

American Guild of Organists Blue Ridge Chapter

March 2025

www.blueridgeago.org



Organ Plus+

March 16, 3pm

Grace Lutheran Church, Hendersonville



Join us for a members recital featuring organ plus other instruments including brass, winds, strings, voice, piano, marimba, and handbells! Performers include Tim Shepard, Michael Helman, Vance Yoder, Hunter Holbrook, Vance Reese, P. Bradley Ulrich, David Anderson, Natalie Haynes, Brannan Szafron, Sally and Ken Frick, and Byron Hedgepeth.

Free Organ Music

Vance Reese will be bringing a large collection of quality organ music to this event for your perusal. Contact reesev (at) brevard.edu if you have any questions in advance. These pieces are free, and you may also consider making a donation to the to the Friends of the Fine Arts, Brevard College in appreciation!

Ken Cowan

Concert Organist

Thursday, May 8, 2025, 7:30 PM

First United Methodist Church
325 N Broad St, Brevard NC

Suggested donation: \$20

Presented by BMZ Organ Foundation,
Blue Ridge AGO, FUMC Music Ministry.

Parking at the Caldwell Street Lot.



April Social Gathering

Chapter members and guests are invited to join us for a social gathering on April 12th at the home of Tom Bernard between 1:30pm to 3:30pm at 65 Chauncey Circle, Asheville. RSVP by text/call to 706-593-0104 or email tbernardjr@reagan.com. The 'chef' plans for New Orleans favorites such as authentic New Orleans coffee and chickory, Mardi Gras King cake and "Lagniappe" (a New Orleans expression for something extra).

Margaret Hillis: Unsung Pioneer

by Howard Bakken, Blue Ridge AGO

We lived in the western Chicago suburbs for 30 years and were always aware of Margaret Hillis and her legendary successes with the Chicago Symphony Chorus and the Elgin Symphony Orchestra. She was born 104 years ago and deserves to be remembered for her contributions to the arts in America.

Miss Hillis, as she was always known and addressed, was born into a wealthy Kokomo IN family; the family wealth (think stainless steel) was a major factor in supporting her professional life. She was a graduate of Indiana University and the Juilliard where she studied with Robert Shaw and was a classmate and then lifelong friend of Alice Parker.

In 1977 Fritz Reiner encouraged her to establish a professional chorus to perform with the CSO. She believed singers were professionals on a par with instrumentalists and should be paid equally. That spirit led to the formation of the ACDA and her membership on the National Endowment of the Arts.

Her recordings earned nine Grammy Awards as testimony to the quality of her work. Her standing in for an ailing Georg Solti at a 1977 Carnegie Hall performance of Mahler VIII received international attention, one of the first times the world had recognized a woman on the podium.

Another aspect of her Chicago stardom arose from the Do-It-Yourself Messiah for which she asked me to be the organist. One of the Chicago banks generously funded the soloists from the Lyric Opera School, the orchestra principals, harpsichordist David Schrader and me. (Our family had an enhanced Christmas for those 20 years.) The rest of the orchestra were auditioned, but unpaid. There were two, and occasionally three, performances in Orchestra Hall, now Symphony Center. Mandatory tickets were free via WFMT-FM. One year there were 18,000 requests for 5500 tickets. The sound of over two thousand singers was one I will never forget. I may try to forget the sound of "Their Sound is Gone Out" and a few of the lesser-known choruses.

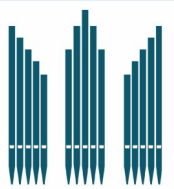
Although Miss Hillis was known and revered by Chicagoans, I have discovered her name here is virtually unknown. She was a dynamo who devoted her life to the cause of choral music. May her contributions be recognized and live on.

Margaret Hillis: Unsung Pioneer by Cheryl Frazes Hill was published in 2022. It is a highly detailed summary of a remarkable musician. Here is a link to an interview with Ms. Hill and Frank Villella, the archivist of the CSO, filled with remembrances and tributes.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N4g2K8tlZJ0>

What will you play on Woman Composer Sunday?



WOMAN
COMPOSER
SUNDAY

The AGO will once again observe Woman Composer Sunday on **Sunday, March 9, 2025**. Members are encouraged to include music by women composers in their services and other performances on that day.

If you're not sure what you might play or are seeking new repertoire, the AGO Task Force on Gender Equity arranged for three works by women composers to be reprinted in *The American Organist* magazine: *Largo*, 1857, by Elizabeth Stirling (Jan.); *Children of the Heavenly Father*, 1964, by Roberta Bitgood (Feb.); and *Let Us Break Bread Together*, 2020, by Martha Sobaje (March). The Task Force will also present a webinar on Monday, Feb. 12 that will highlight further repertoire and explore the legacy of the AGO's first female president, Dr. Roberta Bitgood (1975-81). Visit <https://www.agohq.org/task-force-gender-equity/> to sign up for the Task Force's monthly email newsletter.

