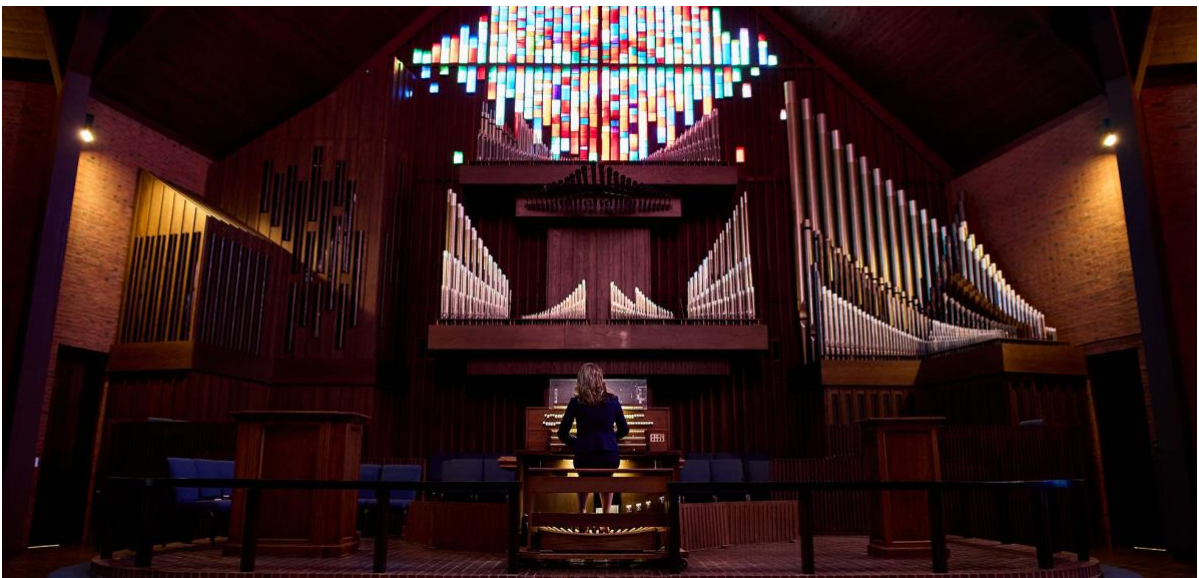




Regional Update

Southwest Regional Ambassador Sheryl Sebo, DMA, AAGO

JUNE 2026



The Holtkamp pipe organ (Opus 1836, 1968; 70 ranks, 3 manuals) at Oklahoma City University in Angie W. Smith Chapel, with organ professor, Dr. Melissa Plamann, seen performing here – photos above and below, courtesy of the university website.

As of July 1, 2026, our incoming Southwest Regional Ambassador, Dr. Melissa Plamann, University Organist, Wanda L. Bass Chair of Organ, and Coordinator of Graduate Studies at Oklahoma City University's Bass School of Music! Congratulations to her – I am thrilled to welcome her to this exciting position, representing all of you in our region! Here is her most recent biography:

Hailed as a performer of the “highest caliber,” Dr. Melissa Plamann “commands the console with confidence, musicality, and fine technique.” (The Tracker). Plamann is the Wanda L. Bass Chair of Organ and Professor of Music at Oklahoma City University’s Bass School of Music; she also serves as Artist-in-Residence at Westminster Presbyterian Church in OKC. A Wisconsin native, Plamann holds organ performance degrees from Valparaiso University and Emory University, and she was awarded her DMA from Indiana University-Bloomington.

*Plamann maintains an active performing schedule, and she particularly enjoys programming 20th- and 21st-century works and collaborative pieces featuring other instruments with the organ. She is an active member and past dean of the Oklahoma City chapter of the American Guild of Organists and was recently elected as the Southwest Regional Ambassador for the national organization. An avid scholar, Plamann recently published her first book with Bloomsbury Press. *Unnerved: The Performer's Guide to Managing Anxiety* (2026) is a relatable and practical roadmap for combating each performer's unique brand of performance anxiety by discovering and managing their root emotional drivers. More information is available at melissaplammann.com.*



Two special opportunities to meet Melissa will be:

- 1) At our regional meeting on **Thursday, July 9, 8-8:45 AM**, (Hyatt room TBD)! and/or...
- 2) **Monday, July 20 at 7:00 pm Central time zone**, we will offer a SW Regional Zoom to get to know Melissa, share impressions of the recent convention, our SW regional meeting, and ask any questions you may have for Melissa or about AGO!

