



THE BIRMINGHAM CHIFF ...off the old blockflute

The Birmingham Chapter of the American Guild of Organists

Winter 2022

A Word from the Dean

Welcome back!!!

It is so wonderful to be together again! While our in-person attendance isn't back to normal levels, it is increasing. We hope to see even more of you at our March dinner and program. For those who can't attend physically, livestream will again be available via Zoom. This will be a program you don't to miss!

I want to express my sincere appreciation to Chairman Paul Mosteller, Jim Cook, and Dan Lawhon for their commitment of time and effort to produce a slate of nominees for officers and a new Executive Committee class. At the end of this newsletter is a biographical feature describing the qualifications and experiences of these nominees. **Members of the chapter have through March 31st to submit additional nominations to the chapter secretary.** The method to accomplish this, the election schedule, and the current slate are provided on page 2 of this newsletter. **Please make sure you're current on your dues so that you can cast your ballot in the election.**

Reminder: Registration for this summer's **2022 National AGO Convention in Seattle and seven POEs** is underway. Visit <https://www.agohq.org/> to find the appropriate link.

There are a number of scheduled musical events on our website's Calendar of Events. If you have something to add, please email the details of it to Mark Hayes so others can make plans to attend.

See you in person Monday, March 14th!
Sherelyn

MARCH 14TH CHAPTER EVENT

Benjamin Kolodziej of Dallas will present *Online Resources for the Church Organist*. He'll share little known compositions, all available from copyright-free sources, that are particularly useful to church organists. **Mike Sparks is hosting this month's event at the Episcopal Church of the Ascension.**

Dinner will be delivered by a restaurant near the church. Meal options and the dinner reservation form will be posted in early March. Watch for a chapter email notification when they're available.

The Zoom link and additional meeting details will be emailed to you separately.

Welcome New Members

Rev. John Allen Bankson is Music Director of First Christian Church in Birmingham. John Allen lives in Montevallo and teaches private piano and voice.

John George joined as a Chapter Friend in November and resides in Gardendale. He has enjoyed attending recent organ and choral programs led by members of our chapter.

John Milas joined as a Young Organist and has earned AAGO and ChM certifications. He lives in Northport.

Michael Yaeger is another Young Organist member. A Hoover resident, he attends Birmingham-Southern College where he studies organ with Dr. Lester Seigel.

Wolfgang Rubsam

There Are No Mistakes in Improvisation



Charles Kennedy, Wolfgang Rubsam, Jeff McLelland

Twelve members had a delightful Saturday morning Feb. 5th with **German organist Wolfgang Rubsam** as he showed simple steps to begin improvising in German polyphonic style. His recommendations: Begin with a pedal point bass line and create a simple melody in the right hand, deciding on a meter but not a particular key. Develop motives and sequences then add another voice. Use a less familiar hymn tune and begin to harmonize with root chords, not 7ths or 9ths. Play with the tenor, alto, soprano voices in the right hand, moving in contrary motion. Rubsam suggested singing the alto or tenor voice while playing in the root chords, enhancing with passing notes and suspensions to create beautiful progressions of inner tones. Only after much practice should the left hand be added.

In speaking of improvisation in the more lyrical French style, he used the celestes with the box closed as a “carpet” of harmonies while playing several notes at a time, using the beauty of a common note among several voices to move from one harmonic progression to another. He suggested adding the melody in the pedal and being careful not to stay too long in the same field of color or rhythm.

Throughout his presentation, Rubsam stressed to not ever say “I didn’t mean that” because there are no mistakes in improvisation. He said it takes experience and practice to develop the inner ear so that it eventually hears what your fingers are going to do before they do it. We heard many interesting and beautiful sounds as Rubsam demonstrated learning to improvise in German polyphonic and lyrical French styles.

Our morning ended with enjoyable conversation and a delicious lunch at The Fish Market.

2022 Election Process Continues

Nominating Committee Chairman Paul Mosteller, Jim Cook, and Dan Lawhon announced the following slate for this year’s election:

Officers for 2022-2024:

Dean: Dr. Dan Lawhon

Secretary: Mr. Jason Pedeaux

Treasurer: Mr. Mike Burt

Executive Committee Class of 2022-2025:

Ms. Ann Giambrone

Mr. Jamie McLemore

Dr. Steven Taranto

A separate biographical section describing these nominees follows at the end of this newsletter.

