price on this music. We simply ask that you make a donation in any amount you deem appropriate. We wish to thank Charles Kennedy and Fred for hosting this event, as well as Nathan Smock for arranging the catered meal with Full Moon Barbeque. We are also grateful to Sherelyn Breland who not only helped with organizing dinner, but also brought all six boxes of the music for sale.

If you missed the February meeting and are now feeling down after having read about it, do not dismay! You get another chance on March 14th at 7 PM. The Handbell Quartet from Trinity United Methodist Church, Huntsville, will present a program at Trinity United Methodist Church, Homewood. This group, led by Shane Kennedy, is a fine group of ringers who will present a short program followed by an informative workshop focused on providing a better understanding of the techniques of bell ringing. If you have a friend interested in bell ringing, this is the perfect time to invite them to join us. For dinner, we will meet at Chicken Salad Chick in Homewood's SoHo Square at 5:45 PM. Linda's

music will again be available for sale, so don't forget your checkbook. You truly don't want to miss this opportunity. I look forward to seeing you there with a friend.

Finally, I want to thank Leslie Teardo for her hard work in arranging and tending to the details of the excellent programs we are enjoying this year.

Sincerely,

Dan Lawhon

2016 ELECTION PROCESS UNDERWAY

The Nominating Committee will soon announce its slate for 2016-18 officers and the 2016-19 Class of the Executive Committee. Dan Lawhon will send a chapter email announcing their recommendations, and it will be posted on the chapter website as well.

Members of the chapter may also submit nominees until April 1. Guidelines for nominations and the election process are listed in "Section 4. CHAPTER GOVERNANCE" and "Section 8. ELECTION PROCEDURES" of the Chapter Operating Procedures at <http://www.birminghamago.org/AboutUs.html>. The election concludes at the May 9th chapter meeting.

Members of the 2013-16 Class completing their Executive Committee terms this year are Mark Hayes, Jeff McLelland, and Nathan Smock.

Remember to keep an eye on your email for the update on the officer and Executive Committee candidates!

MARCH 15 APPLICATION DEADLINE: OUR CHAPTER SCHOLARSHIP COMPETITIONS

The registration deadline for the Minnie McNeil Carr (high school level) and Myrtle Jones Steele (college to 23 years of age as of 1 Aug '16) Scholarships is March 15. All entry forms and fees (nonrefundable) absolutely must be postmarked by this date. Competition guidelines, application forms, etc. may be downloaded from <http://www.birminghamago.org/Scholarships.html>. Please take time to read over these guidelines with utmost care. The competitions will be held on Saturday, April 2, at 1:00 PM CDT, The Episcopal Church of the Ascension in Vestavia Hills.

To arrange practice times, contestants or their teachers should contact Mr. Mike Sparks at mike.sparks@wallacestate.edu. A maximum of three hours is allowed for each contestant. The church is located at 1912 Canyon Road, Vestavia Hills, AL 35216. The phone number is (205) 822-3480.

For further information, please contact Ms. Natalie Tally at ntally@me.com or phone (205) 251-5665.

Comings and Goings

Hopefully, all of you in attendance at our February meeting had the pleasure of meeting our newest member **Dr. Brent Nolte**. Dr. Nolte has been hired as Assistant Professor of Music and College Organist at Talladega College, where he will teach various music courses and play for the college's annual convocations and graduation. Brent previously served as adjunct organ instructor at Martin Luther College in New Ulm, MN. He holds a master's degree in organ performance from Central Michigan University, where he studied with Dr. Steven Egler, and a DMA in organ performance from the University of Minnesota, which he attended on a School of Music fellowship under the instruction of Dr. Dean Billmeyer.

Talladega College has hired **Mark Hayes** to inspect and repair the Moller organs in DeForest Chapel and Andrews Hall, after which Brent will present a recital in DeForest Chapel in April. We gladly welcome Brent to the Birmingham chapter.

THIS AND THAT

Thank You, Nathan!!

With this issue of *The Birmingham Chiff...off the old blockflute*, **Nathan Smock** assumes the role of newsletter editor. He had generously offered to assist in proofing the newsletter when Sherelyn Breland, a long-time admirer of his writing skills, suggested he would be even better as the editor. Thank goodness he agreed to give it a shot! Nathan is also going to submit notices of chapter activities to *The American Organist* and create and maintain a chapter Facebook page. So send in your pics and items for each of these! Many thanks to Nathan for these contributions and to the Executive Committee for approving them.