SHERYL'S NOTES:

Thanks again to all of you for your inspiring energy and leadership as officers and dedicated members! I am so very grateful for the significant times we have shared during the past six years and for the ways you help energize and strengthen AGO, both nationally and locally! I hope to see many of you in St. Louis, July 6-10 and for our **Southwest Regional meeting on July 9 at 8 AM at the hotel!** It is not too late to register for the convention and for our regional meeting! The bus/transportation package is no longer possible, so you would need to drive, take mass transit, Ubers, or catch rides with other members you know or meet who can drive!

Melissa and I have shared several conversations about all she needs to know and do in her new role as SW-RA. It will be helpful for you to record in iMIS, as well as email to myself and Melissa, any **new and continuing officers**. To those who have not had elections yet or are still seeking new officers to step up, we send best thoughts for success to accomplish that needed task! If you have trouble in uploading your new officers' names onto iMIS in the administrative area, JW Arnold, Andrew Basta, Eric Birk, or any of the AGO staff would be more than happy to help you. JW's *Chapter Leader*

News included instructions on that process last month. If your chapter has not prepared a Chapter Operating Procedures (COP) document, PLEASE do that. It honestly does not take long, with several examples and a template in the Document Center on agohq.org under the "Chapters Administration" area. COPs are an invaluable source of guidance for chapter officers!

If you will send (or re-send) to me names of any members who have died this past year, we will reflect on these dear members who have died the past year during our Moment of Remembrance at the regional meeting on July 9.

This is a crucial time of transition for National AGO as well as our own region, as we welcome new National AGO Executive Director, Cathy Brigham, PhD, MA during the Annual AGO Meeting Wednesday, July 8 and during a special reception that week! If you have not signed up yet for either the annual or our regional meeting (July 9, 8:00-8:45 am at the hotel), it is easy to edit your schedule to include those meetings. There will be a special time to celebrate James and wish him well at the convention, as well as welcome Cathy Brigham in her new position as our AGO National Executive Director.

BIG CONGRATULATIONS to all chapters who applied to be considered for an award in the inaugural Chapter Achievement Awards! Two chapters in our region were recognized: Denver Rocky Mountain, with a "Bronze" award and Las Cruces with a "Commendation." I am proud of and thrilled for them! However, I want to affirm that each chapter in this region has many excellent qualities and accomplishments as you share the exciting world of the organ, its music, and enjoy fellowship. With or without an award, please know you are all special in different ways - ALL are integral to the fabric of AGO!

I am grateful for the rich experiences I have had, for new and ongoing relationships fostered and enriched while I have been your humble Southwest Regional Ambassador! I look forward to pitching in along with you as we continue to nurture and enrich our great organization! Blessings to all of you, always!

*Love & grace,
Sheryl*

- Any AGO member in good standing can now apply to be a candidate for National Council or a Regional Ambassadors in the "Call for Nominations!" Information is available at nominations@agohq.org! Karen Rich in our Tulsa Chapter is the Chairperson of the National Nominations Committee and would be grateful to answer any questions you may have!
- Each issue of the Chapter Leader News includes links to current memberships about to lapse. Please reach out to lapsed members and invite them to renew and become more active again! Remember to update YOURS as well! ☺

- As you are able, please remember AGO in your giving, either through the many designated funds, to the general fund, or through the Clarence Dickenson Society. Your generosity makes possible so many benefits, scholarships, and support for all our local chapters, too. (agohq.org/contribute)

