# DESERTWIND

SOUTHERN NEVADA CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN GUILD OF ORGANISTS



Maria Teresa Sierra and Raúl Prieto Ramírez of **Duo MusArt Barcelona** to open the chapter's 52nd year of musical programming, September 6 at 7:30 PM, Dr. Arturo Rando-Grillot Recital Hall, Beam Music Center on the UNLV campus.

## **ARTIST INTERVIEW:**

## SPANISH POWER DUO ON MUSIC & LOVE

In preparation for their recital this Friday, the husband and wife team of Duo MusArt Barcelona spoke with **Bruce Behnke** about their background, their inspirations and how they met.

**BB:** What first started your interest in the pipe organ?

Raúl Prieto Ramírez: An accidental encounter on Spanish Public Radio, where I listened to an instrument playing with orchestra. That sound turned my curiosity on, and from there it was a fascinating journey.

**BB:** When did you first start your study of the piano?

Maria Teresa Sierra: I started when I was three years old with my mom, a pianist as well.

**BB:** How old were you when you first started studying the organ seriously? **Ramírez:** I was 16 years old. That's a very late age to start in music, but thanks to that I could have a vast experience in other arts like theater, painting, sculpture and many sports. Fortunately, I wasn't one of those kids that grow up practicing 4 hours a day, I really had a very intense child life.

**BB:** When did you meet Raúl and start playing concerts together?

**Sierra:** I met him in Menorca -an island from Spain- where both had to play a recital in a Music Festival. It was in 2001. That was love first sight and then after 4 or 5 years, we started playing together.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 6: DUO** 



PAGE 3
ALCEE CHRISS III

This young musician is firing up the American organ scene, and we've added him to our current concert season on January 24, 2020.



**PAGES 4 & 5** 

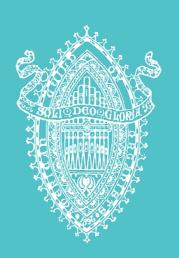
#### FALL SOCIAL

Members gather to kick off the chapter's 52nd year of events with an evening of food & fun.



PAGE 9
FREE ORGAN WORKSHOPS

Chapter offers organ registration & hymn playing workshops Coming this Fall.



## Southern Nevada Chapter of the American Guide of Organists

Steven R. Wright
Dean

William "Bill" Freeman Sub Dean

> Kathi Colman Secretary

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Executive Committee Members:

Bruce Behnke

Kevin Coney

Paul Hesselink

David Zechman

Christian Lentz

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To learn more about the Chapter and our mission, please visit our website at SNCAGO.org. If you would like to learn even more, or be contacted about membership, please email us at <a href="info@sncago.org">info@sncago.org</a>

DESERT WIND is the newsletter of the Southern Nevada Chapter of the American Guild of Organists. It publishes five times a year in email and pdf formats, distributed to members and friends of the chapter.

Current and past issues are available on the chapter's website at: https://sncaqo.org/desert-wind

To subscribe or for submissions, please email <a href="mailto:info@sncago.org">info@sncago.org</a>

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## **NOTES FROM THE DEAN...**



Dear SNCAGO Members,

With more than 50 years of activity behind us, we are poised to begin a new, exciting season of organ recitals, workshops, socials, and other events.

Our Executive Committee has been working hard to plan opportunities for our now nearly 80 members. Yes, we are growing! In addition to the six scheduled

recitals in the Paul S. Hesselink Series we will have a Hymn Playing Workshop in November, an Organ Registration Workshop in September, a Choral Workshop in March, an event in Southern Utah for our members there, an Organ Crawl to visit organs, POE scholarships for young organists, Bench Time on the Beckerath, and some other fun events.

Check our fantastic new website for details, and also watch social media and your email for details of upcoming activities. Thank you for being a member of the SNCAGO. We appreciate you and we are working hard to bring value to your membership. Please join us and get involved this year in new ways. We need you and plan to provide many opportunities in which you can participate in 2019-20. We look forward to seeing you soon at all these events.

