



Sforzando



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JANUARY 2026

Southwest Jersey Chapter American Guild of Organists

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Dean's Message - by Jonathan Stark



The Invisible Organist

This is a true story. I'm not telling this to put a damper on the festive Christmas season, but to shed some light on why the AGO remains relevant, perhaps more than ever.

I recently played the organ for a church service for a group of retired clergy. They do this annually. Never mind what church hosted this service, or what denomination these clergy retired from. This could have been Lutherans, Methodists, Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, etc. And my observations about this service do not rely solely on memory- the service was video recorded and I've reviewed the video.

The folks attending the service were about half retired clergy persons, and half ordained people in staff positions in this denomination's local governing hierarchy. Not only were there



Sub-Dean's Message - by Will Powell

Season's greetings and warm wishes for a happy New Year

This time of year holds reflection and anticipation all bundled into the same yule log. We have much to be thankful for as a chapter, and much to look forward to in the year ahead. I would like to take a moment to thank all those who hosted events this past year. Your efforts are much appreciated. To those who attended events, we are grateful for your participation. For those who help plan, coordinate, and motivate, you help keep our chapter going. You are a blessing.

This past year, we celebrated the life of our friend, Cathy O'Neil. Her indomitable spirit carried many roles in our chapter that are missed. I am encouraged that people like Cathy exist in this world, people who give generously of their time and carry their heart through their work.

...continued on page 3

Winter Social

hosted by
Irina Nenartovich



Friday, January 9, 2026, 7 PM
122 Heath Road, Medford



JANUARY JUMPSTART 2026

Saturday, Jan. 17, 2026
8:00 AM - 5:30 PM
Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church

Registration is now open!

<https://pcaggo.wildapricot.org/event-6427581>

[Click Here to Register](#)

January JumpStart 2026, planned in conjunction with St. Andrew's Organ Week (Scotland) "*From the Old World to the New*," features a full day of concerts and workshops with an emphasis on British and American music.

Headline Presenters: Jeffrey Gemmell (Moravian choral music), James Kealey (British organ music), Chris Bragg (British Organ Music), and Douglas Reed (American organ music).

Featuring:

- Moravian Singstunde (a worship service consisting primarily of hymns)
- Organ recitals including premieres by Libby Larsen and Trevor Weston
- Organ masterclass led by Douglas Reed
- Free music exchange

Plus workshops / panel discussions on:

- | | | |
|------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| The Weekend Organist | Taking Your Choir on Tour | British Organ Music |
| The Composer's Process | Historic Organ Preservation/Restoration | Creating Choral Synergy |

FEES*:

- \$25 AGO Philadelphia Chapter member
- \$45 General
- \$25 Full-time Student (please bring your ID)

Included: Light breakfast, box lunch, and reception

Dean's Message, continued from page 1

staff from the local governing hierarchy, but that hierarchy's chief executive was also present. Everyone should have been on their best behavior.

Ever seen wording like this in a church bulletin? "*.....time spent in Church prior to the service should be used for reflections and prayer*"? Apparently none of these folks ever had! I began the organ prelude with an exquisite small piece for Advent by Helmut Walcha using delicate neo-Baroque registrations. I couldn't even hear myself play. The socializing in the sanctuary sounded like Macy's basement on the day after Thanksgiving. Next was an organ meditation on Advent by Peter Pindar Stearns, which starts softly and eventually works up to a healthy *forte*. The assembled "worshippers" reaction? As the music reached its climax, they talked, laughed, guffawed, and even shouted ever louder.

As the service proper began, they (reluctantly) quieted down. For awhile. The passing of the Peace after the sermon provided another opportunity for enthusiastic chit-chat and socializing. (I should mention that this service had been preceded by two hours of workshops and coffee breaks. It's not as if these folks had just arrived at the church.) I stood next the organ console and..... nobody, not one of these folks, so much as acknowledged me with a nod, let alone a greeting.

On to Communion. Communion was distributed up front, but also brought out to folks unable to make the trip. I played Communion music and watched as Communion..... passed by. No Communion for YOU, organist! Perhaps that's a robot playing the organ; we don't give Communion to robots! Or the organist is strangely and mysteriously invisible?

These folks are not brand new ministers just out of seminary. They are retired clergy with decades of experience, or staff leaders in this denomination. Yet despite their experience and education, despite their ostensible commitments to social justice, despite their advocacy of love and charity, I was treated as a non-person.

And by the way, I wasn't paid on the day of the service. Three weeks later, I still haven't been paid. Classy..... not!

Am I upset? Of course not. I've been doing church music for 47 years and have seen and experienced much worse. I'm sure many of you have also.

