

American Guild of Organists Blue Ridge Chapter

November 2025

www.blueridgeago.org



From the Dean

I absolutely love the stunning Fall display of vibrant yellows, reds, and oranges that paint the landscape of WNC. The breathtaking views and vistas are a dose of awesome for my autumnal soul. Are you a fan of God's creation? I encourage you to pause to appreciate the beauty around you. I make every chance I can to immerse myself in nature. It is self-care, it's worth every second.

I want to express a big thank you to Corey Powell (Central UMC), Elizabeth LaJeunesse (1st Presbyterian), and Kevin Seal (Trinity Episcopal) for hosting last month's Church Street organ crawl in downtown Asheville. It was an absolute treat to hear the enchanting sonorities of three beautiful and unique pipe organs. A special shoutout to young organist Gray Pearson for preparing and playing a wonderful selection of pieces including an improvisation at Central.



October organ crawl participants

On November 22nd at 11 a.m., we will gather in Brevard at Davidson-River Presbyterian for a choral reading session. Lois Fyfe Music retailer will provide a diverse packet of anthems. Feel free to (please, that is) invite some choir members to join us in singing and discovering treasures. You might then head down the street to Smoky Mountain Cafe or another lovely eatery in downtown Brevard for lunch. The reading session will be led by the competent hands and charm of sub-Dean Brennan Szafron and Michael Helman. Thank you, Michael, for hosting, too!

November is election time for the AGO. I am humble and excited to inform that I'm running to be Regional Ambassador in the Southeast. I would be incredibly honored if you could take the time and effort to vote. If you know AGO members in other chapters in the Southeast, I would be grateful if you could write a note on my behalf and encourage them to get out the vote. Many of the other regional ambassador elections are not competitive, but ours has a vibrant choice of myself and another incredibly talented organist. Your support would be appreciated. End of campaign speech.

I am delighted about all the music opportunities all of you are bringing to our area. It's like a musical explosion in the mountains, and it's a real treat for music lovers. Remember last year? It was a tough time; many were digging out of a natural disaster, many without flowing water in their house. This year, I am so grateful for the music. I encourage my organist and DoM colleagues to go to at least one musical event or concert that you are not involved with. Just sit in the audience, listen to the music wash over you, and remind yourself why you became a musician.

Tim Shepard, Dean

Calling All Singers!

The Blue Ridge Chapter
of the American Guild of Organists presents a

Choral Reading Session

led by Brennan Szafron and Michael Helman

November 22 · 11:00 am

Brevard-Davidson River Presbyterian Church

249 E Main St, Brevard, NC 28712

Music graciously provided by

Lois Fyfe Music

www.blueridgeago.org

This monthly feature from the Blue Ridge AGO explores ways that our organization provides resources for your real-world challenges. Get ready to get practical with:

SOS - Someone Offers Solutions!

with Dr. Rhonda Furr

A new pastor arrives and decides he wants to add praise songs to the service to attract more younger people. What do you do? Check out this AGO HQ Webinar:

Contemporary Music for Traditional Organists

Church choral and keyboard editors from J.W. Pepper discuss the ways contemporary music is currently being incorporated in worship and share ideas and resources for traditional organists:

<https://youtu.be/4a7Q3KMGCWo?si=8vE0oW8Ro5qsC2HT>



Fauré Requiem

4pm · Sunday, November 2 · Holy Cross Episcopal Church, Tryon

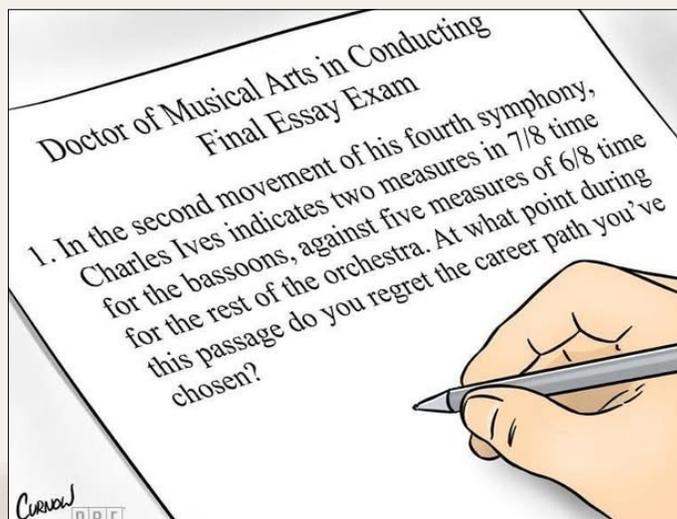
Sunday November 2nd @ 4 p.m. – “Requiem” by Gabriel Fauré and other works, sung in observance of All Souls’ Day by the choir of Holy Cross Episcopal Church
150 Melrose Avenue · Tryon, NC, 28782



Is your membership current?