Best regards,

Sincerely,

Steven R. Wright, Dean Southern Nevada Chapter American Guild of the Organists

## **UNLV TO HONOR ORGAN ENDOWMENT DONORS**

On Friday, September 6, the University of Nevada, Las Vegas will dedicate and install a plaque to commemorate the SNCAGO's fund raising campaign to endow the Maurine Smith Jackson Organ. The plaque will recognize the generosity of all those who donated to the endowment fund.

The chapter raised over \$13,000 for the fund and thanks to Ed and Shauna Smith and the Smith family's generosity, the campaign to endow the maintenance of the pipe organ is complete. Both UNLV and the chapter are deeply grateful to all who worked to insure that the instrument is cared for in perpetuity.

The new plaque will be installed in the lobby of Dr. Rando-Grillot Hall in the Beam Music Center, adjacent to the existing plaque and photo of Ed and Maurine Jackson Smith.



### PAUL S. HESSELINK RECITAL SERIES:

## **CHAPTER EXPANDS CONCERT LINEUP WITH ALCEE CHRISS**

Thanks to the generosity of our patrons, the SNCAGO executive committee elected to add a concert to 2019-2020 season of the Paul S. Hesselink Recital Series. The new event will take place on January 24 at UNLV with Alcee Chriss III at the console.

"Typically the programming chairs would go to the programming committee with 3 or 4 nominations to fill a spot like this" said programming co-chair Christian Lentz. "We had been watching Alcee and his career for a number of months. Once we had the date and found out he was available, we went to the committee with one name. Alcee is just that good."

Alcee Chriss III is widely regarded as one of the country's leading young organists, winning a number of prestigious competitions including First Prize and Bach Prize at the 2017 Canadian International Organ Competition, the Firmin Swinnen Silver Medal at the 2016 Longwood Gardens International Organ Competition, First Prize and Audience Prize at the 2016 Fort Wayne National Organ Competition, and First Prize and Audience Prize at the 2014 Miami International Organ Competition.

Chriss serves as University Organist and Artist-in-Residence at Wesleyan University and is the Minister of Music at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Ridgefield, Connecticut.

"Alcee had a stand out performance at the OHS convention in Dallas this summer. We read a number of reviews and received some first hand intel from Paul (Hesselink) about that performance," Lentz said.

"We are really fortunate to be able to add another concert to the series and we got really lucky in grabbing Alcee. I hope our members and the community recognize the calibre of musicians that the SNCAGO is bringing to Las Vegas. It's an incredible lineup and I hope everyone rolls out to see these artists perform."

Click here to learn more about Alcee
Chriss III and watch some of his
performance videos.



**Alcee Chriss III** is the latest artist to be added to the 2019-2020 Paul S. Hesselink Recital Series. He will perform January 24, 2020 in the Dr. Arturo Rando-Grillot Recital Hall on the UNLV campus.

## NAC AWARDS CHAPTER RECORD GRANT



On June 27, the board of the Nevada Arts Council (NAC) unanimously approved funding for fifty-five Project Grants for Organizations, including a \$4,000 grant to the SNC:AGO's Paul S. Hesselink Recital Series (fiscal year 2020). The grant is the largest ever awarded to the chapter by the Council.

In total, the NAC board approved more than \$1,048 million of grants to enrich the cultural lives of Nevadans by supporting, strengthening and preserving excellence in the arts. Just over \$200,000 was awarded in Project Grants for Organizations. In this category, there were 69 applicants, of which 60 were approved for review and 55 were awarded funding.

A panel appointed by the NAC reviewed, discussed and scored the approved applications during a public meeting on May 22 & 23. Their scoring determined which applications were funded and at what amount.

Many of the panelists' comments and suggestions about our series and grant application will be adopted by the chapter and incorporated into future submissions for funding.

For the past 12 years the SNC:AGO has received annual grants from the Nevada Arts Council, a state agency, supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency. Since 2007, our average award was \$2,350 annually, totaling \$28,204 in funding.

The SNC:AGO utilizes this funding to help pay our recitalist's artist and travel fees. This year's grant was written by chapter member Kevin Coney.