But if there's any doubt about why we organists still need a strong national organization to advocate for us and for the art we practice and love, experiences like this should dispel that doubt. Even with limitations imposed by the 2017 FTC ruling, the AGO remains a powerful voice through its educational outreach, its many publications (not just TAO), and its advocacy for fair and equitable musician/employer relations.

Soli Deo gloria



Sub-Dean's Message, continued from page 1

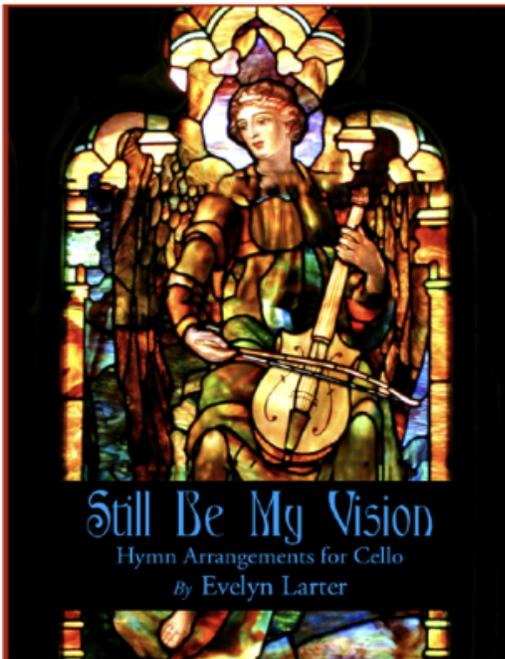
Many thanks to the talented and exceptional Cowboy Organist, Nathan Figlio, who hosted a tour and demonstration of the Kimball theatre organ (3/8 circa 1927) at the Broadway Theater of Pitman, a unique gem in our chapter's footprint. Those attending were treated to a demonstration of theater organ techniques and a tour of the pipes with a few brave souls invited to play. It was an inspirational event we are hoping to do again. Thank you, Nathan!

Coming up very soon is our annual social event on Friday, January 9th, hosted by Irina Nenartovich. Bring your best holiday recipes for this year promises to be a joyful event. Festivities are at 122 Heath Rd, Medford. See you there!

For those preparing for services this season, wishing you joy in the process. As organists, we hold the unique opportunity to layer music into the memories of so many. May your organs stay in tune and your consoles be warm and cozy. However you trim your table this holiday, I pray that song and merriment are yours in abundance.

Regards,

Will



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Still Be My Vision: Hymn Arrangements ~ for Cello

Hear The News The Angels Bring: Christmas ~ for Cello

A Rose E'er Blooming ~ for Violin

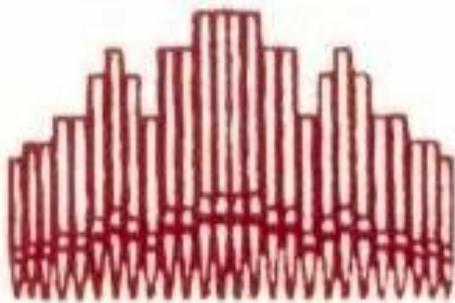
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— David Kim, Concertmaster of The Philadelphia Orchestra



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THREE LIVES AND MORE - by Anthony Falatico



A retrospective by long-time friend and member of SWJAGO, Anthony Falatico. It will be published in serial form monthly in Sforzando.

Part III: WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

It was here that fate stepped in for the second time.

My home church, Westminster Presbyterian in Utica, NY had been served by Westminster graduates for many years, and upon graduation that job became open and I was hired. This was a full-time position with six choirs, a wonderful pipe organ with two consoles, one in the balcony and the other a movable one in the sanctuary (there was also a small pipe organ in the chapel.) My title was Director of Music, and another person was organist. This was fine with me, since I loved to conduct, rather than conduct and play at the same time, which I've done so often. That organist was John L. Baldwin, Jr., a well-known musician and first-class organist who gave many recitals, and I was able to play the organ when John was away. This church subscribed to the then popular graded choir system, with children's choirs at all levels and a wonderful adult choir. I gave voice lessons and organ lessons, and a number of the choir singers studied with me. This choir was accustomed to singing the finest music, so we were a good match. The singers worked hard for me, and with beautiful accompaniments from John, the results were most satisfying. We sang the standard oratorio excerpts as anthems, pieces such as the Gounod "Sanctus" and Schubert's "The Omnipotence."

