

THE DESERT WIND

Editor: Bruce Behnke © 2015

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Dean's Notes



Southern Nevada Chapter
American Guild of Organists

It is beginning to feel more like the fall season, and we are all a bit relieved to have respite from the extreme heat of the summer months. As church musicians, our thoughts also turn to the Advent and Christmas seasons, when our schedules become super busy and the practicing of our craft is intensified.

Many of our churches celebrate Advent, the part of the Church Year which prepares us for the celebration of the birth of Christ on Christmas Day. The focus of Advent is our looking ahead, and the scripture readings for the season recount the prophecies and promises for the coming of the Messiah as found in the Old Testament. It is a time of heightened expectation.

While we do expect to invest a greater amount of time and effort in our preparation of special programs and celebratory church services, we need to be careful that we ourselves also participate in the joy of the season. If we fail to experience that special sense of awe and exhilaration, it is unlikely that we can communicate it to our listeners.

For many years, our chapter has presented a members' Advent-Christmas organ recital, usually on or near the first Sunday of Advent. This year's program will be presented at Christ Church Episcopal, 2000 S. Maryland Parkway, on Sunday afternoon, December 6 at 4:00 P.M. This is our annual opportunity to put our

chapter's "best foot forward" to the community. Last year's Organ Plus program was very well-received, so we have a standard to uphold! As you prepare organ (or organ and instruments) literature for your use in church, will you consider planning something special which could be included on this year's recital? If you are not wishing to perform, please plan to attend the program and support our chapter --bring your family and friends.

As we close out 2015, (how could it have flown by so quickly?) I take this opportunity to wish everyone a joyous Christmas and hope that 2016 will be a blessed and fulfilling year for you.

Paul

In this Issue	Page		Page
Dean's Notes	1	Advent-Christmas Recital	5
Houlihan Recital	2	Fall Social	5
Woodward Recital	2	4 Organs, 37 Days	6
Thomas Strauss & Brass.....	3	Organ Media Foundation	8
Recital Series Committee.....	4	Do It Yourself Messiah.....	9
Membership Report	4	Joy of Christmas	10

Christopher Houlihan Recital

On Friday, October 9 at 7:30 P.M. in Doc Rando Recital Hall in the Beam Music Center on the UNLV campus, organist Christopher Houlihan opened the 2015-2016 Organ Recital Series with a stylish program of works by Leo Sowerby, J. S. Bach, Johannes Brahms, Louis Vierne, and Camille Saint-Saens. About 120 people came to enjoy the program which amply illustrated why Mr. Houlihan has received superb reviews in his international concert career. His playing was assured, musically and stylistically sensitive, and performed from memory.

Eighty audience surveys were completed. Here are the results:

First hearing of the Maurine Jackson Smith Organ: 19
(an unusually large number compared to past recitals)

How people heard about the recital:

e-mail notification: 38

flyer: 11

radio: 4

previous program: 17

from a friend: 20

other: 19 (various websites, newspaper, other publications)

Statement best describing feelings about program and performer:

Loved it - 58 (73.4%)

Liked it a lot - 16 (20.3%)

Found it interesting - 3 (3.8%)

Might come back for another performance - 2 (2.5%)

Overall rating:

Superb - 51 (67%)

Excellent - 24 (32%)

Average - 1 (1%)

The general audience “approval rate” (superb and excellent ratings combined) were 75 of 76 responses) for 98.68 %. Eighteen responders requested to be added to the Recital Notification List.



Christ Church Episcopal hosts Ty Woodward

In the first recital of their series, Ty Woodward entertained the audience with a program of favorite pieces including “Toccata” by Widor, “Abba Dabba Homeymoon”, “Maple Leaf Rag” and Disney’s “Beauty and the Beast.” With the 54 rank Schantz organ located in the rear balcony, the video projection provided by the Church’s choir director Kathi Colman and her husband Jeff Colman continue to make recitals at Christ Church Episcopal an enjoyable experience.

Thomas Strauss and Trinkle Brass Works

Our next recital in our 2015-2016 Organ Recital Series will feature German organist, Thomas Strauss. He will be joined by four trumpets and timpani from the Trinkle Brass Works. The program includes works by J. S. Bach, Henry Purcell, Georg Frederic Handel, Gaspar Cassado, Wolfgang Mozart, Giuseppe Torelli and Jean Francaix. This promises to be a spectacular musical experience which you won't want to miss! Our own AGO member, Genie Burkett, will be the timpanist.

The program will be presented at Doc Rando Recital Hall at 4:00 P.M. on Sunday afternoon, November 1st in the Beam Music Center on the UNLV campus. There is convenient free parking in adjacent parking lots (Sunday, no restrictions) and in the parking garage.