FALL SOCIAL:

# MEMBERS KICK OFF YEAR WITH FOOD, FUN & A WURLITZER

More than 30 chapter members and guests kicked off the SNCAGO's 52nd year of workshops, concerts, organ-related events and fellowship on Friday, August 30 at the home of member and theater organist John Ledwon.

The casual evening allowed party guests to socialize and to peruse Ledwon's eclectic collection of instruments, music-related antiques, clocks, memorabilia and the popular water fountain that Ledwon constructed of various musical instruments.

The evening's menu included a board of imported cheeses, dried fruit, Italian meats, fruit and crackers; a platter of seasonal vegetables, hummus and homemade dressings; crostini of sliced beef, herb bousin, and micro greens with balsamic reduction; caprese salad skewers of heirloom cherry tomatoes, baby mozzarella and a fresh basil pesto; miniature chocolate tarts topped with a bourbon caramel and a shard of white chocolate; and a selection of beverages. Catering was provided

by Michael Boyle of Boyle & Co. Private Cooking & Catering.

John Ledwon, our host for the evening, treated attendees to an impromptu recital including his transcription-in-progress of Suppé's Poet and Peasant Overture, a suite of music from the movie "La La Land," and then "Bohemian Rhapsody" by Queen. To close, the El Capitan Theatre organist delighted guests with Disney's "Fantasmic."

Between numbers Ledwon gave party guests a brief history of the Wurlitzer (Opus 1379), which began as an 8-rank church organ in Lakeland, Florida in 1926, made its way to Grand Rapids Michigan in 1929, to an old farmhouse north of Detroit, and finally to Ledwon's home in Henderson, Nevada in 2010. Click for more on this organ.

Thank you to all that attended the fall social and special thanks to John Ledwon for his generosity.

For more party pictures, go to sncago.org/fall-social-gallery



Host for the evening, and theater organist, John Ledwon.

PHOTOS: Tonya Harvey



Frank Tierhold and chapter member Lea Kuijsten



Treasurer David Dorway, Barbara Dorway, and members Shireen Beaudry and Rosemarie McCrary



Linda Parker with Executive Committee Member Bruce Behnke



New Members **Bob Stoeckig**, **Kevin Irvin** with Executive Committee Member **Christian Lentz** 



Dr. Kelly Styles (chapter member), Barry Welker and member Laura Hensley



Barbara Dorway, Jeff Colman and chapter Secretary Kathi Colman



Executive Committee Member Paul S. Hesselink and Linda Parker



Chapter member Gary Carlson

PHOTOS: Tonya Harvey



Dean **Steven Wright**, **Dan** and **Alexis Hayes** and Executive Committee Member **David Zechman** 



Chapter member Andrew Olson



Chapter members Mark Towne and Christian Lentz

#### **ARTIST INTERVIEW:**

## A CONVERSATION WITH HUSBAND AND WIFE TEAM OF DUO MUSART BARCELONA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

**BB:** Who are some of the most influential teachers with whom you have studied?

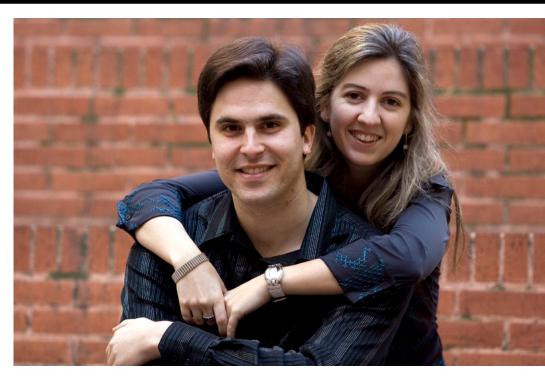
Ramírez: By far, Ludger Lohmann (Stuttgart Musikhochschule) and Leonid Sintsev (Saint Petersburg Conservatory) but, although I was not in time to learn directly from him -because he died as I was diving into my music studies-, Sergiu Celibidache (legendary 20th-century conductor) shaped most of my musical thinking.

**BB:** What do you do in addition to your organ and piano work, do you play solo piano concerts and do any teaching? **Sierra:** I've been playing solo recitals since I was 18 years old but I decided to quit 5 years ago and right now I'm involved in different chamber music groups in addition to our organ and piano duo. I also have a piano studio in San Diego where I teach more than 30 students.

