



THE BIRMINGHAM CHIFF ...off the old blockflute

The Birmingham Chapter of the American Guild of Organists

Fall 2020

A Word from the Dean

Greetings!

What challenging and interesting times the last six months have been! Wonder what adventures are ahead?

Despite the challenges of Covid-19, the Executive Committee has planned a varied and interesting schedule for the 2020-2021 calendar. We plan to zoom our sessions from October on. It appears that we'll be able to gather in person for our November 14th meeting at IPC. The monthly scheduling is included in this newsletter and is posted on the website.

I want to recognize outgoing **Secretary Charles Kennedy and the Executive Committee Class of 2017-20 members Faythe Freese, Paul Mosteller and Cathy Shelton** for their leadership and service to the chapter during their terms. We appreciate the work of **Mark Hayes, Natalie Tally, and Pat Fitzsimmons** in developing a talented slate of nominees. We welcome new **Secretary Debby Holmes and Class of 2020-23 members Sam Burke and Jim Cook**.

Thank you for the opportunity to continue as dean the next two years; thank you to those who've accepted responsibility for planning and executing each month's events; and thank you to the members 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.

I hope to see you virtually October 12th!
Sherelyn

OCTOBER 12TH CHAPTER ACTIVITY

In celebration of the sesquicentennial year of the birth of Louis Vierne, **Charles Kennedy** will present *Louis Vierne: The Man and the Music*.

The program will be illustrated by various musical examples, principally from his organ works, but also little snippets from some of his other music (e.g., chamber music).

Both the chapter business meeting at 6:45 pm and Charles' presentation at 7 pm will be held virtually.

The link and additional details will be emailed to you a few days before the meeting.

From National AGO

New items of all kinds are constantly added to www.agohq.org. You may enjoy these links:

Lots of free recitals, workshops and webinars:
<https://www.agohq.org/online-programming-for-chapters/>

Wealth of free educational videos:
<https://www.agohq.org/online-educational-resources/>

The AGO OctoberFest 2020:
<https://www.agohq.org/organfest-2020-performances-live-on/>

Comings and Goings

Faythe Freese is enjoying the weather and scenery in Tabernash, Colorado where she and her husband Jerry share their log cabin with their feline family. She stays busy teaching organ and preparing for her recital at the East Texas Pipe Organ Festival. Faythe is active in the Denver Rocky Mountain AGO chapter. Faythe served the Birmingham chapter well in many capacities including chapter dean, Executive Committee member, chairperson of the 2017 POEA, and most recently as a presenter on our March program "Music and Technology." We wish her well in her next adventures!

Nathan Peace graduated from Samford University this past spring with a Music and Worship degree, after studies with Jim Dorroh and Fred Teardo, and completed a season as Organ Scholar at the Cathedral Church of the Advent. Nathan has now moved to Boston, where he is pursuing a Master of Sacred Music degree at Boston University, studying organ under Peter Sykes. We wish Nathan the very best in his continued endeavors and look forward to hearing from him in years to come!

Stephen Schaeffer has settled into his new home in Durham, North Carolina where he has joined his close-knit family. Stephen's support of the chapter spans many years in many ways. He served on the Steering Committee for the 1997 Regional Convention, was on the faculty for the 2011 and 2013 POEs, was very involved as an Executive Committee member for several terms. He continues his AGO activities as a member of the Durham/Chapel Hill chapter.

Congratulations and best wishes to Faythe, Nathan, and Stephen on their new pursuits. We will miss you.

Time to Renew Your Membership?

If your renewal date falls **between July 1 - November 1** and you've not yet renewed, please use ONCARD on www.agohq.org to pay your dues and update your address, phone, and other information. You may also call **Molly Davey**, HQ membership assistant, at **(212-870-2310)** for assistance. Many thanks!

IN MEMORIAM

On March 22, 2020, **Dr. Betty Louise Lumby** passed away at age 94. Originally from Michigan, she moved to Birmingham in 1953 where she built a life as a recitalist, church musician, and educator. Her longest tenure was at The University of Montevallo (1957-2012), teaching organ, harpsichord, counterpoint, and early music. She was active at various levels of the AGO, including as a convention recitalist, for many years and was a decades-long Birmingham chapter member.

Select the June 2020 issue to read the lovely obituary in TAO: <https://www.agohq.org/current-issue/>.

2020 Election Results

Many thanks to those who participated in the May election of officers and members of the Executive Committee Class of 2020-23. Here is the roster of the Executive Committee for July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021.

Executive Committee

Dean: Sherelyn Breland
Secretary: Debby Holmes
Treasurer: Mike Burt

Class of 2018-21: Dan Lawhon
Jamie McLemore
Fred Teardo

Class of 2019-22: Mark Hayes
Jeff McLelland

Class of 2020-22: Sam Burke
Jim Cook

AGO Convention News

The regional conventions slated for next summer 2021 are rescheduled to summer 2023. Currently there is no Southeast Regional Convention planned.

The next national convention will be held in Seattle July 3 – 7, 2022.

Pandemic Activities

When life gives you lemons, make lemonade.

