

# THE BIRMINGHAM CHIFF ...off the old blockflute

## The Birmingham Chapter of the American Guild of Organists

Fall 2018

### A Word from the Dean

Greetings, friends and colleagues,

We closed the 2017-18 year with an entertaining and enlightening program led by **Pat Fitzsimmons** and **Jim Cook** at South Highland Presbyterian Church. After a delicious meal prepared by SHPC's chef, the large gathering enjoyed Pat and Jim's reflections of the growth of the Birmingham chapter as well as the development of the musical scene in Birmingham. Sub-Dean **Bruce Ludwick** led the way with several insightful questions, with members joining in with their remembrances of events and interesting individuals as well. The evening ended all too soon! Many thanks to our host **Jamie McLemore** and to South Highland for allowing us to enjoy their beautifully renovated facility, and to Pat and Jim for their many contributions to the chapter over the years.

The 2018-19 year opens **September 10<sup>th</sup> at All Saints' Episcopal Church**. Details are described in a separate topic below, but I want to highlight one particular item: *We are incorporating a membership effort with this month's activities*. As we did at IPC one September several years ago, we want to invite other organists, choir directors, singers, and anyone else who shares our interests to attend and learn about the Guild. Perhaps you remember what a wonderful time we had, and how fabulous the meal was at that potluck dinner! This might be the perfect time for someone you know to join us and enjoy the benefits and camaraderie available to AGO members.

*For this month's event, the Executive Committee (EC) invites each member to bring one potential member as their guest (at no cost to the member host). We*

*hope you'll give careful thought to this.* The newsletter topic about the September 10<sup>th</sup> meeting has instructions on reserving a spot for your guest.

I want to recognize and thank outgoing **Dean Dan Lawhon, Sub-Dean Bruce Ludwick, Sam Burke, Bill Richardson, and Natalie Tally** for their leadership during their terms as officers and EC members. They have each worked many hours over the years to support this chapter, and we are most grateful for their past and ongoing efforts.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as dean the next two years; thank you to all those who've accepted responsibility for planning and executing each month's events; and thank you to those who've agreed to serve as officers and on the executive and standing committees. We are excited about the year's plans and encourage each of you to share your thoughts and ideas as the year evolves.

Hope to see you on the 10<sup>th</sup>!  
Sherelyn

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### POEA 2017 Students in the News

**Nicholas Stigall** and **Danielle Little**, two of our POEA students, competed in the Greater Columbia, SC chapter's Young Organist Competition last March. Nick, from Knoxville, won first prize and also the Best Bach Performance Award and the Hymn Playing Award. Danielle, a resident of Huntersville, NC, won second prize. You can read about the other competition winners and see their photo on page 75 of the June 2018 edition of **The American Organist**.

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## SEPTEMBER 10<sup>TH</sup> CHAPTER MEETING

This month **Melanie Couch** is hosting us at **All Saints' Episcopal Church**, 110 West Hawthorne Road, Homewood 35209. We'll begin the year with potluck dinner at 6 p.m. followed by the business meeting and 7 p.m. program.

To share the benefits and opportunities available to AGO members and as an introduction to our chapter, *the Executive Committee encourages each member to invite one potential new member to join us for all of the evening's activities.* (This guest may be in addition to a member's spouse, 'though spouses are welcome to join the chapter, too!)

**Natalie Tally is coordinating our Pot Luck Salad Dinner. When you make your online dinner reservation, please indicate on the reservation form's memo line what dish you are bringing to avoid duplication, along with the name of your guest. Natalie asks that you bring your item ready for the table with a serving utensil (labeled with your name). Meat dishes are encouraged. Please remember to take into account potential guests when preparing your dish so that we have sufficient food for all to enjoy.**

*Online reservations will open Tuesday, August 28<sup>th</sup>, and will close at midnight Sunday, Sept. 2<sup>nd</sup>.* Reservations will be accepted earlier than usual to allow time for planning the dinner. **Log on to the chapter website to make your reservation or email Mike Burt at [treasurer@birminghamago.org](mailto:treasurer@birminghamago.org) or call (205) 201-3838.**

**Elizabeth Smith of Lois Fyfe Music** in Nashville will present the program. She'll be sharing an excerpt from her workshop at the Kansas City Convention and will discuss accessing reprint services and publishers who provide them. In addition, Elizabeth will have a variety of organ and choral music available for perusal and purchase, as well as a selection of piano teaching materials geared toward organists teaching piano in private or academy settings. **Greg Roberson** is the program coordinator.