In addition to the excellent programming you’ve come to expect from the Blue Ridge chapter, your membership includes a subscription to

The American Organist, **the glossiest magazine west of the prime meridian**. Please visit agohq.org to check on the status of your membership, or contact chapter registrar Tom Bernard: [Tbernardjr1949 \(at\) gmail.com](mailto:Tbernardjr1949@gmail.com)



www.blueridgeago.org

m. gray pearson
presents

a pipe organ recital

saturday nov. 1, 2025

3pm

St. Mark's Lutheran Church
Asheville, NC

Concerts and Worship Happenings

Lutheran Church of the Nativity 2425 Hendersonville Rd. Arden, NC

Tom Eure & Amelia Osborne: Folk Duo

Sunday, November 16 @ 10am worship



Tom Eure & Amelia Osborne offer up a heartfelt fusion of Folk, Celtic, and Appalachian influences. The two come together as a veteran singer songwriter and a fine artist with the voice of an angel, combining their multi-instrumentalist talents to paint a musical picture as uplifting as it is engaging.

The duo hail from the fertile musical grounds of North Carolina, where they draw endless inspiration. Their “folk process” of absorbing musical traditions and allowing them to shape their own sound creates a unique folk fusion.

Tom and Amelia have led music at various synod gatherings and will be in concert the same afternoon at 4pm at St. John in the Wilderness Episcopal Church in Flat Rock.

Blue Ridge Ringers

Sunday, December 14 at 4pm

The Blue Ridge Ringers will be here to share some Christmas favorites old and new. They were with us last year and we had such a great response they will be here again. Come get in the spirit of the season with a great afternoon of ringing.



SacredMusicDownloads.com

printable PDFs / reproducible downloads

by Timothy Shepard

Ready with your Christmas handbell music? SacredMusicDownloads.com offers these:

[AzaleaCircle Christmas Collection](#)

2 Octaves Handbells OR
3 Octaves Handbells

[Carol of the Bells](#)

4 Octave Handbells
Mallets
3 Octave Chimes (optional)

[African Noel](#)

5 Octave Handbells
3 Octave Chimes



2025 Fall Concerts

Nov. 21 - 7:00 pm | Nov. 22 - 3:00 pm

**UU Asheville
1 Edwin Place, Asheville**



**For tickets
scan here or
visit womansong.org**

**Tickets \$20
(plus fees and taxes)
Age 12 and under FREE!**



FINE ARTS • FALL EVENTS • 2025

BC Music**Faculty Showcase**

Sep 7, 3:00pm
Scott Concert Hall, Porter Center

Student Showcase Recital

Sep 18, 7:30pm
Scott Concert Hall, Porter Center

With Every Breath: Awake and Live

Brevard College Wind Ensemble
Sep 22, 7:30pm
Scott Concert Hall, Porter Center

Connections

Concert Choir and Chamber Singers
Oct 12, 3:00pm
Scott Concert Hall, Porter Center

The Viola in My Life

Vance Reese, piano; Lillian Green, viola
Nov 2, 3:00pm
Scott Concert Hall, Porter Center

Celestial Bodies

Brevard College Wind Ensemble
Nov 17, 7:30pm
Scott Concert Hall, Porter Center

Lessons and Carols

Dec 6, 7:30pm
Scott Concert Hall, Porter Center

Vivaldi Gloria+

Transylvania Choral Society
Dec 11, 7:30pm
Scott Concert Hall, Porter Center

BC Music Colloquium**Once Upon a Time:**

Folk Tales and Music
Vakama Trio - violin, cello, piano
(Mariya Potapova, Katie Hamilton, Vance Reese)
Aug 27, 2:00pm