**BB:** What are some of the more interesting venues in which you have played?

Ramírez: It's hard for me to answer since any mention I make will leave so many great venues out. I tend to enjoy concert halls more than churches since people are normally more focused on the music--a concert hall is a venue built just for music. Russia is always very surprising since culturally they still are very involved in classical music. In some cities, I have to play on two consecutive days so they can sell out the entire hall for two days. Los Angeles Concert Hall is a very special one as well.

**BB:** Do you do any improvisation and or have you ever composed music?



Ramírez: I started in music through composition and have written extensively for organ, orchestra and chamber music. Some of my pieces have been broadcasted on Spanish National Radio. I stopped writing music when my concert career demanded more and more time from me, but I feel like I need to come back to it soon. Being a composer, improvisation feels like fast food music, so I did when I needed it -as a church organist in Barcelona Main Basilica for three years-, but since people book me to listen to my performances of repertoire, improvisation really got left behind on my weekly work and it doesn't play any role in my career right now.

**BB:** Where do you get your music for organ and piano, do you commission works and/or transcribe works? Sierra: Some music like Widor and Saint-Saëns duets are easy to find out. Others like Dupré's Piano and Organ Variations took us more than a year to get them. The music of Langlais Diptyque was sent us by Marie-Louise Langlais, his widow. We also commission some music, especially from Spanish composers. You can find one of those commissioned works in the CD we recorded in Spain for Brilliant Classics label. We also play a lot of transcriptions and basically it is Raul who transcribes the work.

**BB:** Who are some of your favorite modern composers?

Ramírez: Bengt Hambraeus, which needs to be performed more often in my opinion, Rautavaara is also very rewarding to perform nowadays and I like Ligeti very much (I think his volumina deserves to be part of concert programs more often).

## See Duo MusArt Barcelona perform this Friday, September 6 at 7:30 PM

Dr. Arturo Rando-Grillot Recital Hall inside the Lee & Thomas Beam Music Center on the UNLV campus (<u>map</u>). The concert is free to the public and no tickets are required.

Program selections will include works by Widor, Langlais, Bédard, Gershwin and Lutoslawski.

All are invited to our post-recital reception for your chance to meet the artists, ask them your own questions and pose for pictures.

For more information on Duo MusArt Barcelona, including some performance videos, <u>click here</u>.

For more information on the venue including parking, <u>click here</u>.

For information about the pipe organ, <u>click here</u>.



**Nebiyu Samuel** peforms the Prelude in G Minor, BWV 558 by Johann Sebastian Bach during the Young Artists Concert on August 25 at Guardian Angel Cathedral.

#### YOUNG ARTISTS CONCERT:

## RECITAL SHOWCASES AREA YOUTH

On Sunday, August 25th, eight young organists participated in the chapter's "Pipe Organ Encounters: Young Artists Recital" at The Guardian Angel Cathedral on the Las Vegas Strip. More than 50 people attended the concert in support of these musicians.

Recitalists included Alyssa Tobler, Nebiyu Samuel, Alaina Backes, Claire Henriod, Sadie Williams, Brenna Schelin, Everett Minnick and Ashlyn Henriod. All of the organists are students of local organ teachers Elaine Hardy, Shireen Beaudry and Laurie Swain.

Each performer sat at the console of the cathedral's 79-stop Allen organ to play hymns or pieces by Bach, Mendelesshohn and other composers.

"This is exciting for our community's young organists. They get to play on one of the biggest instruments in the state and demonstrate what they have

learned," said SNCAGO Sub-Dean, cathedral organist, and CCSD music teacher William Freeman.

All but one of the recitalists are recipients of the Raymond J. Barnes Memorial Scholarship and have attended an AGO Pipe Organ Encounter, a week long summer camp surrounded around the pipe organ.

Following their performance, each organist addressed the crowd to describe their POE experiences and other impressions of the instrument.

