



Sforzando



VOLUME 15, ISSUE 7

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MARCH 2026

Southwest Jersey Chapter American Guild of Organists

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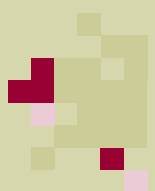
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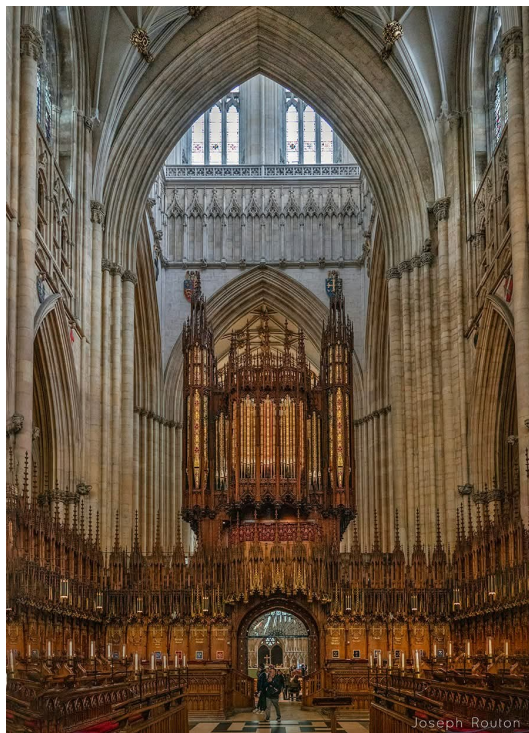
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Yorkminster

photo by Joseph Routon

Dean's Message



The Work of Our Chapter Program Committee

Last month I wrote about the demographic challenges faced by the AGO in general and also specifically our chapter, and how these impact the necessary work an AGO chapter does in order to function. I divided that work into three major categories, and plan to elaborate on each in the March, April and May issues. This month it is the work of the Program Committee.

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Executive Committee Meeting

Our next Executive Committee meeting will be Monday, March 16, 7:30 -9:00pm. At that time we will receive the report of the 2026 Nominating Committee and also receive the Program Committee's proposal for our Fall 2026 programming.

Any Chapter member can attend an Executive Committee meeting, although only Executive Committee members can vote.

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Dean's Message -- by Jonathan Stark

The Mission the AGO seeks to achieve is “to foster a thriving community of musicians who share their knowledge and inspire passion for the organ”. The AGO Mission Statement is buttressed by three underlying statements of purpose:

- To advance the cause of organ and choral music, to increase their contributions to aesthetic and religious experiences, and to promote their understanding, appreciation, and enjoyment.
- To improve the proficiency of organists and choral conductors. To evaluate, by examination, attainments in organ playing, choral techniques, conducting, and the theory and general knowledge of music, and to grant certificates to those who pass such examinations at specified levels of attainment.
- To provide members with opportunities to meet for discussion of professional topics, and to pursue such other activities as contribute to the fulfillment of the purposes of the Guild.

The organizational structure through which the AGO pursues this mission is primarily the approximately 250 local chapters. Unlike some national organizations, the AGO does not specify or mandate the activities local chapters should do in order to achieve this mission. It is up to chapters to plan and execute programs that support the AGO's mission and align with its purposes. Chapters therefore have extraordinary freedom to apply thought, creativity, and innovation in devising programs.

Programs can be primarily educational in nature, or social, or activities that combine social, educational, inspirational and entertaining aspects. (Dare I say chapter programs could even be fun?) The AGO publishes a Chapter Management Handbook. It is primarily intended for folks in chapter leadership positions, but anyone can download it from the Document Center tab of www.agohq.org. It has a section on chapter programming. This section is not prescriptive, it's just meant as a resource. Here are some of the program formats it suggests: *recital, lecture-recital, lecture-demonstration, Guild service, choir festival, hymn festival, master class, workshop (variety of possible topics is almost endless), panel discussion, mock wedding, audiovisual presentation (aka movie night), repertoire reading session, repertoire sharing session, organ crawl, field trip (organ shop or other location), competition, recognition of group or individual, AGO certification preparation. To this list I'll add picnic, dessert social, member-clergy dinner, pedals, pipes & pizza. I'm sure you can extend the list even further with little effort.*