Please reserve Monday, September 10<sup>th</sup> for what promises to be a fun and rewarding evening. We look forward to seeing you and your guest there!

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## Welcome New Members

Whether long-time area residents or recent arrivals from other parts of the country, we are pleased to welcome these new and returning members to the chapter.

**Glenn Day** resides in Rainbow City, AL, where he teaches piano and organ at the Hardin Center of the Cultural Arts and is organist/choirmaster of the Episcopal Church of the Resurrection.

**Constance Moore** teaches church music and other classes at Miles College. She was previously a student member while at Birmingham Southern College, and studied organ and choral conducting at Westminster Choir College

**Ann Morris** is a returning member and is now available to substitute.

We look forward to becoming reacquainted soon!

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## Comings and Goings

This summer **Bill McElwee** accepted the positions of Organist and Choir Director of Holy Comforter Episcopal Church in Montevallo. Bill was previously very active as a substitute for several area churches.

**Brent Nolte** accepted a position in the Music Department of Ohio Christian University in Circleville, Ohio. This private college is denominationally affiliated with the Churches of Christ in Christian Union. The Columbus chapter is fortunate to have Brent joining their group!

**Fred Teardo** was recently named Adjunct Instructor of Organ and University Organist at Samford University. He will teach applied organ, lead performance labs, guide the development of performers equipped for service in multiple venues, including the church, recruit to the program, and provide music for University Convocation and Commencement ceremonies. Fred will also teach courses in service playing, literature, and pedagogy.

Congratulations and best wishes to these gentlemen on their new pursuits.

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## The Brant Duddy Appreciation Tour

Birmingham chapter members enjoyed a tour of significant organs in the Philadelphia and Atlantic City areas this summer, facilitated by their legendary host Brant Duddy. In addition to Boardwalk Hall, organs at Longwood Gardens (Emily Moody, hostess), Girard College (Chuck Gibson, host), Dickinson High School (Carl Black, host) and the Wanamaker organ at Macy's City Centre store (Curt Mangel, host; Nick Meyers, tour guide) were



*Pictured at the Midmer-Losh (VII/449) console, left to right, are Sam Burke, Thomas Graves, Barry Norris, Jeff Binford & Bill McElwee (photo by Bill McElwee)*

examined and played. Jonathan Bowen was kind enough to host us at the Church of St. Luke and the Epiphany in Philadelphia, and David Christopher at the Episcopal Church of Saints Andrew and Matthew in Wilmington, Delaware, home to a new Quimby organ. Chapter member **Jeff Binford** and Alabama ATOS Chapter member **Stuart Thompson** were called upon to play a concert Friday, 13th July, at Boardwalk Hall (Nathan Bryson, host) on the largest organ in the world with less than 24 hours notice! They performed brilliantly for a crowd of about 60 tourists. James Martin was their *combination machine*, manipulating over 1,200 stop tabs.

--- Bill McElwee

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## This and That

### Quarterly newsletter publication schedule

The next edition of *Chiff...off the old Blockflute*, our chapter newsletter, will be the winter edition. In the meantime, we will continue to share information updates on the chapter website and via chapter emails.

### September 1<sup>st</sup> goal for directory updates

Please remember to check that your directory information is complete and correct on our chapter database. Our members frequently use this to contact each other, and we want to be sure the info we provide is accurate. We would appreciate it if you could do this by September 1<sup>st</sup>, so that we can update the records you submit before the first chapter meeting. Thanks!

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## A TRIBUTE TO JIM GARNER

On August 4, 2018, **Jim Garner** passed away after a lengthy illness. For over 20 years, he taught choral music at Gardendale High School. He was also a church musician and long-time member of this AGO chapter. Jim had a positive impact on many, and we will miss him.

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## 2018-19 STANDING COMMITTEES

*Calendar* – **Mark Hayes**

*Competition & Scholarship Awards* – **Sam Burke** (chair), **Karen Krekelberg**

*Educational & Professional Concerns* – **Faythe Freese** (chair), **Dan Lawhon, Scott Roberts**

*Finance and Fund Raising* – **Mike Burt** (chair), **Bill Richardson**

*Membership* – **Debby Holmes** (chair), **Katie Loudermilk Ou**

*Newsletter* – **Cathy Shelton**

*Webmaster* – **Cathy Shelton**

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## Andrew Risinger in Concert

**Andrew Risinger** will present a recital on Sunday, September 9<sup>th</sup>, at 4 p.m. at the Church of the Nativity, 208 Eustis Avenue, Huntsville 35801.