For our Concert Series the Oratorio Choir sang Handel's "The Messiah", Haydn's "Seven Last Words", Buxtehude's "Rejoice, Beloved Christians", and Clokey's "When the Christ Child Came." I was always pleased that some of our additional singers were my high school and college friends. A highlight of this series was a sacred voice recital by Janice Harsanyi, with yours truly at the organ, a wonderful experience, enjoyed by many. I also taught organ, beginning the students on the smaller chapel organ, then later progressing to the larger organ in the sanctuary. There was one shy and reserved woman who studied and did quite well. When it was time to transfer to the larger instrument, I began to explain the numerous new console features, and at one point, obviously overwhelmed, she interrupted me and said "Well, if you stuck a broomstick up my a**, I could sweep the floor, too."

Although Westminster Church was a full-time position, the church permitted me to teach two days a week at New Hartford Central School. There I taught music in Grades 1 and 2, and directed a choir of 60 junior high girls. I was also active in the Central New York Chapter of the American Guild of Organists, and performed for the chapter and for both the Etude and B Sharp Clubs, all of whom gave me scholarships when I was a student. Working at Westminster Presbyterian Church was most rewarding. The pastor, P. Arthur Brindisi was, like me, an Italian former Roman Catholic. We frequently joked with each other that we must keep the worship service Presbyterian: For him, no colored robes, and no more than two candles on the altar, and for me, no Latin anthems, no Ave Marias and no Gregorian Chant. Both my music teachers from high school, Christine Gardner and Louise Miner Hobaica were long-time members of Westminster Church. It was quite a switch with Louise singing in my choir, and I frequently used her as soloist, even though there were four or seven other capable sopranos. Christine was so proud of me, and often wrote notes to my mother, singing my praises.

Next month - Part IV: PHILADELPHIA AND GIRARD COLLEGE

CHAPTER EMERGENCY FUND

The SWJAGO Chapter sponsors a fund to provide short-term emergency aid to Chapter members who find themselves temporarily in need of assistance. No dues money will be used for this aid, but tax-deductible contributions will be welcome at any time. The chapter Executive Committee will award aid as the need arises. Any Chapter member may recommend a member in good standing who, for reasons such as illness or unemployment, deserves our help, by contacting the Dean. All cases of course will be confidential, any discussions in the Executive Committee will occur in executive (unrecorded) session. There are two ways to contribute to this cause: 1) when renewing your membership via iMIS, you may elect to contribute an additional amount to the Emergency Fund; you may also contribute via iMIS at any other time by using the "Make a Contribution" option from the iMIS menu; 2) you may also send your tax-deductible donation (as a check made out to SW Jersey Chapter AGO) to our Treasurer Chuck Gibson, marked for "Musicians' Emergency Fund." Mail to: 691 Willow Grove Road, Monroeville, NJ 08343-4529.

Our chapter's scholarship program exists to serve area congregations by increasing the number of capable organists and to insure the continuation of the classical church music profession. (Application forms on pages 8 & 9.)

As a reminder, the program is structured as 14 one-hour lessons scheduled at the mutual convenience of the instructor and student, ideally on the organ where the student practices, or at least one a month where the student practices. The lessons and public jury *must take place within 4 months*. The practice instrument must have a minimum of two 61-note keyboards and a concave, radiating 32-note pedalboard, with all keys functioning. The student must have legs long enough to reach the pedalboard and have intermediate piano skills (meaning and understanding of meter signatures, chords, key signatures, and the ability to read G and F clefs).

The audition for this program is on piano. Applicants will be asked to prepare and perform a simple Bach keyboard work, also one movement of a sonata by Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, Clementi, or Kuhnau, and also one hymn written in traditional four-part harmony. The applicant will be asked to sight-read two short pieces; one will be in common meter.

At the conclusion of the 14 one hour lessons, a jury is required with the teacher and at least two additional chapter members present. The jury will consist of the following:

Two of these three chorales: *Ein feste Burg, Lobe den Herren, Herzlich tut mir verlangen*

A hymn will be sight-read, pedaling not required

The tune *Old Hundredth* in any of its traditional forms, copy provided to the committee

One pedal alone passage of a chorale, minimum 15 measures

A trio chorale

A prelude or fugue from the collection [Eight Little Preludes and Fugues](#)

The instructor is appointed by the local chapter. Accepted applicants are responsible for securing a pair of Organmaster shoes and required music. Instruction may happen any time provided all activities are completed within four months. Candidates of all ages who meet the above criteria are welcome. Please contact Lawrence De Pasquale at ldorg59@yahoo.com with questions and to express interest.