In addition to supporting the AGO's mission, and demonstrating thought and creativity, programs must be meaningful to the membership of the chapter. From the Chapter Management Handbook: “*The first step is to consult your members for their ideas and needs. Additional inspiration can be found in the "Chapter News" section of THE AMERICAN ORGANIST, where other chapters share what they have done. Program committees should balance the types and topics of programs, so that an interesting blend of information, education, and entertainment satisfies the needs of your members and your community. Chapters should recognize the diversity of AGO membership and the community when scheduling recitalists and designing programs.*” To this I would add that our chapter is geographically associated with the counties of Burlington, Camden, Gloucester, Salem, and Cumberland. It is desirable that at least one program venue be situated in each county each year.

Selecting interesting program concepts is only the first part of the battle. Programs must then be planned. Initial concepts for programs have to be fleshed out. Venues have to be located. Costs have

.....continued on page 3

Dean's Message, continued from page 2

to be identified, and vetted against available budgets. Participants from within the chapter, or if appropriate, experts from without have to be identified and scheduled. Materials such as handouts or programs must be printed. All of this planning falls within the purview of our chapter's Program Committee. Once a program plan is fleshed out, it must be reviewed and approved by the chapter Executive Committee. Hopefully, this planning and approval cycle occurs sufficiently in advance that adequate communication and publicity, both within the chapter, and when appropriate, outside the chapter can occur.

In addition to all this, the Program Committee has the responsibility to ensure the program runs smoothly on the actual day it occurs, and that the venue is returned to its owners in immaculate condition. Does this all sound like a significant quantity of work? It is. However, it is vitally important and rewarding work. Our chapter's Program Committee, led by SubDean Will Powell, currently consists of five at-large members. Does that seem like enough folks to shoulder the burden of this work? Perhaps not.

I must now share a concern: attendance at our chapter's programs this year has been low, even taking the reduced size of our chapter into account. Chapter programs are both critical to the life of our chapter, and require significant effort to put on. Without programs and without chapter members attending programs, the mission and purposes of the AGO cannot be achieved. Leadership of the chapter needs to understand *why*. Are the program concepts not interesting? Are the locations and times inconvenient? Are members simply too busy with other things? How can we improve? I request *everyone* in this chapter, but especially those of you who perhaps have attended only one chapter meeting in the last 12 months, or none, to please reach out to chapter leadership and give us feedback.

And also, if you have concrete suggestions for improving our programming, please consider joining the Program Committee. There's certainly room for more folks on the Committee, and *many hands make light the work*.

Soli Deo gloria.

**The mission of the American Guild of Organists is to foster
a thriving community of musicians who share their
knowledge and inspire passion for the organ.**

Upcoming Webinar

**Pedagogy Series
The Neuroscience of Memory
Monday, March 10
7 p.m. ET / 4 p.m. PT**

This presentation by Dr. Molly Gebrian, the first in our online Pedagogy Series, will approach the challenge of memorizing music from the perspective of neuroscience, strategies for memorization, and specifically how musicians can improve their comfort with and mastery of performing from memory.



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A delightful program of music by Debussy
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Sanctuary accessible to those with disabilities