"The POE in Seattle was a life changing experience for me. I've played the organ for two years and to be honest I didn't love it. The POE taught me to love the pipe organ," said recitalist Alyssa Tobler.

Special thanks to Father Bob Stoeckig, Guardian Angel Cathedral, the organists, their teachers and parents. **CALL FOR PATRONS:** 

## NEW SEASON. NEW LISTINGS, GIVE TODAY.

Friday, September 6 marks the opening of the chapter's 52 year of musical programming. With the opening comes our annual call for patrons and patron renewal.

The success of our annual series is due primarily to the generosity of our members and patrons, like you. Giving is easy with donations at multiple levels starting at just \$25. Patrons are recognized in each concert program and on our website.

There is still time to contribute and be included in the patron listings for our first concert on Friday, September 6.

To make the Wednesday afternoon deadline and be included in this week's program, <u>please log on the chapter's</u> website and use the sponsor portal to make your easy & safe donation, here.

If you prefer to donate via the mail, checks made out to "Southern Nevada Chapter AGO" may be sent to SNCAGO, P.O. Box 371893, Las Vegas, NV 89137. Of course members may still give via the AGO's national website.

Please note that those who donate via mail or via the AGO's national website this week may not be included in the patron recognition listings for this first concert, but those donations will be included in online recognition and in the October concert listings.

## GET SOCIAL WITH SNC:AGO PLEASE FOLLOW US AND LIKE US ON...



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#### **ARTIST INTERVIEW:**

## GET TO KNOW DR. ADAM PAJAN, IN CONCERT OCTOBER 25TH

Adam Pajan spoke with Bruce Behnke about his background, motivations and about the program Adam is planning for his October 25 recital here in Las Vegas.

**BB:** What first started your interest in the pipe organ?

Adam Pajan: My first interest in the organ came at the age of five when I would pass the console each Saturday evening at the vigil mass. The instrument was a mid-1980s Allen, and the organist was untrained. Despite these less than ideal circumstances, the organ fascinated me, and I have wanted to play ever since that first encounter.

**BB:** How old were you when you first started studying the organ seriously? **Pajan:** I was able to start studying when I was twelve, though I had wanted to start at age eight. My mentors (rightly) insisted that I start building keyboard technique with piano lessons before beginning organ study.

**BB:** Who are some of the most influential teachers with whom you have studied?

Pajan: I would say that all of my primary organ teachers have left a significant impression on my playing. Charles Tompkins gave me a solid foundation and instilled a sense of musicality and expression. Martin Jean continued that work, improving my technique and analytical skills. Thomas Murray opened my eyes and ears to the symphonic world, which forever changed how I hear and make music at the organ. John Schwandt taught me to think outside of the box - music is music regardless of the vehicle for expression.

**BB:** What are some of the more interesting venues in which you have played?

**Pajan:** My favorite performing memories are from Europe. Getting the keys to the cathedrals of Magdeburg, Mainz, and Altenberg and being locked inside, practicing into the early morning hours is nothing short of inspiring. The magnificence of the architecture and richness of the history are themselves



awe-striking, and making music in those spaces is beyond words. Likewise, having three hours alone in St. Paul's Cathedral in London was deeply meaningful.

**BB:** How and when did you get involved with the building aspect of the pipe organ like voicing and regulating?

Pajan: I have had an interest in organbuilding since I was a teenager, but I was never able to gain access to a chamber or get my hands dirty. Instead, I bought copies of Audsley and learned what I could. It was only at the University of Oklahoma as a graduate student that I was able to work in the organbuilding shop and finally start to learn the handson components. John Schwandt thought I would excel as a voicer and started training me in that art. Since then, I have found a particular affinity for reed voicing and have been fortunate to work on many ranks during my time at the American Organ Institute.

**BB:** Do you do any improvisation and/or have you ever composed music? **Pajan:** I consider myself a liturgical improviser and have studied it both

at Yale and Oklahoma, but I have not studied or practiced enough to improvise in concert. Composition has always been an interest, and I have several pieces for choir and many liturgical settings of Psalms and descants.