Boston AGO Organ Library and Archives

Located on the campus of Boston University, the Organ Library of the Boston AGO Chapter is one of the largest collections of organ music in the world. Its stated mission "is to collect, preserve and make accessible to scholars and performers its holding of works for the organ, important related literature and unique archival materials" and is "dedicated to preserving the musical heritage of the pipe organ."

Its web catalog is a searchable database listing the complete contents of anthologies and single-composer collections of the more than 50,000 items in its holdings. The books and periodicals collection covers organ literature and composers, performance practice, and pedagogy. Its archives document the careers of notable performers such as T. Tertius Noble and E. Power Biggs. Their listening room contains hundreds of LPs and CDs that are available for listening.

The library accepts donations of music and books. Duplicate copies of music and books are sold at modest prices (plus postage) as a service to the organ community, with proceeds used to support the mission of the Organ Library.

As a research library, the materials are not accessible outside of the library. But if their catalog shows they have a composition you want that's out-of-print and no longer under copyright restriction, they will scan it and email it to you for a small fee. To explore the resources they have available or to arrange a visit, click <http://www.organlibrary.org/about/>.

UA's Pedals, Pipes, and Pizza – Saturday, February 20th, 2016



The Pedals, Pipes and Pizza group in front of Denny Chimes, following a demonstration by UA Carillonneur, Tyler Canonico

The University of Alabama Organ Department, under the direction of Dr. Faythe Freese, presented a Pedals, Pipes, and Pizza event on Saturday, February 20th, 2016, from 9 AM - 2:30 PM under the sponsorship of the Birmingham AGO chapter. Twenty-one youth aged 11-16 attended the event and played the five organs of The University of Alabama and two organs at Canterbury Episcopal Church and University Presbyterian Church. Additional activities included a powerpoint presentation designed by our Master of Ceremonies, Tyler Canonico; a game of Organ Jeopardy; a video; a performance of *Rex, the King of Instruments* by composer, Daniel Burton, performed by Tyler Canonico and narrated by Faythe Freese; and of course, a pizza lunch! A Tuscaloosa News photographer documented the event with photos and a brief article printed on Sunday, February 21.

Catherine Heemann was the official photographer. Katie Loudermilk, Matthew Edwards, Alex Benford, and Christopher Henley served as leaders for the Reeds, Principals, Flutes and Strings groups. UA tote bags were replete with university paraphernalia and Birmingham AGO brochures. Parting gifts of tiny organ pipes for the attendees were generously donated by Birmingham AGO chapter member Mark Hayes, owner of Hayes Pipe Organ Service, Inc. Seven PPP students expressed interest and signed up to take organ lessons. The UA Pedals, Pipes, and Pizza was a resounding success for the King of Instruments!

Article by Faythe Freese, photo by Catherine Heemann

Watch for additional photos from the event to be posted on the chapter website shortly.

From Our Members

*On January 9th, the Gainesville (Florida) Chapter sponsored a hymn playing master class led by Todd Wilson. Our own **Mary Ann Croft** was in attendance and brought back these notes to share with us. Many of you may be very familiar with the content; however, a healthy review of information can be beneficial for even the most learned and accomplished musician.*

* A steady, singable tempo is most crucial. Focus one's attention first and foremost on leading the congregation. For slower hymns, maintain a sense of forward motion. When words or harmony come quickly, remember to give people time to think about the text. In addition, be sure one's pace enables phrases without commas to be sung with one breath.

* *Always* be mindful of the text being sung. While musical phrasing certainly has its place, it cannot be given power over poetic phrasing and punctuation. A break in the wrong place can change the entire meaning of a sentence. This of course means that not every verse will break in the same places. Also, watch for places Wilson refers to as "shopping lists" and give breaks after each item, e.g. "One Lord, One Faith, One Birth."

* Hymn melodies are invariably in the soprano range. Soloing out the melody in the tenor range can encourage stronger singing from the lower voices in one's congregation. Furthermore, playing phrases in unison can bolster the confidence of those who do not sing well or are unfamiliar with the tune. Too many sounds coming from multiple directions can be confusing and distracting to the singer.

* Passing tones can fill in thirds in the alto or tenor lines. These can add a breath of fresh air to otherwise vertical hymns.

* Hymns structured with repeated musical phrases, e.g. "Praise to the Lord the Almighty," can be made more interesting by slightly altering the harmonization or color of the registration on the second phrase.

* Registration changes between verses need not always be dramatic. Subtle changes such as the addition or subtraction of a bourdon, mixture, or reed can produce tasteful, noticeable results without requiring the use of a general piston.