Application

DATE _____

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP _____

PHONE _____ BEST TIME TO CALL _____

EMAIL ADDRESS _____

Your Place of Practice

NAME OF PRACTICE LOCATION (Church, Temple, etc.) _____

STREET ADDRESS _____

CITY, STATE _____

TYPE AND BUILDER OF ORGAN (if known) _____

Your Keyboard Background

YEARS OF PIANO STUDY _____

LIST ANY PREVIOUS CLASSICAL ORGAN STUDY _____

Your Goals and Musical Background

Please include on a separate sheet a brief statement of your goals and objectives for organ study and an outline of your musical background and experience.

Purpose

The organ scholarship awarded by the AGO is necessary in order:

1. To serve the congregations by increasing the roster of capable organists.
2. To foster an appreciation for sacred classical organ repertoire.
3. To encourage more musicians to meet the standards and ideals of the American Guild of Organists.
4. To ensure the continuation of the church music profession.

History

In the 1980's a decline in the number of qualified organists and in the number of new organ students became a concern for churches and Guild chapters across the country.

Inspired by an innovative "floating organ academy" begun in South Dakota and described in an article in *The American Organist*, AGO member Helen Taylor founded the Southwest Jersey Organ Scholarship program in 1988 as a way to help solve this problem. The first committee members were Marilyn Rabbai, Barbara Knight, Joyce Ann Routon, and Larry DePasquale.

Since its inception, more than two dozen organists have successfully completed the program. Many of these new organists have gone on to successful careers in area churches.

The Southwest Jersey Chapter is pleased to continue this tradition of service to its churches and to the art of organ playing.

AGO Code of Ethics

Approved by the AGO National Council January 27, 2017

Preamble/Preface

The American Guild of Organists encourages its members to embrace and practice the following values as core ideals that Guild members aspire to cultivate in their ethical and professional conduct.

Value 1. Responsible Conduct toward Those Whom We Serve (including but not limited to clergy, supervisors, congregants, choir members, students, children, et al.). Members shall:

- o Treat those whom they serve in a professional manner, with dignity, compassion, civility, and respect.
- o Show respect to those whom they serve, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, age, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status, socio-economic status, disability, or medical condition.
- o Avoid any sort of abusive behavior, whether verbal, physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, or other.
- o Refrain from disclosing confidential or sensitive information about others obtained in the course of professional service, unless disclosure serves a compelling professional purpose or is required by law.

Value 2. Respect for Our Professional Colleagues. Members shall:

- o Maintain a professional attitude and act with integrity in relationships with colleagues, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, age, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status, socio-economic status, disability, or medical condition.
- o Respect the reputation and diversity of colleagues.

Value 3. Integrity in Our Professional Work. Members shall:

- o Honor and abide by the conditions and requirements of the job descriptions and work agreements to which they have knowingly agreed, so long as those provisions are in accord with all applicable federal, state and local laws.
- o Follow, as applicable, the principles of professional conduct that are expressed in the AGO Code of Professional Standards.
- o For the benefit of future generations of musicians and to preserve the instruments of our profession, use care to ensure that when playing an instrument, the institution's expected practices and requirements for the care of the instrument and its venue are met.

Organ Scholarship

for beginning students



presented by

The Southwest Jersey Chapter

of

The American Guild of Organists

The Scholarship

The Organ Scholarship of the Southwest Jersey Chapter of the American Guild of Organists provides a term of 14 introductory organ lessons for qualified persons wishing to begin study of the organ.

Eligibility

All applicants must possess the following qualifications:

- ◆ Must reside in the Southwest Jersey geographical area.
- ◆ Must have received little or no previous formal classical organ training.
- ◆ Legs must be long enough to reach the pedalboard.
- ◆ At least an intermediate piano proficiency (see *audition requirements below*).
- ◆ Basic knowledge of theory, including G and F clefs, key signatures, meter signatures, and chords.
- ◆ Must have access to an organ on which to practice. The organ console must either 1) conform to AGO standards having at least two 61-note manuals and a full pedalboard, or 2) conform to historical mechanical action standards.
- ◆ Must commit to completing 14 lessons and the jury within four to six months.

Inquiries

Address questions or inquiries to:

Vernon Williams
email: vwilliams@trinitymoorestown.org
phone: 856-235-0811

Application Procedure

Send completed applications to:

Vernon Williams
Trinity Episcopal Church
207 West Main Street
Moorestown, NJ 08057

In addition to the application form, applicants are asked to include on a separate sheet a brief statement of their goals and objectives for study and a summary of their musical background and experience.

The Audition

The audition is scheduled once the application has been received... Auditions will be played on the piano. No memorization is required.