**Deerfield Presbyterian Church,
530 Old Deerfield Pike, Deerfield Street, New Jersey 08313**

Photo Gallery



Scenes of Egypt



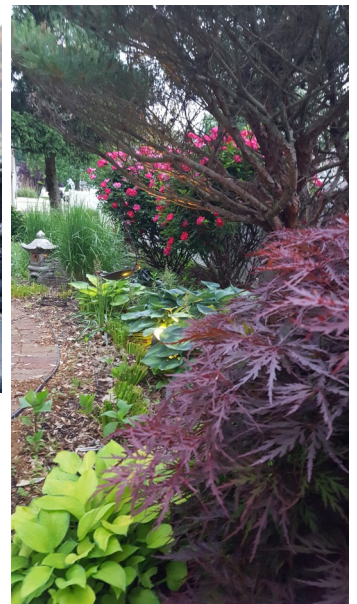
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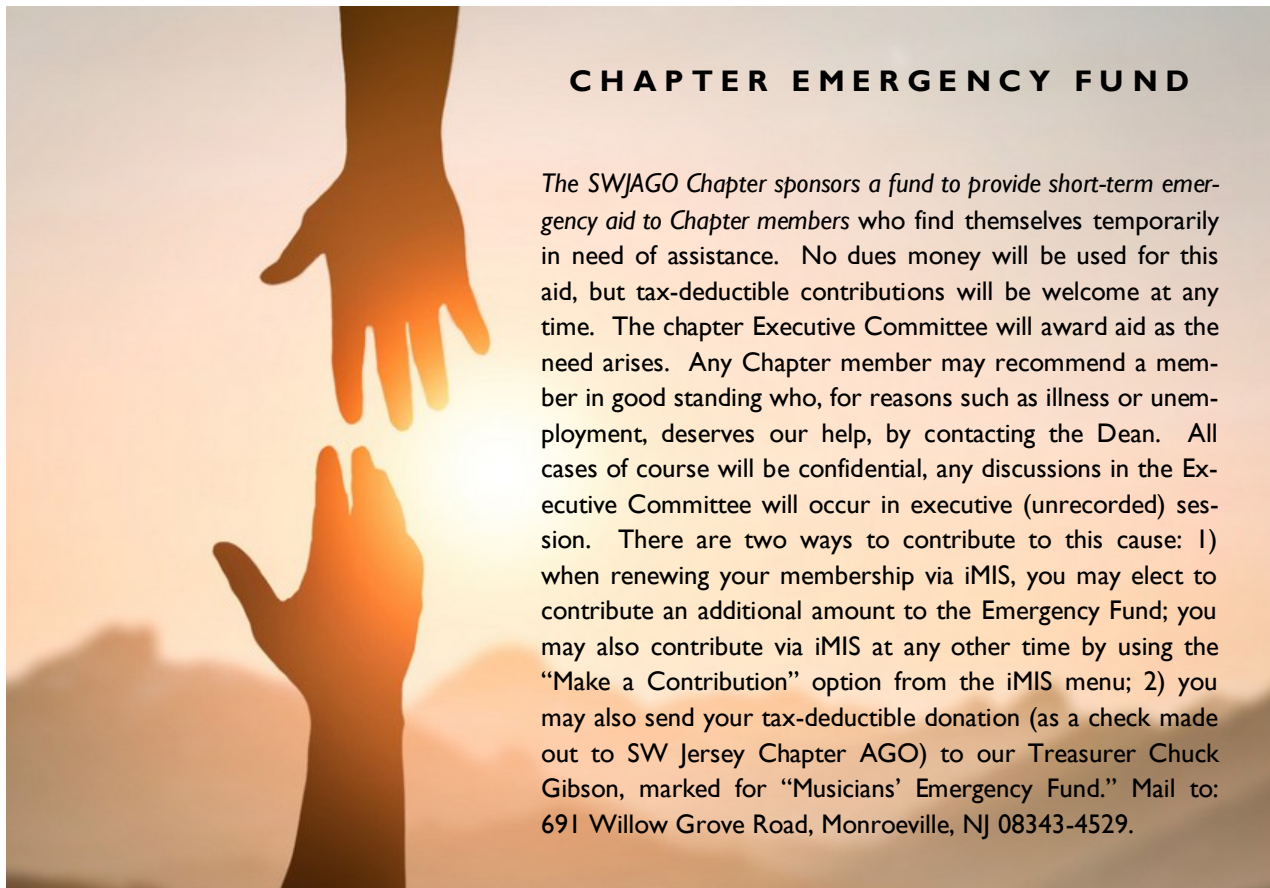
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CHAPTER EMERGENCY FUND

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 13 & 14)

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.

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) mebayj47@yahoo.com

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

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

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Ethel H. Geist, CAGO

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Cranmer, Charlene

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Doan, David

Gardener, Robert

Gassaway, Gail

Hatzold, Renee

Johnson, Mary & Keith

Joshi, Layla

Kolojechick, Leonard

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Powell, Robert "Will"

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Cathedral Organ Benefit Concert Series

Sunday, March 15, 2026 | 3:00 PM
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Maria Nieva - Pianist

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THREE LIVES AND MORE - by Anthony Falatico



This is the fifth and final chapter in the retrospective by long-time chapter member and friend, Anthony Falatico. At the end is a YouTube link to performances of his singing, playing the organ, and conducting the Girard Choir.

