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2006-2007

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# THE CIPHER

The Monthly Newsletter of the Grand Rapids Chapter  
American Guild of Organists

January 2007

## From the Dean

A very Happy New Year to you and your kin. I hope everyone had time during the busy season of concerts and services to spend good and plentiful hours with family and friends. There are several news items for GRAGO members to be happy about this January, and a few events to make us sad. The sad news comes first, so that we can end this letter on a cheery note.

ITEM 1 – Ron Krebs has sold his house (good news) and will be moving to Kansas this month (bad news). We will miss you, Ron. Thank you for all you did for the people of Grand Rapids at the two churches you served, and for your gifts to us, as a colleague, an active AGO member, and as our Convention Chairman. Please keep your promise to stay in touch.

ITEM 2 – Elaine Witt and her husband have sold their house (good news) and will be moving to Minneapolis this month (bad news). Elaine, we will miss your smile and congeniality as a GRAGO member, and your quiet skill and efficiency in the many committee meetings you faithfully attended. Thank you, and God bless you both.

ITEM 3 – Jonathan Tuuk has agreed to take Ron's place on the Executive Committee. This was very welcome news for all nine of the members. Jonathan is a longtime member of GRAGO and brings not only his skill and experience as a performer, but also his knowledge of the local and national organ scene.

ITEM 4 - Helen Hawley has agreed to take Elaine's place on the Executive Committee. Helen is the new Minister of Music at Westminster Presbyterian Church, and has moved here from Kansas. (Kansas giveth, and Kansas taketh away.) We look forward to the new ideas of a new member, new to Michigan, but with lots of experience.

ITEM 5 – As of the last count we have eighty-five members in our chapter. This is perhaps a record. If not, there will be one soon as we all work on bringing more organists and organ enthusiasts into our organization. 100 members is our goal for 2007.



Howard Slenk

## January Meeting

Our January meeting will be Monday night, January 15, at First Methodist Church on Fulton Street in downtown Grand Rapids where Mark Loring will be our host. Punch will be served at 6:30 in the Fellowship Hall, where we will also have dinner at 7:00 before moving to the chancel for the program at 8:00. A member of the Executive Committee will be calling you on January 8 or 9 to take your dinner reservation. If for some reason you are not called, please call in your reservation to Errol Shewman on Wednesday, January 10. His phone number is 616-456-9232. Alternately, you may email your reservation to Errol here: [EShewman@hotmail.com](mailto:EShewman@hotmail.com)



**Janette Fishell** will be our guest and clinician, presenting a workshop entitled “The Variety of Organ Touch.” This program will be similar to her presentation in 2004 at the National AGO Convention in Los Angeles. The excellence of her presentation there is one of the reasons we tried for such a long time to bring her to Grand Rapids.

Janette Fishell is Distinguished Professor of Music at East Carolina University where she heads the Organ Performance and Sacred Music degree programs and is head of the Keyboard Department. She holds degrees in organ performance from Indiana University and Northwestern University. Named “Young Organist of the Year” by Keyboard Arts, Inc. while still an undergraduate. She has developed a career as a recitalist and teacher of international standing. She has performed in many of the world’s greatest concert venues and has been a featured recitalist and lecturer at five national conventions of the AGO. Come and bring a friend!

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## 2007 AGO/Quimby Regional Competition for Young Organists

The Grand Rapids Chapter is pleased to offer the AGO/Quimby organ playing competition for young organists. The competition is made possible by a generous grant from Michael Quimby, president of Quimby Pipe Organs, Inc. The purpose of the competition is to encourage younger organists to pursue excellence, to gain performance experience, and to receive recognition for their efforts. Our Grand Rapids Chapter has added a March 19, 2007 event to our schedule to listen to what we hope will be several area participants in this national competition. Here are the details:

- Entrants must be under 23 years of age as of August 1, 2007.
- Competitors must compete only in the AGO region of their school or home. Membership in the AGO is not required.
- The Grand Rapids Chapter Competition will be held at Park Congregational Church, 10 East Park Place NE in downtown Grand Rapids on Monday evening, March 19, 2007.
- Official registration form and rules were published in the April 2006 issue of *The American Organist* (p. 108). They may also be downloaded at [www.agohq.org](http://www.agohq.org) under the Competitions section. There is a \$25 registration fee, and competitor's application must be postmarked no later than January 16, 2007.
- The winner from our chapter will then perform at the Regional Competition in Columbus, Ohio next summer.
- The winner of the Region V competition will be invited to perform, along with the winners of the other regional competitions, at the National Convention in Minneapolis in 2008.
- To register, or for additional information, please contact Jim Metzler, Organist & Director of Music, Park Congregational Church, 10 East Park Place NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49503. Tel: 616.459.3203, ext. 29. email: [jmetzler@parkchurchgr.org](mailto:jmetzler@parkchurchgr.org)
- Please start thinking now about how to encourage young organists in our area to register! Our chapter will pay for the registration fee of all those who enter with a recommendation from their organ teacher, and will also pay \$500 to the winner of our local competition. We will also provide a second prize of \$200 and an Audience Prize of \$100. There will be additional opportunities to perform, for example, at a Bach Festival event on April 15, 2007.

## Upcoming Meetings for 2007

For pictures and comments on our earlier meetings,

see <http://www.grago.org/chapter/programs.shtml>

- Monday, February 19** David Cherwien at LaGrave Avenue Christian Reformed Church (Larry Visser, host)
- Monday, March 19** AGO/Quimby Regional Competition for Young Organists at Park Congregational Church (Jim Metzler, host)
- Monday, April 16** Paul Jacobs at Trinity Lutheran Church, in a joint concert with the St. Cecilia Bach Chorale (co-sponsored by the Grand Rapids Bach Festival) (Elizabeth Claar, host)

## Other Events of Interest for January

**Sunday, January 7, 8:00 p.m.** The Calvin Alumni Choir, led by guest conductor Duane Davis, at the Calvin Fine Arts Center Auditorium, singing music by composers from Palestrina to Bobby McFerrin. Tickets (\$12/adult, \$5/student) available from the [Calvin Box Office](#) at 616-526-6282.

**Sunday, January 14, 8:00**, Janette Fishell in recital at St. Mark's Episcopal Church, downtown Grand Rapids. Free and open to the public.

**Thursday (repeated Friday), January 25 (and 26), 7:30 p.m.**, a hymn festival with John Ferguson at the organ and the Greenville (Illinois) College Choir, directed by Jeff Wilson, at the Calvin College Chapel. Free. This event is part of the January 25-27, Symposium on Worship at Calvin College and Seminary (see [www.calvin.edu/worship/sympos](http://www.calvin.edu/worship/sympos)). Organ presenters this year are **John Ferguson** from St. Olaf College, and **Mark Thallander** ([www.markthallander.com](http://www.markthallander.com)) from Southern California.

**Tuesday, January 30, 7:30 p.m.**, Huw Lewis in recital at Hope College Dimnent Memorial Chapel, 277 College Ave. in Holland, Michigan.

A free recital to celebrate the restoration of their Skinner organ. Huw Lewis is professor of organ at Hope College and a highly respected concert artist. The Skinner organ is a rare example of the original work done by Ernest M. Skinner when he was working at the height of his craft.

Built in 1928 and installed in 1929, the organ has performed well for 75 years, but needed to be restored to ensure that it could last for future generations.

The restoration project, overseen by A. Thompson-Allen Company, took over two years. The concert is the first in a series of five concerts celebrating the restoration.