The chapter is invited to submit additional nominations to the secretary by March 31st. Each nomination is made by a petition signed by five members of the Guild. Nominees and petitioners must be voting members in good standing.

Complete guidelines for nominations and the election process are defined in “Section 4. CHAPTER GOVERNANCE” and “Section 8. ELECTION PROCEDURES” of the Chapter Operating Procedures at <http://www.birminghamago.org/AboutUs.html>.

Nominations from the chapter and the slate proposed by the Nominating Committee will be combined into a single ballot. **Members will elect two (2) of the EC nominees to serve a three-year term as the Class of 2022-2025.**

We will again be using online election software for this year’s election. Online and absentee voting will begin Monday, May 1st and end Sunday, May 22nd. In-person voting to conclude the election is tentatively scheduled for Monday, May 23rd.

Rotating off the Executive Committee on June 30th are Dean, Sherelyn Breland; Secretary, Debby Holmes; and Treasurer, Mike Burt; and Class of 2019-2022 members Mark Hayes and Jeff McLelland. We appreciate the contributions these members have made in support of the chapter.

You're Invited to Hear

Amanda Mole, organ

**First United Methodist Church,
Montgomery, AL**

7:00 pm, Friday, February 26, 2022

St. Paul Overture	Mendelssohn/Best
Innig, Sechs Stücke in kanonischer Form, Op. 56, No. 4	Schumann
Fantasia in F Minor, K 608	Mozart/ Haselböck
Orpheus	Liszt/Schaab
The Revd Mustard his Installation Prelude	Muhly
Introduction and Passacaglia, Sonata No. 8	Rheinberger

Upcoming 2021-2022 Chapter Events

Monday, March 14 Copyright Free Music Sources

Presenter: Benjamin Kolodziej, Dallas
Venue: Episcopal Church of the Ascension, Vestavia Hills
Dinner 6:00 PM; Business meeting 6:30 PM;
Program 7:00 PM
Zoom links provided via email

Monday, May 23 (Tentative) In-person Voting, Election Concludes

Venue: TBD
Schedule: TBD

University of Florida Sacred Music Workshop

Greetings!

I invite you to come to Gainesville in May for UF's Sacred Music Workshop. Dates of this year's workshop are May 1-3. Detailed information about the workshop may be found on our website: <https://uflsmw.wixsite.com/home>.

Trey Clegg will be our primary guest clinician. Trey wears many hats: organist/music director at First Congregational Church, Atlanta; Founder/Director of the The Trey Clegg Singers; and instructor at Spelman College. Also joining us will be Matthew Estes (Music Director at Ascension Lutheran in Clearwater); Elena Baquerizo (she's completing her MM at Juilliard will play an organ recital for us LIVE this year); J.D. Cain (UF DMA choral conducting student), Zach Zaroogian (UF Carillon Studio Member), and much more!

Registration is now open:
<https://reg.conferences.dce.ufl.edu/SSP/1400084028>

Only \$75 if you register before April 15th.

Start looking at your calendar...it would be wonderful to see you in person this year!

Best,

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Meet the Nominees in This Year's Election



DAN LAWHON

NOMINEE FOR DEAN

DAN LAWHON, a Kentucky native, has served as organist-choirmaster at the Baptist Church of the Covenant since 2008. Before that he served as organist-music associate at First Baptist Church, Huntsville, AL from 1999 to 2008 as well as churches in Kentucky and Tennessee. Dan received his Bachelor of Music degree from Belmont University, where he studied organ with Helen Trotter Midkiff. He completed the Master of Church Music and Doctor of Musical Arts degrees at the School of Music of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY, studying with Boyd M. Jones and Donald P. Hustad. Dan has taught organ at the School of Music of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, the University of Alabama at Huntsville, Oakwood College in Huntsville, and Samford University.

Dan also is an accomplished handbell ringer and director. He was co-director then director of the civic handbell ensemble *Heritage Ringers of Huntsville* (2006–2013) and is currently a member of the civic handbell ensemble, *Embellishments*. Dan has been a member of the *Area 6, Handbell Musicians of America* board from 2007–2015 as treasurer, chair-elect, chair, and past chair. He served as Sub-Dean, then Dean of the Birmingham Chapter of the *American Guild of Organists* 2012-2014 then 2014-2018 respectively.

