



THE CIPHER

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

December 2010

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Grand Rapids AGO
2009-2010

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From the Dean

Every once in awhile, something stupendous hits you that brings you a new perspective. I am feeling this the day after hearing the Chamber Choir of Grand Rapids' performance at the Basilica of St. Adalbert on the Saturday night after Thanksgiving. This program has been at this place and time for on the plus side of a quarter century. I should know, I was there most of that time in front of the choir.

Saturday night, Diane and I were in the audience and that vantage point was a revelation to me. For nearly as long as there has been a CCGR Christmas program, Jonathan Tuuk has been at the console. Thanksgiving weekend he performed his last Christmas Concert with the CCGR. While I have performed literally hundreds of pieces with him as my accompanist, I have to say I have a fresh appreciation for his accompanying after sitting in the audience and listening to this artist wield his brush over a palette of either vivid or pastel colors. Each brush stroke was exacting, and each color chosen was precise, painting picture after picture of beautiful sounds.

When we are on the bench, we may take accompanying for granted. Maybe we just hit general three and go for it. We should take the time to survey the scene and raise this art to its truest form. I think of the greats who influenced me who were masters this skill: Alexander Schreiner and Alexander McCurdy. Both of these artists worked incredibly hard to get just the right sound at just the right time. Sometimes that meant they were almost unnoticed, other times, it required that they be the center of the attraction.

Now that I have the luxury of not being seated at the organ bench, I gain inspiration from others. My hope for you this Christmas is that you are what you need to be when you need to be it!

Please remember to take time to enjoy your work on the bench at Christmas. Cause those who hear you to be fascinated, awed, and moved by your work. It is a huge job, usually under-paid and under-appreciated, but this is a critical moment in organ history. We need to be at our best. The toil and hours of time are all worth it if some one person is better for listening to us.

Have a wonderful Christmas and remember that we don't meet again until February 21, 2011.

Merry Christmas, Happy New Year, Happy Valentine's Day,

Larry Biser



Grand Rapids AGO Student of the Month



I am **Jared Langerak**, a first year medical student at MSU's College of Human Medicine here in Grand Rapids. I currently attend Southeast Protestant Reformed Church, where I also play for worship services, weddings, and other events. My wife Lisa and I were married this past summer and live in Wy-

oming, MI. Although spare time is difficult to come by, I do enjoy traveling, camping, and fishing when I get the chance.

I attended Calvin College for my undergraduate studies, graduating in May as a biology major. During my four years at Calvin I had the privilege of studying organ with Dr. Larry Visser. I also took lessons for several years prior to Calvin. I am thankful that I was able to study organ for a time; learning new pieces and serving my congregation as an organist continues to bring me joy. I look forward to getting to know the members of the Grand Rapids Chapter and remaining active with community organ events as I continue my studies in the coming years.

REGISTRATION OPEN FOR JANUARY SYMPOSIUM AT CALVIN

Calvin Symposium on Worship and the Arts, January 27-29, 2011

Registration is open for the annual worship symposium held at Calvin College. Several hundred people have already registered for this ecumenical conference that draws more than 1200 people from around the world. Registration is available for one, two, or all three days. As always, worship services may be attended without charge and without need for registration. For all information and to register, see www.calvin.edu/worship/sympos.

EVENTS OF INTEREST

Tuesdays at 12:15 pm at Park Congregational Church. Free half-hour recitals.

Lunch is also available at the church from 11:15-1:30 (Soup, Salad, and Dessert for \$5).

December 7 - East Grand Rapids High School Madrigals

December 14 - Caledonia High School Choralaires (TBC)

December 21 - Phyllis Miner, harp, and Carol McNally, organ

Friday/ Saturday, Dec. 3/4, at 8:00 p.m. *The Messiah*, The Calvin Oratorio Society, conducted by Joel Navarro, in the newly renovated Covenant Fine Arts Center, Calvin College. \$20, \$28, \$22 (student discount offered; for tickets call the Calvin Box Office at 616-526-6282 / www.calvin.edu/boxoffice).



Sunday, December 5, at 3:00, repeated at 6:00 p.m. Lessons and Carols at LaGrave Ave. Christian Reformed Church, with the Calvin Women's Chorale and Campus Choir, conducted by Pearl Shangkuan and Joel Navarro. Free.

Sunday, December 5, at 4 p.m. BachFest Christmas Stetson Chapel at Kalamazoo College. Bach Festival Chorus, Western Brass Quintet, organist Eric Strand. Tickets \$22 center/balcony, \$15 right/left, \$5 students. Call (269) 337-7407 for tickets.



Monday, December 6, 8:00 PM *The Messiah*, A Fall Arts Celebration Holiday Gift - in honor of the 50th anniversary year of Grand Valley State University. Open to the public with free admission, at Fountain Street Church, 24 Fountain Street NE, Grand Rapids.

**Sunday, December 12
Gloria John Rutter May-
flower Congregational
Church .**

The splendor of Brass and Voices will be heard in John Rutter's Cantata "Gloria" on Sunday, December 12 at the 10:30 a.m. worship service. This work will feature the Grand Rapids Symphony Brass and Percussion Ensemble with the Mayflower Chancel Choir.