**BB:** Who are some of your favorite modern composers?

**Pajan:** I have particularly enjoyed getting to know the works of Lionel Rogg. I appreciate his balance of traditional contrapuntal forms and, often, neoclassical harmonies. From a choral perspective, I have also enjoyed learning more works by Ola Gjeilo, whose harmonic language I find quite appealing.

**BB:** What pieces will you be playing for us?

Pajan: My program will include works by Ola Gjeilo (his only organ composition to my knowledge), chorales by Bach, several of the Pastels from the Lake of Constance by Karg-Elert, an unknown yet remarkable work by German composer Arno Landmann, and the Finale from the Sunday Music by Petr Eben. I'm looking forward to getting to know the Beckerath!

**ORGAN SKILLS SEMINARS:** 

# CHAPTER OFFERING FREE REGISTRATION & HYMN PLAYING WORKSHOPS

Whether you are a beginning organist, or you sit at the console during church services every Sunday, two new workshops hosted by the SNCAGO are perfect for organists of all skill levels.

Both workshops are free and will be led by local expert organists. A certificate of completion will be issued to all those who complete each class.

Space is limited. Please reserve your seat by completing the online registration form for each session (links below class description). If you need assistance with registration, please email <a href="mailto:info@sncaqo.org">info@sncaqo.org</a>



Introduction to Organ Registration Saturday, September 28 10 AM till Noon Grace Presbyterian Church

Dr. Paul S. Hesselink, adjunct professor of organ at UNLV, will open with a 30-minute presentation on general organ registration. (Learn more about Dr. Hesselink). Following, attendees will receive hands-on instruction at the console of a pipe organ and/or digital instrument.

<u>Please click here to complete the registration form to attend the organ registration workshop.</u>



Hymn Playing Workshop Saturday, November 9 9 AM till Noon Christ Church Episcopal

Brush up on your hymn playing skills just in time for the holidays. This free workshop, led by David Deffner, DMA, will help you hone your congregational accompaniment skills. (Learn more about David Deffner) This workshop is for anyone open to a refresher on their hymn playing skills.

Please click here to complete the registration form to attend the hymn playing workshop.

## WELCOME NEW SNCAGO MEMBERS:

Please welcome our new members to the chapter. Thank you for being a part of the SNCAGO!

Kevin Irvin
Kathy Gilles
Alaina Aime Backes
Brenna Schelin
Alyssa Brianne Tobler
Rev. Father Bob Stoeckig

## **DATES TO REMEMBER:**

#### **SEPTEMBER 6:**

Recital: Duo MusArt Barcelona

#### **SEPTEMBER 28:**

Workshop: Organ Registration

#### **OCTOBER 25**:

Recital: Adam Pajan

#### **NOVEMBER 9:**

Workshop: Hymn Playing

## **DECEMBER 15**:

Members Christmas & Advent Recital

#### JANUARY 24:

Recital: Alcee Chriss III



## **ON TOUR:**

Chapter Member and theater organist John Ledwon has several performance engagements in the coming weeks, including November 3 at the Rochester Auditorium Theatre and November 17 at the Empire Theatre, New York State Fairgrounds in Syracuse, NY.

John's next dates at the El Capitan Theatre in Hollywood include September 20 and 21 (Nightmare before Christmas) and November 8 and 9 (film to be announced),

### **CALLS TO ACTION**

## WAYS TO SUPPORT YOUR CHAPTER

#### **RECITAL VOLUNTEERS**

Our most visible chapter activity is our concert series and we can always use volunteers to assist.

**Ushers:** If you are willing to greet guests, hand out programs, answer questions and help people to their seats as an usher, please <u>email Christian</u>.

**Reception:** Members willing to provide a dish of their favorite finger food for our post-concert receptions, or willing to help with reception set up and clean up, please <u>email David</u>.

## **SUBSTITUTE ORGANISTS NEEDED**

The chapter website includes a list of available organ substitutes and for-hire organists for weddings, funerals and special events. If you are a chapter member and would like to be contacted as a possible substitute organist or organist for hire, please email us your contact information and availability, HERE.







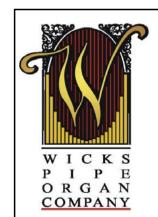






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