Prepared pieces

- ◆ Any Bach Two-Part Invention or one selection from the *Anna Magdalena Notebook*
- ◆ One movement from a sonatina by Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, Clementi, or Kuhnau
- ◆ One hymn written in traditional four-part harmony

Sight-reading

- ◆ Two short pieces: one in common time, the other in another meter

The Lessons

Lessons are arranged at the mutual convenience of the teacher and student, ideally on the organ where the student practices. In any event, at least one lesson per month will take place on the organ where the student practices.

Students will learn how to practice and will become acquainted with registration, articulation, and pedaling, through the practice and preparation of hymns, teaching pieces, and repertoire.

Students will be required to have appropriate shoes (as recommended by their teacher) before the second lesson.

Students will provide at their expense the necessary hymnal and books required by the teacher. (Generally hymnals may be borrowed from the student's church.) Photocopied music is illegal, contrary to the Guild's *Code of Ethics*, and may not be used.

The Jury

At the conclusion of the 14 weeks of study, the student will be required to play before a jury:

- ◆ Two of the following four-part hymns (at least one of the hymns must be played with pedal):

<i>Nicaea</i>	<i>Lobe den Herren</i>
<i>Ein feste Burg</i>	<i>Olivet</i>
<i>Hymn to Joy</i>	
<i>New Britain (Amazing Grace)</i>	
<i>Herzlich tut mich verlangen</i>	
<i>(Passion Chorale)</i>	
- ◆ The Doxology (*Old Hundredth*) in any of the standard forms
- ◆ One pedal-alone passage of a Bach chorale or from a method book, at least 16 measures long
- ◆ A trio exercise or a chorale trio
- ◆ A prelude or fugue from Bach's *Eight Little Preludes and Fugues*

Southwest Jersey Chapter



American Guild of Organists

Positions Available/Substitute List - by Peter Homon

If you are available to substitute and would like to be included on this list, please contact Peter Homon, our Referral/Position Coordinator.

Please forward or refer any items concerning positions available or substitute needs to Peter at lapajar@yahoo.com or call 856-952-5132.

Positions Available:

St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, Laurel Springs - permanent or interim O/D, Adult Choir, 10 a.m. service. Contact Pastor Dasol Kang at 917-886-7254 or dasolkang@sppres.org. (12/24)

St. James Lutheran Church, Pitman – o/p, 9:30 service, Thursday evening, rehearsal, pipe instrument. Complete job description is available upon request. Secretary@saintjamespitman.com (10/25)

These musicians are available on Sundays and also for weddings and funerals other days:

Mary Johnson 856-332-8869 (Cherry Hill) mebay47@yahoo.com

Irina Nenartovich 856-321-3465 (Medford) irinanenartovich@gmail.com (after 10:30AM on Sundays)

Bob Scara 609-386-7268 (Burlington) rvscara@aol.com, Roman Catholic services only

These substitutes are available for weddings and funerals or Saturday work only:

Evelyn Larter, CAGO 856-358-1112 (Elmer) ERLarter@juno.com

Marilyn Rabbai, CAGO 856-589-3901 (Pitman) mwrabbai@verizon.net

Matthew Smith, 630-800-8967 (Philadelphia) matt.smith2011@att.net

AGO Certified Members

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Miriam Bisbing, SPC

Mark Cole, SPC

Charlene Cranmer, AAGO, CAGO, SPC

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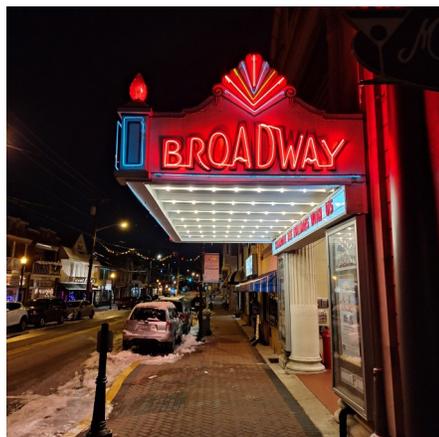
Nichols, Victoria

Obarski, Stephen

Powell, Robert "Will"

Rodgers, Glenn

Scara, Robert



Nathan Figlio looks on as Peter Homon plays the organ at the Broadway Theater in Pitman.

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EDITOR & PUBLISHER: Glenn L. Rodgers, gcrodgers@aol.com

REFERRAL & POSITIONS AVAILABLE COORDINATOR: Peter Homon, lapajar@yahoo.com, (856)952-5132

PROFESSIONAL CONCERNS COORDINATOR: David Rhody, drhody1@comcast.net; (856)795-6735

CHAPTER OFFICERS

DEAN: Jonathan Stark, jonstark47@gmail.com

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gcrodgers@aol.com