**Friday/Saturday, December 17/18, 7:00 3 p.m.,
Lessons and Carols with the Grand Rapids Choir of
Men and Boys, Scott Bosscher, director, at the Ca-
thedral of St. Andrew, 265 Sheldon SE.**



**Saturday, December 18, 7:00 p.m. Sapphire Brass
Immanuel Lutheran Church, 2 Michigan St. N.E.**

This Christmas concert will be filled with traditional favorites and an organ/brass arrangement of Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus." A free will donation will be received. Free parking is available in the lot east of the church or across the street in the parking garage. We hope you will join us for an enjoyable evening of fine brass music! For more information you may contact the church at 616-454-3655.



Sunday, December 19, 7:00 p.m. Sapphire Brass. Trinity Lutheran Church, 1379 Harding Street, Conklin This Carol and Candlelight Service will include many familiar carols sung by all in attendance and seasonal Bible readings. The Sapphire Brass will enhance the carol singing and will also play pre-service music beginning at 6:45 p.m. A free will donation will be received. We hope you will join us for this service, in preparation for the coming of Jesus! For more information, you may contact the church at 616- 899-2167.

Sunday, December 19, at 3 p.m., The North American Choral Company in concert at Milwood United Methodist, Kalamazoo. Youthful Grand Rapids singers under conductor Mark Jackson will bring a Christmas concert sampler to Kalamazoo blending musical styles including traditional, pop, vocal jazz, musical theater, gospel, and contemporary. Free will offering.

Monday, December 20, at 7 p.m., Christmas Brass Concert, featuring the Majestic Brass, at the Cathedral of St. Andrew, 236 Sheldon SE.

Friday, December 24, 9:30 PM - 10:15 PM Annual Christmas Eve Carillon Concert on the Becker-Family Carillon Concert by University Carillonneur Julianne Vanden Wyngaard, at the Lacks International Plaza, Richard M. DeVos Center, Robert C. Pew Grand Rapids Campus.



New Year's Eve Concert, Friday, December 31, at 8:00 p.m., Elizabeth Claar and John Hamersma in concert at Central Reformed Church, 10 College Ave. NE in Grand Rapids. Free will offering.



Grand Rapids AGO Student of the Month

I have to admit, I am a student in a rather technical sense of the word. Perhaps, in the more European sense of the word, or, as in a “professional student”. Considering that I finished my graduate degree around the time that people were starting to worry about Y2K, and then worked for a number of years after that, the fact that I'm still applying for the student rate of AGO membership is certainly a turn of events I never expected or would have predicted, back in those final days of the twentieth century.



My name is **Rhonda Sider Edgington**, and I live with my family in Bremen, Germany. The impetus for our move here, over 6 years ago, was a Fulbright scholarship that I had been awarded, to study the organs and music of 17th century North Germany with Prof. Harald Vogel at the Hochschule fuer Kuenste (University of the Arts) here. We'd only planned on staying that one year, but found we enjoyed life here, and were just getting used to the language, forming friendships, and establishing ourselves after that year was over. My husband found work in his field (electrical engineering) at the University of Bremen, and we settled in for “one more year”. After a second year, somehow the reasons for returning to the States still didn't seem that compelling, so we found ourselves a more permanent apartment, I started a degree, and then we found out we were expecting a child. Now, I've recently finished that degree, and we have two children. I have worked as a church musician here, directing choirs and playing for services, and have had the opportunity to play concerts on many of the instruments that I came here to become acquainted with.

Before arriving in Bremen, I would have told you my favorite organ repertoire was from late 19th and early 20th century France, although I also enjoyed Bach quite a bit. After my first two years here, focusing almost exclusively on music in the time period from Scheidt to Bach, I don't know what I would have told you. I later expanded my focus back out again, not only to repertoire that I had previously loved, but also began playing much more new music, due to my lessons with Hans-Ola Ericsson, an avid proponent of new music. A recent trend in my concerts has been introducing German audiences to the organ music of 20th and 21st century America, often juxtaposing it with early North German repertoire. I think it's definitely true that the music I am focusing on right now is the music that I love the most in this moment. In my former life, I never would have imagined playing a concert of only music that pre-dates Bach, but then again, I had never experienced the instruments that helped that repertoire make sense to me – all through the wise eyes and ears of Prof. Vogel.

I could go on for pages about all I've learned in the last years (I love learning – it's that professional student thing), but I'll leave it at this. If you'd like to learn more about Prof. Vogel and me, you can read an interview I did with him that was recently published. http://horp.org/files/HORP_Report_1.2.pdf

If you'd like to read more about the instruments that I've gotten to know in the last years, I have lots of pictures and recordings on my website. <http://rhonda.edgington.info>

When we eventually return to the US, we've pondered settling for awhile in Western Michigan, where we have family. Thus, I wanted to join the Grand Rapids chapter now, to start reading about you all, what you do, and what the chapter is like. I look forward to meeting you one of these days in person. And yes, I do realized that now that my studies are finished, I'll need to start paying the regular AGO dues again.