Some comments shared by members

Benefits of the shutdown: ability to be outside to enjoy the beautiful spring weather we had; saving on gas and miles on the car while working from home in favorite comfortable clothes; ample time to clean out lots of closets; not putting on makeup or shaving off the beard; enjoying the solitude of church sanctuaries and lack of scheduled rehearsals to practice more.

Challenges of the shutdown: teaching children from home, especially while virtual teaching techniques were still being worked out; isolation from friends and extended family; cabin fever; learning to communicate virtually for meetings, rehearsals, and creating worship services successfully.

Charles Kennedy is one of our members who took great advantage of the time made available by the shutdown and the wonderful harpsichord and organ available to him at Cathedral Church of the Advent. Here's what he shared about his activities during this time:

The coronavirus pandemic has, among many things, brought about what I could describe for me personally as "the summer of the harpsichord," as I have been taking the time to learn new harpsichord pieces and relearn pieces I've studied in the past. My focus lately has been on the music of Byrd, Bull, Tomkins, and Sweelinck. Accordingly, I have taken the time to learn more about tuning and temperament, having had my hand at tuning the harpsichord in quarter-comma Meantone temperament, given its special suitability for this particular repertoire.

On the organ side of things, the pandemic has been an interesting learning experience about the varying approaches to playing the organ for online worship services on the one hand, and outdoor worship services on the other hand.

The Cathedral Church of the Advent is presently offering two outdoor worship services on Sunday mornings, in addition to its pre-recorded online service. One of these is led by choir and organ, with the Cathedral organ played live through the speakers

outside, using the very same microphones employed for recording the online services.

Both scenarios require differing approaches to organ registration from what one would normally do for a congregation gathered inside. In the case of the online services, with hymns led by an ensemble of usually six singers from the choir, we have found it best in hymn playing to limit the use of upperwork and reeds to those in the enclosed divisions, while keeping the Great limited to 8' stops in order to balance well with the singers, yet keeping the pedal strong, as computer speakers and headphones tend to be weak on bass response.

On the other hand, with the outdoor services, the amplified organ sound through the speakers is very heavy on the bass, while also exaggerating the higher pitches. Thus, we are using relatively lighter pedal registrations at the 16' level, and also being very sparing in the use of Mixtures, in fact only using the Swell Mixture. The other Mixtures tend to sound like breaking glass! In both situations, we are keeping the swell boxes generally more closed than open.

Many of you can relate various challenges and "opportunities" presented in your situations, too. It has definitely been, and continues to be, a time for persistence and patience.

Invitation to Hear Online Saint Thomas' Fall Concert Series at Discounted Ticket Price

Patrick Fennig, manager of the Concert Series at **Saint Thomas Church Fifth Avenue**, announced that their Fall 2020 season is being presented entirely on a digital platform, and they are offering a discounted ticket (50% off) to all AGO members for this season.

For complete details of each concert, visit <https://www.saintthomaschurch.org/music/concerts> and click on a picture to access the details and link to the ticketing page to purchase a ticket for the concert.

In order to purchase a discounted ticket, **enter the promo code: AGO** when you visit the ticketing page <https://ci.ovationtix.com/35174>.



2020-21 Birmingham AGO Chapter Calendar of Events

September Live Online Workshops from AGO HQ

Friday, 11 Church Musicians and Technology

Saturday, 12 Hymn Playing 101- 102

Monday, 21 So You Think You Can Dance?

Monday, Feb. 8 Continuo Instruments

Presenter: Fred Teardo

Venue: Cathedral Church of the Advent

Dinner 6:00 PM; Business meeting 6:30 PM;

Program 7:00 PM

Monday, Oct. 12 Louis Vierne: The Man and the Music

Presenter: Charles Kennedy

6:45 PM Virtual chapter meeting

7:00 PM Charles' virtual presentation

Monday, March 8 Copyright Free Music Sources

Presenter: Benjamin Kolodziej, Dallas

Venue: TBD

Dinner 6:00 PM; Business meeting 6:30 PM;

Program 7:00 PM

Saturday, Nov. 14th Isabelle Demers

Venue: IPC (In-person and livestream)

11 AM – noon *Pre-recital lecture/demo*

Noon Lunch with Isabelle

Dutch treat at area restaurant

Monday, April 12 Chapter Recital

Venue: TBD

Dinner 6:00 PM; Business meeting 6:30 PM;

Program 7:00 PM

Friday, Jan. 8 Epiphany Party

Venue: Home of Barry Norris

6:00 – 8:00 PM

May Didier Grassin, Noack Organ Co.

Venue: Cathedral of St. Paul's

Dinner 6:00 PM; Business meeting 6:30 PM;

Program 7:00 PM

Details for unknown items will be announced as soon as they're available. All items are subject to change.

We'll keep you updated as adjustments occur.

Social distancing and face masks will be required according to venue and health agency policies in place at the time of each activity.

Chapter business meetings and programs will be livestreamed. Links and other necessary details will be provided via email during the week prior to each activity.

We'll resume catered dinners prior to the meetings as soon as possible.