THE NEW JERSEY YEARS

Dean, my life partner, and I moved to New Jersey in 1993 and my first post across the river was as O/D of Collingswood Presbyterian Church. I soon joined the SWJersey Chapter of The American Guild of Organists and became an active member, serving on many committees and eventually becoming dean of the chapter. I conducted and participated in numerous workshops and frequently played or sang on Members' Recitals. For many years I did interim and substitute work in local churches as organist/director, and finally took a post as organist of Ascension Episcopal Church in Gloucester City for seven years until my retirement in 2009. I returned to interim and substitute work until 2015.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention the two last vocal coaches I worked with: Jon Spong and Gary Magby, superb musicians who taught me a great deal. Both men were excellent singers, outstanding accompanists with a vast knowledge of vocal technique and repertoire. Both Jon and Gary had taught in New York City before relocating to Philadelphia, with Jon coaching at The Academy of Vocal Arts and Gary at The University of the Arts. Jon was also a composer who wrote mainly for the organ, and his compositions are well-known in the organ world. Jon and I became close personal friends and we corresponded after he returned to his home in Iowa until his passing in 2006.

THE LAST ACT

Some of my best and most rewarding singing of my later years were my solos at Logan Memorial Presbyterian Church in Audubon NJ for ten years before I stopped singing in 2015. These solos were never recorded as I always wanted my church singing to be a part of worship, and recording them would have been a distraction to the service.

Because of health issues I am no longer able to sing or play the organ, so my days of performing are over. I have tried to play the stoic and admit that it doesn't matter, that having performed for about 70 years should be enough, but that hasn't worked. I wish that I could sing and play again and I miss doing it. There is so much music that I never performed, and there is so much music that I love and would like to perform again, but that is not meant to be.

Being hyperacoustic, I cannot tolerate any loud sounds and cannot attend concerts or recitals. My only connection to music is through recordings that I have and greatly treasure. I am fortunate, though, to have recordings of the many recitals that I have sung, allowing for some pleasant memories.

In addition to sharing my music through performing, it has been a tremendous joy to have taught for many years. Teaching is another way of sharing one's knowledge and experience, and I still hear from former students that I taught fifty and sixty years ago. In years past I taught piano, organ, and voice, but realized that I couldn't do my best work in all these areas, so I stopped teaching piano, and then organ, though I occasionally did teach organ again later in life. To keep refining my teaching skills I needed to concentrate on one area, and that was singing, my greatest love.

There is one important aspect of teaching that I wish I had learned many years ago: There are some students who are "teacher-proof." They study for many years, going from teacher to teacher, yet they never learn anything. I have heard people who have been performing for years, who have studied with some of the best teachers, and yet they do not make music. Beethoven once told a student that he would need to practice for many years before he realized that he had no talent!

Once I realized that I was not happy teaching music full-time, I ventured into other fields and always ended up teaching whatever I was doing: bartending, sewing and tailoring, Italian study, home health care, even Weight Watchers! As the old saying goes: "once a teacher, always a teacher", and all this juxtaposed with music made for a most rewarding life!

....continued on next page

THREE LIVES AND MORE, continued from previous page

Here is my complete playlist of videos on YouTube, with samplings of my singing, organ playing, and directing my Girard Choir. If you're wondering why there are so many, it's because I've explored unusual repertoire which I hope will interest young musicians.

Please keep in mind that all these pieces were taken from performances and many were recorded at low volume to avoid distortion, and will need to be played at a higher level than usual.

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8H8GZEaU01UOIXmC-H1IrdxkxN_sRXV

[When I Have Sung My Songs - Charles](#)

Sforzando is the official publication of the Southwest Jersey Chapter of the American Guild of Organists. The AGO is a multi-denominational, non-profit organization chartered by the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York in 1896.

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Sforzando is published on the 1st of the month September through June.

**Please submit all material to be included in the publication by the
25th of the preceding month.**



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):
 - Nicaea* *Lobe den Herren*
 - Ein feste Burg* *Olivet*
 - Hymn to Joy*
 - New Britain (Amazing Grace)*
 - Herzlich tut mich verlangen*
(*Passion Chorale*)
- ◆ 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