When Dan is not busy at the church or elsewhere making music, he enjoys running, cooking and doing odd jobs around the house.



JASON PEDEAUX

NOMINEE FOR SECRETARY

JASON PEDEAUX serves as Organist and Director of Instrumental Ensembles at First Presbyterian Church, Tuscaloosa. He holds degrees from Louisiana State University (BM, piano performance) and the University of North Texas (MM, organ performance). He has served churches in the New Orleans and Dallas areas and most recently in Mt. Pleasant, South Carolina, a suburb of Charleston. In addition to his duties at FPC, Jason is collaborative keyboardist for the Treble Chorus and University Singers at the University of Alabama.

A member of AGO for more than 20 years, Jason has served on numerous committees of the Dallas Chapter and was chair of the Robert T. Anderson Recital Series Committee. In Charleston, he served on the Board and as Sub Dean and Dean. He looks forward to being involved with the Birmingham Chapter.

When not busy practicing, Jason enjoys attending concerts and going on walks around town with Trixie, his retired racing greyhound.



MIKE BURT

**NOMINEE FOR
TREASURER**

MIKE BURT joined the Birmingham AGO chapter fifteen years ago. He has shared his accounting abilities as treasurer of the 2013 POE and 2017 POEA and served on the Steering Committees of both POEs. Mike is the current chapter treasurer, a position he has held since July 2014.

Mike's lifelong love of music began as a child studying piano and participating in church music programs. He studied organ his junior and senior years of high school with Ashley Burrell, his choir director. Then, as a Samford University student, he studied piano with Betty Sue Shepherd. While a freshman he began playing piano for a church and continued doing so for the next 32 years.



ANN GIAMBRONE

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE NOMINEE

ANN H. GIAMBRONE has served as Director of Music/Organist at St. Mary's-on-the-Highlands Episcopal Church since 1997 and holds a Master of Music in Organ Performance from Birmingham-Southern College where she studied with Dr. James H. Cook and Dr. James Dorroh. She served at both Canterbury United Methodist Church and St. Luke's Episcopal Church as Music Associate from 1987-1997 before coming to St. Mary's. She is a member of both the American Guild of Organists and the Association of Anglican Musicians and is married to Charles Giambrone. They have grown children and several grandchildren.



JAMIE McLEMORE

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE NOMINEE

JAMIE McLEMORE is currently the Organist at St Luke's Episcopal Church in Mountain Brook. Prior to this he was organist at South Highland Presbyterian and Briarwood Presbyterian. A long-time member of the Birmingham Chapter he has held positions of Dean, Sub-Dean, hospitality chair and a member of the Executive Board. He was chair of the first POE held in 2011. He is a graduate of the University of Alabama where he studied with the late Warren Hutton.



STEVEN TARANTO

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE NOMINEE

STEVEN TARANTO currently serves as Organist and Assistant Music Director for Christ Episcopal Church (Tuscaloosa) as well as the Collaborative Pianist for the Alabama Choir School. Before moving to Tuscaloosa in 2019, he served as Organist/Choirmaster for St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Oxford, Mississippi and as accompanist for the Oxford Civic Chorus. In 2011 Steven helped organize the newly formed AGO Oxford-University Chapter and served as its Treasurer for two years. Steven completed his Doctor of Philosophy in Music Education at The University of Mississippi in 2010.

Prior to his time in Oxford, Steven was Director of Music and Organist for the First Presbyterian Church of Jackson, Tennessee (1996-2006), and musical director for the Festival Singers, an interdenominational community choir hosted by First Presbyterian Church. Steven also was musical director for the Jackson Theater Guild, and accompanist and assistant director for the Jackson Community Children's Choir at Union University. During that time, Steven was an active member of the AGO Memphis Chapter and served on the Scholarship Committee.

Steven received a Master of Sacred Music from Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University in 1995. Upon graduating he served as Assistant Music Director and Organist for North Park Presbyterian Church and worked for the Choristers Guild as a music editing assistant. Steven received a Bachelor of Music in Music Business and a Bachelor of Arts in Church Music from Elmhurst College. While there he was organist for Bethel United Church of Christ. Steven remains active as a composer of music for choir and organ and has four children's and two handbell anthems published by the Choristers Guild.