Thomas Strauss received his early musical education at the Conservatory of Strasbourg, France. He attended the State Academy of Music at Freiburg, studying organ, piano, and conducting, and holds the A-Exam, the highest church music degree available in Germany. He is the recipient of major prizes in both the National Young Musicians Competition of Germany and the Strasbourg Conservatory Organ Competition. Since 1993, Strauss has been the cantor and organist/choir director at St. John the Baptist in Oppenau (Black Forest region); in 1995 he founded the Bach Consortium and the Bach Chor-Ortenau. He performs regularly as harpsichordist with the Wurttemberg Chamber Orchestra Heilbronn.



Plan to attend, and bring your family and friends.

Bruce Behnke What first started your interest in the pipe organ?

Thomas Strauss I began to play the piano when I was four. My parents went to the Catholic church at my home town and there was no organist. Once our priest saw I played the piano, he asked my parents if it wouldn't be possible that I could play the services – that was when I was nine. So I began to play the services at our Catholic church. That was the basis for getting more and more in touch with church music and organ playing...

Behnke How old were you when you first started studying the organ seriously?

Strauss I began playing services at nine but was not able to touch the pedals with my feet – I was too small. So seriously I got lessons with 11.

Behnke Who are some of the most influential teachers with whom you studied?

Strauss I received my early musical education at the Conservatory of Strasbourg, France. I attended the State Academy of Music in Freiburg studying with Hans Musch (organ), A.K. Klein-Sheljasov (piano) and Klaus Hövelmann (conducting). Further organ study began in 1990 with Ludwig Doerr, Xavier Darasse and Klemens Schnorr. Working towards the highest church music degree available in Germany, the “A-Exam”, I studied harpsichord with Robert Hill and choral and orchestral conducting with Hans-Michael Beuerle. These two and Hans Musch were my most influential teachers I studied with. I also participated in masterclasses with many acclaimed organists such as Zsigmond Szathmary, Ludger Lohmann, Wolfgang Rübsam and Daniel Roth.

Behnke What are some of the more interesting venues in which you have played?

Strauss The most interesting venues where I have played are the places and churches with very good organs, mostly historic organs. The organ at my church in Oppenau is a Stieffel organ from 1832 – and I like that very much. In Germany and France are also very important organ builders like the baroque organ builder Silbermann or French romantic Cavaillé-Coll – and I take great delight in playing them.

Behnke Do you do any improvisation and or have you ever composed music?

Strauss In my job as a church musician I do a lot of improvisation in the service. It’s an essential element in the study in preparation for the life of a church organist. A few years ago I played a concert improvising simultaneously to the movie “The Bear” from Jean-Jacques Annaud.

Behnke Who are some of your favorite modern composers?

Strauss Honestly, my favorite composers are not modern. Bach was the greatest composer ever – but I like all genres, baroque, classical, romantic and there are really good contemporary composers.

Organ Recital Series Committee

The 2016-2017 season of our organ recital series will be the 10th anniversary year of this endeavor of our chapter. The recital series committee will begin planning the program for the next year soon after January 1st. We would like to plan an “extra-special” season. While we already have some ideas (and we need to be certain to keep in mind the limitations of our budget!), we would gladly entertain any suggestions you might have. You may communicate your ideas to any member of the committee: Paul Hesselink (Chair), Jan Bigler, Shireen Beaudry, Genie Burkett or David Dorway.

Membership Update

Our Chapter Update! We have 40 registered members and 36 Patrons! If you haven’t joined and have any questions, I would be glad to help. David Dorway Daddocorg@cox.net

Advent-Christmas Recital

Our annual members' Advent-Christmas Recital will be presented on Sunday, December 6 at 4:00 P.M. at Christ Church Episcopal, 2000 S. Maryland Parkway on the church's 54-rank 4-manual Schantz organ completed in 2010. This recital showcases the talent of our local members and is generally well-received and well-attended.

Planning the program involves a lot of effort in coordination of practice times and pulling together the program. It can become almost like an exercise in "herding cats!" If you are interested in performing on the program, you need to contact Paul Hesselink no later than Monday, November 16. (702) 242-1940. Rehearsal times at the organ will be scheduled beginning that week up until Thanksgiving (Tuesday, November 17- Wednesday the 25th) and from Monday, November 30 through Saturday, December 5. It would be helpful to know the name(s) of the compositions you propose to play on the program, an approximate time length, and your short biography. If you plan to include other musical colleagues (instrumentalists and singers), we would need their names and a short biography to include on the program as well. You are encouraged to choose works which fit into the religious themes of Advent and Christmas since the program is being presented in a sacred space.



This program also provides an opportunity for attendees to contribute to our Raymond Barnes Memorial Scholarship Fund.

Please plan to attend and bring family and friends. It is a nice way to get the holiday season off to an inspiring start.

Fall Social

On Friday, September 11, about twenty members met at the home of John Ledwon for a potluck and a demonstration of his self built theatre organ. Pictures include John sitting at his moveable console and a most amazing metronome collection that is located just inside his front door.