Andrew is Associate Minister of Music and Organist of West End United Methodist Church in Nashville and is also Adjunct Organ instructor at Belmont University. In 2007 he was named Organ Curator of the Schoenstein organ in the Schermerhorn Symphony Center, where he is principal organist of the Nashville Symphony.

There is no charge to attend this program, which is sponsored by the Huntsville AGO Chapter.

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## AGO National Convention Kansas City, July 2 - 6

**Sam Burke, Faythe Freese, Charles Kennedy, Karen Krekelburg, Dan Lawhon, Jeff McLelland, Jamie McLemore, and Cathy Shelton** represented our chapter at the National convention. Several of them shared their thoughts and experiences of their week in KC. All photos are courtesy of Jamie McLemore.

*From the editor: Faythe Freese served as an official convention reviewer for the TAO, and in that position submitted over 4100 words in her article!*

I would like to encourage everyone to read my observations and comments in the October issue concerning the wonderful 2018 national AGO convention

--- Faythe Freese

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*Richards-Fowkes organ, Village Presbyterian*

The Kansas City chapter did an excellent job in hosting this convention. The crowds were smaller than past conventions which made all of the venues

much easier to maneuver. Both the Sheraton and Westin hotels were connected with an enclosed, albeit very warm, covered connector. This made going back and forth between the 2 hotels easier. The highlight of the convention for me was Todd Wilson's recital at the Community of Christ Temple in Independence, Missouri. His stunning recital, played from memory, used the large Casavant to its fullest potential. I enjoyed hearing the Richards-Fowkes organ at Village Presbyterian Church in Prairie Village, Kansas. Doug Cleveland played a beautiful program with a commissioned work from Pamela Decker – complete with dancers! The Kauffman Center was the venue for the opening and closing recitals. If you sit in the balcony you cannot be afraid of heights – especially if you are on the first row.



*Unity Temple on the Plaza. E.M. Skinner organ 1950 rebuilt by Quimby in 2013*

The entire week was full of seeing old friends, connecting with new ones, and missing those who have left us. A big void in this convention was not having Jonathan Biggers in our midst. He is sorely missed at these conventions. It was good to see many people at the exhibits each night. The week was very good and always informative. I'm sure Atlanta has a lot planned for us in two years.

---Jamie McLemore

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The 2018 AGO National Convention in Kansas City was built around the commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the end of World War I. Programming was coordinated to reflect upon this anniversary commemoration, with implications of what the lessons of one hundred years ago might mean for us

today. It could not be lost upon a convention goer the significance of the themes chosen for the convention, and the coordination of the convention's location and year, given that the well known World War I museum is in Kansas City. Music and the arts have great power to cause one to think, reflect, and then act upon what one has received. The convention was very well organized, and the breadth and depth of the programming was most inspiring, supercharging me for the work of music ministry. Many fresh ideas and perspectives, as well as new music, were gleaned from the week in Kansas City that be will of great benefit to the work that I do. Many outstanding performances were heard, along with deeply moving experiences of worship, and it was special to have quality time for conversation with many colleagues and friends in the Guild, many of whom I only have the opportunity to meet with during a convention such as this. Bravo to the Kansas City AGO Chapter for putting on such a fine convention!

--- Charles Kennedy

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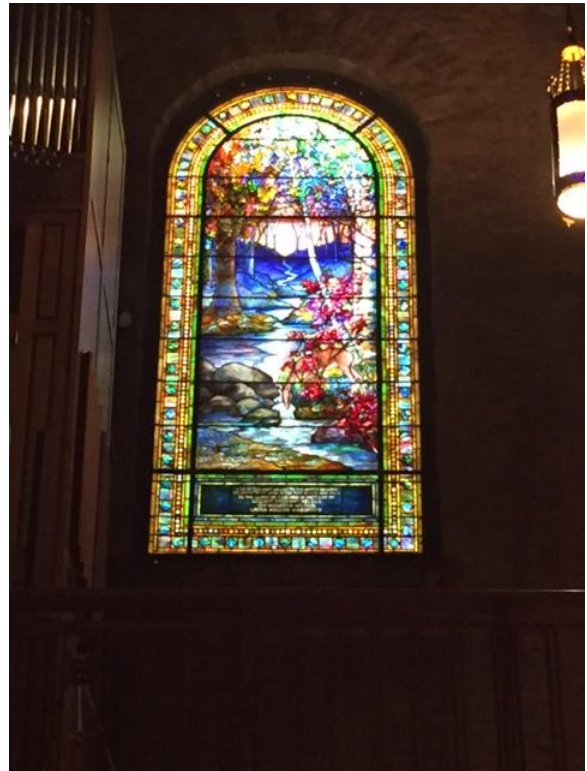