* Try leaving out the pedals for a verse to give the singer a break from the 16' sound. This makes for an uplifting effect when the pedals return in the next verse. Leaving a verse on a deceptive cadence can also dramatize the start of the next.

*The zimblestern can add a certain sparkle to phrases of select verses; however, the prudent organist should guard against the temptation to use it more than quarterly.

* Let the style of your playing and registration reflect the character of the text as well as the tune, e.g. "In Thee Is Gladness" lends itself to the style of a baroque dance. Play it that way and use sounds that would invoke similar imagery for the listener.

With all of that being said, take heed not to wear out your welcome with too many "special effects," while at the same time avoiding predictability and monotony. Remember that people are stuck listening to you for years at a time, so keep things fresh while ensuring that the organ doesn't interfere with the singing. Never be a distraction from the text by drawing the attention to oneself. Save that for the postlude.

Items of Note

Organist Needed at Covenant Presbyterian

Covenant Presbyterian (PCA) of Birmingham remains in search of a part-time organist to meet their worship needs. In addition, those who are available for substitute work may be interested in fulfilling their needs for Easter only. For further information regarding either opportunity, please contact Rick Barnes, Director of Musical Arts, at rbarnes@covpres.com or (205) 706-3328.

National Convention in Houston, June 19 – 23, 2016

Online registration is available at the convention website <http://agohouston2016.com/>. Links to details of all aspects of the event are also available on the site.

MARCH CHAPTER EVENT

Please make plans to attend the March 14th chapter meeting at Trinity United Methodist Church in Homewood. The program on handbell techniques will be led by Shane Kennedy and a handbell quartet from Huntsville's Trinity UMC. We will meet for dinner at 5:45 PM at Chicken Salad Chick in SoHo Square (1830 29th Avenue South, Homewood, AL 35209); no reservations are necessary. The menu and directions are available at http://www.chickensaladchick.com/sites/default/files/menus/Birmingham%20Menu_1.pdf.

There will be a 6:45 PM business meeting at the church, and you'll have the opportunity to peruse the three boxes remaining of Linda Gill's music that are available for purchase. Hope to see you there!

SCHEDULED CHAPTER EVENTS 2016

March

Workshop with Huntsville Trinity Handbell Quartet

Monday, March 14, 2016
Trinity United Methodist Church, Homewood
Dinner 5:45 PM Chicken Salad Chick in SoHo Square;
Business meeting 6:45 PM; Program 7:00 PM

April

Student Recital

Monday, April 11, 2016
Vestavia Hills United Methodist Church
Dinner 6:00 PM; Business meeting 6:30 PM; Program 7:00 PM

Pedals, Pipes & Pizza

Saturday, April 16, 2016
Anniston First United Methodist Church
Time to be announced
Lunch will be provided
Info: chrishenleyorganist@yahoo.com

May

Literature Sharing

Monday, May 9, 2016
The Episcopal Church of the Ascension in Vestavia
Dinner at 6:00 PM at Newk's; Business meeting and program following dinner

MARCH OPPORTUNITIES

See Online Calendar of Events for Complete Listing

March 6, 2016: 2:30 PM

Adam Cobb, Senior Organ Recital – Reid Chapel, Samford University
Music of Bruhns, Franck, Durufle, Paulus, Ireland, Phillips, and Vierne
Info: <http://www.ipc-usa.org> jmclelland@ipc-usa.org

March 6, 2016: 2:30 PM

Leon W. Couch, III, Organ Recital – Birmingham-Southern College
Buxtehude Praeludium in D Minor, BuxWV 155; Petr Eben, Homage to Buxtehude; Franck, Cantabile; Tchaikovsky, Nutcracker Suite
Info: ProfCouch@gmail.com

March 6, 2016: 3:0 PM

Choral Evensong – Cathedral Church of the Advent
The Advent Episcopal School Choral Ensemble; Richard Phillips, director
Music of Bruhns, Franck, Durufle, Paulus, Ireland, Phillips, and Vierne
Info: <http://www.adventbirmingham.org/kennedy@cathedraladvent.com>

March 20, 2016: 3:00 PM

Choral Concert – Independent Presbyterian Church
IPC Choir and Jeff McLelland
Gabriel Faure *Requiem*
Info: <http://www.ipc-usa.org> jmclelland@ipc-usa.org

March 20, 2016: 3:0 PM

Holy Week Organ Meditation – Cathedral Church of the Advent
Frederick Teardo, organ
Bach *Sei gegrüßet, Jesu gütig*; Brahms *Eleven Chorale Preludes, Opus 122*
Info: <http://www.adventbirmingham.org/kennedy@cathedraladvent.com>