Guest Performance Colloquium

Andrea Price, soprano; Andrew Adams, piano
Sep 17, 2:00pm

Influence of Black Mountain College on Art Song

Casey Edwards, tenor; Vance Reese, piano
Sep 24, 2:00pm

Student Performance Colloquium

Nov 5, 2:00pm

Love Stories and Fairy Tales

Opera and Musical Theatre Scenes
Nov 19, 2:00 pm
Ingram Auditorium, Dunham Hall

Student Performance Colloquium

Dec 3, 2:00pm

All colloquium performances take place in Scott Concert Hall unless otherwise noted.

BC Theatre**No Exit***

by Jean-Paul Sartre
Oct 2–Oct 4, 7:00pm
Oct 5, 2:30pm
Morrison Playhouse, Porter Center

Ms. Holmes & Ms. Watson – Apt. 2b*

by Kate Hamill
Nov 13–Nov 15, 7:00pm
Nov 16, 2:30pm
Morrison Playhouse, Porter Center

Fall Mixtape

Dec 2, 7:00pm
Morrison Playhouse, Porter Center

A Christmas Carol*

A one-man adaptation by William Leach
Dec 5, 7:00pm
Dec 6, 2:30pm
Morrison Playhouse, Porter Center

Unless otherwise noted, events are free and open to the public.

**Event is ticketed. \$5 for BC students, staff, and faculty, \$10 for community members. Please visit www.onthestage.tickets/brevard-college/season +Please visit Transylvania Choral Society to purchase tickets*

BC Spiers Gallery**Whistling Past Eternity**

David Sheldon & Mark Connelley
Aug 28–Sep 26
Opening reception Aug 28, 5:00pm
Spiers Gallery, Sims Art Building

Juried Student Exhibition

Oct 2–Nov 7
Opening reception Oct 2, 5:00pm
Spiers Gallery, Sims Art Building

The ballad of 370 dollars

Photography by Jordan Whitten
Nov 14–Dec 5
Opening reception Nov 14, 5:00pm
Spiers Gallery, Sims Art Building

Spiers Gallery is open weekdays 8:00am–5:00pm

BREVARD COLLEGE
BREVARD, NORTH CAROLINA

Holy Cross Advent Recital Series

Wednesdays at 12 noon • free will offering

Dec. 3rd: Benjamin Barker, hammer dulcimer

Dec. 10th: Tate C. Addis, organ playing excerpts from "La Nativite du Seigneur" by Olivier Messiaen

Dec. 17th: "Holy Harmony" vocal ensemble

For Sale

Allen CF15DK in excellent condition. Located in Greeneville TN. Contact us for information!

Save the Date!

The Linda Lassiter Hill Organ Recital Series presents **Nathan Laube, Organist**
Thursday May 14, 2026; 7:00 p.m.
St. James Episcopal Church, Hendersonville

From AGO National Headquarters:

Important Announcement Regarding Dues

Beginning with renewals effective on July 1, annual dues across all membership categories (Regular, Special, and Young Organist) will increase by \$7, with \$2 being distributed to chapters. This modest increase, approved by the National Council, will allow the AGO to continue offering high quality programs and services to our members, while providing additional financial support to chapters.



Your Next Event Here!

If you're looking for the perfect platform to publicize your premier of pitched percussion Pachelbel preludes, look no further. Just write the details (in pencil) on the back of an autograph of POP102 and mail it to the editorial department today! Alternately, you may email your event details to: cantordavid@stmarkslutheran.net



Update on our Student AGO member John Bayne

from Gayle Stepp



Our members first heard John Bayne play Bach's "Prelude in F" at the Pedal, Pipes, and Pizza Event at First United Methodist Church Brevard as a youth. Since then, John graduated from Furman University *Summa Cum Laude*, where he performed recitals and regularly for Sunday Mass on the Daniel Chapel pipe organ. John is in his third year in the PHD Music Theory program at Washington University in St. Louis. Along with his course work, John teaches Music Theory classes to undergraduates and serves as a private Music Theory tutor. Let's keep encouraging our youth! It is so important!