Dan Lawhon and Jamie McLemore

Experiencing Kansas City, MO for the first time was a wonderful experience for me. Both the opening and closing concerts in their Kauffman Center of the Performing Arts featuring choirs, instruments, handbells and their magnificent Casavant were

moving and well executed. The organ that impressed me most was Richard Fowkes Organ at Village Presbyterian Church in Prairie Village, KS (suburb of Kansas City, KS). I always enjoy hearing Todd Wilson play as he demonstrated the Casavant at the Community of Christ Temple in neighboring Independence, MO. It's hard to stop here, but I will.

---Dan Lawhon



Tiffany window at Grace and Holy Trinity Cathedral

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The Kansas City convention began for me with a recital most appealing to my OHS sensibilities: Christopher Marks' program on the 1869 E.& G.G. Hook instrument at Rainbow Mennonite Church, located on the Kansas side of KC. Though modest in size, the Hook was as colorful as the church's name, and Marks demonstrated its capabilities well. Originally built for a church in upstate New York, the organ was transplanted to Rainbow by Quimby Pipe Organs, who reported the organ needed only predictable repairs in the process (a testimony to quality of construction and care it received over time). In talking to church members after the recital, it was clear all were delighted to have this instrument. In the 1920s, prominent citizens of KC founded what was to become the

National World War I Museum and Memorial (located not far from the convention hotels). With the 100th anniversary of the armistice which ended that war being observed this year, it was no surprise that convention planners included presentations throughout the convention which raised awareness of this world-changing event. Many new music commissions (both organ and choral) reflected this; memorable to me was Emma Lou Diemer's "Remembering", movingly performed by Chelsea Chen as part of her excellent recital on the afternoon of July 4th in Helzberg Hall, the principal concert venue of the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts. This WWI emphasis resulted in some morning lectures possessed of rather unusual titles. I attended "Hubert Parry's Organ Works in Context of the Great War and Parry's Study of J.S Bach", a thoughtful presentation by American organist Ruth Eldredge Thomas. Her studies in England included a stint as assistant organist at New College, Oxford, during which time her interest in Parry's music grew, resulting in her recent editing of a new edition of HP's complete organ works (Wayne Leupold). The aspect of many Britons (including HP) feeling conflicted over war with Germany was explored, as we were reminded the Kaiser's grandmother was none other than Queen Victoria.



*Grand Avenue UMC Temple, E. M. Skinner 1911*

Excellent choral performances were heard throughout the week, including an inspired Bach Motets program by the Spire Chamber Ensemble. With the Kantorei of Kansas City, the Kansas City Chorale, and Anton Armstrong of St Olaf prominently featured, one was tempted to wonder if the ACDA had co-opted the

proceedings. KC has reason to be very proud of its choral resources.

The final day held great OHS-style interest again, with recitals involving two notable Ernest Skinner organs. The first involved the last instrument built under Skinner's direction, located at Unity Temple on the Plaza, with a fine recital given by Nicole Keller. In the afternoon, Damin Spritzer played a remarkable program on the oldest and largest unaltered four-manual Skinner in existence, built in 1912 for Grand Avenue Methodist Temple. The edifice has never had air-conditioning, so all endured a sweltering experience. Kudos to members of the congregation for their hospitality (lots of bottled water) and to Eric Johnson of Quimby for his preparation of the organ, which stayed in tune and operation throughout.

What I've mentioned is just a small fraction of what was offered at KC 2018. As has been the case for me at other AGO conventions I've attended, this one provided good opportunities for fellowship with friends old and new. I was particularly delighted to be able to spend quality time with former colleagues from the Wilmington, NC chapter. A final word about the National World War I Museum and Memorial (mentioned earlier): if you find yourself in KC and have few hours available, you will not regret a visit to this "Smithsonian-level" site. I paid a short but meaningful visit, and am glad I did.

*---Sam Burke*



*Cathy Shelton, Jamie McLemore, Karen Krekelberg*

Conventions are so much better with friends!