Your Ad Here

Want to see your next event here?

Just write your submission on the back of a crisp \$100 bill and mail it to the editorial department today! Alternately, email your event information to:

cantordavid@stmarkslutheran.net



Is your AGO membership current? In addition to the great programming you've come to expect from the Blue Ridge chapter, your membership includes this newsletter, and a subscription to *The American*

Organist, the glossiest magazine around. Please visit agohq.org to check on the status of your membership, or contact the chapter registrar Tom Bernard: tbernard (at) reagan.com



SacredMusicDownloads.com

printable PDFs & reproducible downloads

by Timothy Shepard

Looking for accessible & creative handbell music for **LENT**?

The Azalea Circle Hymn Collection IV contains EIGHT hymn tune arrangements for beginning three octaves choirs. Although the arrangements are conceived for handbells, many can readily be played by hand chimes, often to quite good affect. Each piece is 2-3 minutes in length yet they each feel complete and are appropriate length for most worship settings. *CONTENTS: 40 Days and 40 Night; Ah, Holy Jesus; Be Still My Soul; Blessed Assurance; Dear Lord and Father; My Faith Looks Up to Thee; Were You There?; When I Survey the Wondrous Cross* Visit www.SacredMusicDownloads.com to preview this collection and other handbell, keyboard, or choir music for your music ministry. I would be honored by your patronage.

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Winthrop University Chorale

Dr. Jeremy Mims, Conductor

Sunday, March 30th at 4:00 pm

Lutheran Church of the Nativity

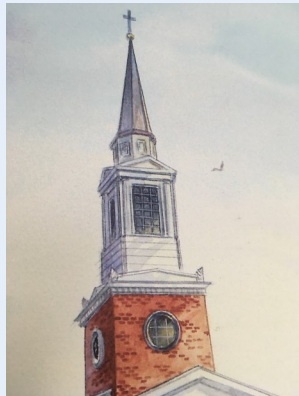
2425 Hendersonville Road

Arden, NC 28704

Freewill offering

Open Positions

Hendersonville Presbyterian Church, Hendersonville, NC



Organ and Piano Accompanist Position Summary:

We are seeking a part-time, skilled organist and piano accompanist to join our worship team. This position will support our traditional worship services through music, providing accompaniment for congregational singing, choir anthems, and other special music.

Primary Duties: Provide accompaniment by playing the organ and/or piano to accompany congregational hymns, choir anthems, soloists, and other musicians during worship services. Select appropriate musical pieces in collaboration with the Director of Music or Lead Pastor and prepare adequately for services. Availability to attend rehearsals and services, which may include evenings, weekends, and holidays. Actively participate in rehearsals with the choir, soloists, and other musicians as needed. Provide music for special services including holidays and other church services upon request. Collaborate with the Director of Worship, Lead Pastor, Choir, and other musicians to enhance the overall musical experience during worship. Provide or assist in arranging accompaniment for funerals, memorial services, and weddings on organ/piano as needed. For more information, contact Rob McClelland, rmcclelland@hendersonvillepc.org or 828-692-3211.

Union Lutheran Church, Salisbury NC

Union is conducting a search for a Part Time Director of Music Ministries and a Part Time Church Organist. We are open to the same person filling both positions. Job descriptions may be found at <https://lcsalisbury.org/employment-opportunities/>. Contact the church office for more information.



Blue Ridge AGO Chapter

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Founded
August 15, 2013

OFFICERS

Vance Yoder
Dean

Thomas Bernard
Treasurer and Sub Dean

JC Cecconi
Secretary

Rhonda Furr
Timothy Wissler
Hunter Holbert
Michael Helman
Members at Large

Tim Shepard
Past Dean and Registrar

David Anderson
Newsletter Editor

American Guild of Organists

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New York, NY 10115
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About Us

Our mission is to enrich lives through organ and choral music. To achieve this, we encourage excellence in the performance of organ and choral music; inspire, educate, and offer certification for organists and choral conductors; provide networking, fellowship, and mutual support; nurture future generations of organists; promote the organ in its historic and evolving roles; and engage wider audiences with organ and choral music.

Area Organs

Trinity Episcopal Church, Asheville
Austin Organ Company (Opus 2605A, 2018)



44 ranks · 3 manuals · 32 stops · 57 registers