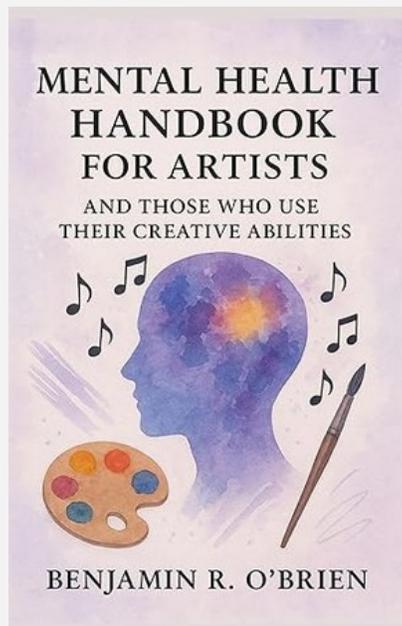
www.blueridgeago.org

Book Review

Thanks to Blue Ridge AGO member Howard Bakken for submitting the following book review. If you have a book or other resource that would be of interest to our members and friends, please consider sharing it with us!

Mental Health Handbook for Artists and Those Who Use Their Creative Abilities

Benjamin R. O'Brien



We have all read secretly, or openly, many articles about the importance of understanding our own mental health, our attitudes toward others, and our jobs. What we have perhaps not read deals with our lives as artists, be it visual art, performance, composition, conducting, writing, religious leadership, or creating in any number of areas.

Benjamin O'Brien has addressed this in his new book MENTAL HEALTH HANDBOOK FOR ARTISTS And Those Who Use Their Creative Abilities. In his private counseling practice in Asheville, he has focused on real-world struggles among artists that can lead to burnout, isolation, perfectionism, depression, and in the worst situations, abandonment of a life in the arts.

This book has no checklists of things to do to handle difficult situations. There are no sentimental bromides. Rather, there are discussions of creativity, confidence, pressures to excel, acknowledgment of occasional struggles and failure, and acceptance of the fact that creative personalities view their world "with heightened sensitivity, intuition, and emotional depth."

As a dividend to the reader, O'Brien opens each chapter with an incisive quote from someone who understands us as artists. All are fresh and to the point. My favorite is from Mark Twain: *The worst loneliness is to not be comfortable with yourself.*

This 67-page paperback is available from www.bookshop.org or other online sources for \$11.99. ©2025

Howard N. Bakken, Blue Ridge AGO

***Benjamin O'Brien is a mental health therapist who offers in-person counseling as well as virtual. He holds a master's degree in counseling from Western Carolina University. He may be reached at benjaminobrientherapy@gmail.com .



Open Positions

Abiding Savior Lutheran Church, Fairview NC

Lutheran (ELCA) congregation in Fairview, N.C. seeking pianist to support Sunday morning worship.

Abiding Savior Lutheran Church in Fairview is searching for a pianist (or pianist/guitarist) to play for our services Sunday mornings at 11 a.m. Worship is casual and cozy with an average attendance of 20 people. Worship music consists of a mix of contemporary and traditional music, generally this is a prelude, three hymns/songs, a psalm refrain and postlude as well as some liturgical service music. We welcome all types of people to Abiding Savior and are an LGBTQ+ affirming church. The accompanist will work with the interim pastor to choose songs and play on Sunday mornings, as well as Christmas Eve and Wednesday evening services during Lent.

Qualifications

- Skilled piano player
- Guitar playing would be a definite plus but is not required
- Experience with church music - both traditional and contemporary – is preferred
- Small church experience or desire to work in a small community preferred
- Flexibility, sight-reading and willingness to collaborate are desired

For more information or to apply for this position, please email president@abidingsaviorlutheranchurch.org

First Presbyterian Church, Greeneville, Tennessee (Presbyterian Church, USA)

First Presbyterian – Greeneville is endeavoring to hire an organist for the two traditional services each week. Salary: \$ 17,000 per year, 10 hours per week, contractual part-time employee, under the supervision of the Director of Music. Responsibilities for this part-time position include providing accompaniment for our choir and congregation as well as voluntaries during services. Music is one of the hallmarks of our congregation and we support efforts to continually grow this ministry. Music is a tool for leading people to Christ, for strengthening our faith, for helping persons experience true worship, and for glorifying God.