FOUR ORGANS IN SEVEN DAYS

Dorothy Young Riess M.D.

A trip to Southern California, October 2015, became an organist's play day. I had the opportunity to perform on two organs, practice on a third, and hear a fine concert on a fourth.

Organ One was the grand instrument at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Angels, Los Angeles, where I was privileged to play a noon program on Wednesday, October 7. Constructed by Dobson Pipe Organ Builders, Ltd., Opus 75 is a IV manual, 105 rank, 76 stop organ with enough power to fill the enormous space of the Cathedral. The only drawback was limited practice time, Monday and Tuesday mornings 7:30-10:00 AM. Although Wednesday early morning was also available, I dreaded driving the Pasadena freeway twice in one day, so arrived a half hour before the scheduled program time of 12:45, calmed down during the noon Mass, and played my program cold – without a warm up. All went well and the audience was warm and enthusiastic.



Organ Two was the Aeolian-Skinner, Opus 1131, at Pasadena Presbyterian where Tim Howard arranged for three hours practice time Thursday morning. It is one of my favorite organs and despite IV manuals is a most comfortable organ console for a large instrument. With 111 ranks, a complete restoration and completed Echo organ in 2003, it is a joy to play. I will give a noon program there March 9, 2016.

Organ Three was the IV manual EM Skinner, Opus 430, 430A and 430AA, at First United Methodist Church, Pasadena, where Richard Elliott gave a superb recital for Los Angeles AGO Monday, October 12. El-

liott brought out the lovely colors, power and grandeur of this fine old instrument.

Organ Four was a IV Manual Rodgers Infinity 484, hybrid electronic and pipes, at Azusa Pacific University where I played a full concert on October 14. It offers so many sounds because of the advanced electronics, that I would have liked more time to explore the options. The pipes are seamlessly integrated, and the instrument extends as far as your imagination. An interesting addition to my time in Azusa was an interview of me by Dr. John Sutton for the 300 music majors in the school during which I also played for them. They knew little about an organ and I hope they were inspired about the instrument and the “calling” of being a musician. I was pleased to see many of them at the concert on Wednesday.



On October 30, I will play Organ Five, Schoenstein Opus 118, at the University of Arizona in Tucson.



ORGAN MEDIA FOUNDATION

For immediate release

There is yet another way to experience great organ music online. The Organ Media Foundation has rolled out its third Internet streaming audio station, The Organ Experience. This station broadcasts classical organ music 24 hours a day via its website at www.organexperience.com. A built-in web player automatically handles connecting listeners to the stream, and complete information about each work being played is displayed on the site.

This station is automated, and generates its own creative playlists. The music is grouped into 30-minute, 1 hour, or 2 hour blocks. The music of each block is chosen based on a specific theme. To give you an idea, a few randomly chosen themes one might hear are:

- German Music on French Organs
- Music from Canada
- Baroque Music
- American Music on Aeolian-Skinner Organs
- Organs by Casavant
- French Music on North American Organs
- Music of Dieterich Buxtehude
- Romantic French Music on Cavaillé-Coll organs
- Recordings from the Pro Organo Label

Some themes are broad, others very specific, there are currently more than 80 different themes up for selection. The information about each block of music can be found on the website, as well as a listing of upcoming blocks.

For each work, the listener is presented with the work title, the composer and dates with a link to the composer's biography, the performer with a link to his or her biography, the length of the work, the organ being played and a link to its specification, the album title and artwork, label and catalog, and links to purchase the album online either as a CD or as MP3 if available. In addition, there are frequently links to purchase the sheet music of the work, and often a link to a free PDF score if the work is public domain.

All of the music heard is from the ever growing broadcast library of the Organ Media Foundation, which currently holds just shy of 20,000 tracks from more than 1500 albums. The Organ Media Foundation is a listener-support non-profit 501(c)3 organization. All of its broadcasts are free to hear, and are commercial-free.

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A raffle drawing for numerous Gift Baskets will also be held! Come early and see!

TWO PERFORMANCES

7:00pm Wednesday, December 2, 2015

Spencer Baker Conducts from the Harpsichord



Green Valley Presbyterian Church

1798 Wigwam Parkway, Henderson, Nevada 89074

Northeast corner of Valle Verde at Wigwam (just north of I-215)

(702) 454-8484

www.greenvalleypres.com

► Sing in the Audience Seats! ◀

Come and Sing! Scores are available for purchase

3:00pm Sunday, December 6, 2015

Dr. Mark Wherry, Conductor

Mountain View Presbyterian Church

8601 Del Webb Boulevard, Las Vegas, NV 89134

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First Christian Church
Disciples of Christ
Presents

The Joy Of Christmas

Featuring the
FCCC Music Ministry

Directed by Timothy Cooper

Sunday, December 13, 2015 at 7:00 p.m.

101 S Rancho Drive, Las Vegas, NV 89106

Complimentary nursery provided

Cookie reception following the concert