EDUCATION & CERTIFICATION

As a parting thought, I want to give a special plug for EDUCATION! It is one of the most important, foundational purposes of AGO, and it continues to grow steadily! Our new national staff Education Director, Dr. Michelle Kardos, DMA, CAGO, reported that the Committee on Professional Certification has just completed grading the upper-level spring exams. Of the 30 graders for these exams, six are in our region: Denise A. Lanning, FAGO; Colin MacKnight, FAGO, ChM; David A. Heller, AAGO; Joyce Shupe Kull, FAGO, ChM; Melanie Randall, FAGO; and Maxine R. Thévenot, ARCCO, with Denise and Colin also on the Professional Certification Committee! We appreciate ALL who serve in this area! This year's results will be made available once all exam-takers have been notified of the results. I hope you all will include a workshop or program on certification, celebrate any exam achievers, and encourage organists of any age to prepare for and take an exam! **Our Southwest Regional Education Coordinator, Peggy Graff, AAGO, is eager to talk to you about this vital area and possibly lead a workshop for your chapter!**

Related to education, even though our region did not host a POE or related workshop week this summer, several of our colleges have been very active in offering student organ introduction weeks, including Colorado State University (Dr. Joel Bacon, director/organ professor); University of North Texas (Dr. Malcolm Matthews, director/organ professor); Baylor University (Dr. Jens Korndörfer, director/organ professor and Chase Douthit, BU alum, instructors); and Southern Methodist University (Stefan Engels, director/SMU organ professor!

- The University of North Texas Organ Department welcomed 12 students to campus June 8-13 for the 2nd annual Summer Organ Academy. Malcolm Matthews, assisted by Drs. Lenora McCroskey and Michael Conrady and guest artist Christoph Preiss led daily workshops, lessons, and seminars focusing on repertoire, improvisation, and liturgical accompaniment. Students practiced and performed on the University's instruments and took a daytrip to Dallas to see a variety of instruments by E.M. Skinner, Noack, Richards Fowkes and Co., and Fisk. Matthews looks forward to next year's event planned for June 10-15, 2027. If you or your students missed this year's Academy and are interested in joining next year, please write to him at Malcolm.Matthews@unt.edu.
- The first photo of the CSU group below includes some of their organ faculty and performing artists: Dr. Joel Bacon, Jason Moy, Elizabeth Ogg, Beverly Everett, Ken

Cowan, Todd Wilson, and Andrew Steinberg. Quite a few of our chapters offer similar annual lessons or mentoring programs for new organists! I am grateful to colleges and to AGO for ways they reach out and introduce young people to the organ!

Other special AGO youth/young adult organist events being offered currently or soon are:

- Permian Basin/Concho Valley Chapter will offer a free Organ Workshop on July 12, 2-3 pm in Odessa, Texas, led by Dr. Young Whiting, Assoc. Professor of Piano at Odessa College and organist at First Methodist Church, Midland, Texas. Contact Dr. Young Whiting for details at ykwon2010@gmail.com.
- Denver Rocky Mountain Chapter's summer scholarship organ student lessons are in full swing, leading to a fall recital by those beginning young organists.
- Church Music Institute offers a special experience for early career church musicians working toward a career in church music. If accepted into the program, members of the Paul Lindsley Thomas Society will receive free admission to all CMI online and onsite events, including the Winter Retreat, access to the extensive online organ and choral libraries, and monthly online meetings with PLT colleagues. Special consideration will be given to AGO members. More information and application information are [HERE](#) (link). Deadline is September 1, 2026 for the 2026-27 year.; the application form link is [HERE](#). For more information, contact Dr. Charlotte Kroeker, CMI Executive Director, info@churchmusicinstitute.org.
- Jens Korndörfer shared that Baylor University's [Fourth National High School Organ Competition](#) is open for applications. [HERE](#) is a link to the BU website with full details and an application form. Thanks to generous donors, they will award five cash prizes totaling \$2,500, plus five \$100 gift certificates, among the ten finalists who will be selected to compete on campus on October 10. The application deadline is August 24, 2026.
- AGOYO information and future events are found on agohq.org - [HERE!](#)

AGOSTL2026.org - click [HERE!](#)