Qualifications Include: A high level of musical talent, proficiency, education, and experience playing the organ in liturgical services is required. Proficiency playing the piano is required. A Bachelor's degree in organ, piano, or sacred music is preferred. Five years' experience as an organist in a liturgical, mainline protestant church is preferred.

Applications should be sent to the attention of the Organist Search Committee at fpcscity@gmail.com. The church telephone number is (423) 638-4533. For more information on our church community, or to stream a live service, please visit us at www.firstpresgreeneville.org.

A candidate qualified as an organist, and also as a choir director, may apply for a part-time (20 hours/week) combined position: Director of Music. Please contact fpcscity@gmail.com for the description of the choir-related and administrative duties for the combined position.

St. Andrew's on the Hill Episcopal Church, Canton NC

St. Andrew's seeks a part-time (12-15 hrs/wk) musician who is called to serve in ministry in a mutually creative and collaborative relationship with the Rector, choir, and congregation. Our congregation is deeply committed to prayer, community, and service. We enjoy musicians within our congregation who share the following gifts: sing in a quartet; play dulcimer (hammered and mountain), guitar, and violin; compose and arrange music; and direct our children's choir. We seek a Parish Musician with experience on organ and piano as well as directing a small, volunteer adult choir. We currently have choir rehearsal on Wednesday evenings and before Sunday morning worship, which begins at 10:30. A year-round position is preferred, but other options will be considered. Compensation: \$17,000 - \$19,500, based on experience for a year-round position. Benefits include 5 weeks paid time off and \$500/year for continuing education. If you are interested in seeing the full job description, please check our homepage at: www.standrewscanton.org or contact Karen Barfield at rectorstandrewscanton@gmail.com

Trinity Presbyterian Church, Hendersonville, NC

Music Director — Part time: 20 hours

The Music Director will provide leadership and oversight to the music programs of Trinity Presbyterian Church, including the Chancel Choir, and assist the Pastors and Worship Ministry with planning and providing appropriate music for worship services and other special services as needed. Trinity is a family of faith, trusting and following Jesus Christ, welcoming and nurturing all people, reaching out to serve the needs of our communities near and far, and doing these things humbly and joyfully, believing that the greatest commandment is LOVE. Please send application materials to: worship@trinitypresnc.org

A PDF containing a letter of application and resume/CV.

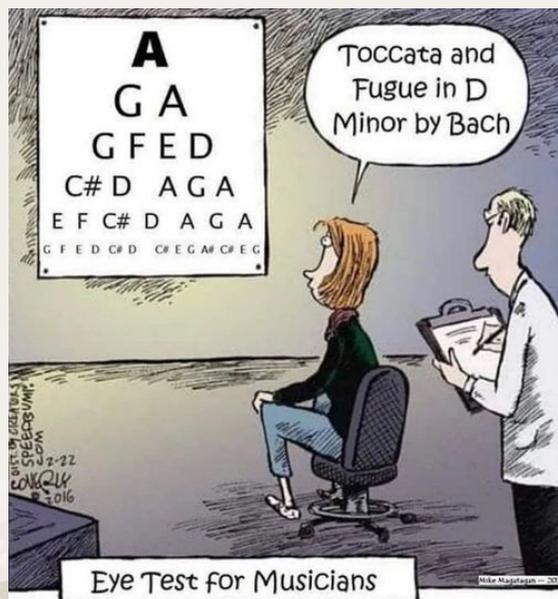
URL links to videos of the applicant:

Conducting a church anthem with an SATB choir

Playing prelude/postlude repertoire music (organ and piano)

Congregational singing of hymn on organ

Names and contact information (email/phone #) for three professional references.



Blue Ridge AGO Chapter

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Founded
August 15, 2013

OFFICERS

Timothy Shepard
Dean

Brennan Szafron
Sub Dean

Thomas Bernard
Treasurer and Registrar

JC Cecconi
Secretary

Rhonda Furr
Hunter Holbert
Michael Helman
Tate Addis
Members at Large

Vance Yoder
Past Dean

David Anderson
Newsletter Editor

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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 Organ Highlight

Cornel Zimmer Organ Builders Opus 21, 1997
Originally Casavant Frères Ltée. (Opus 3082, 1970)

Brevard-Davidson River Presbyterian Church

