

THE CIPHER

September, 2006

The Council of GR-AGO
2006-2007

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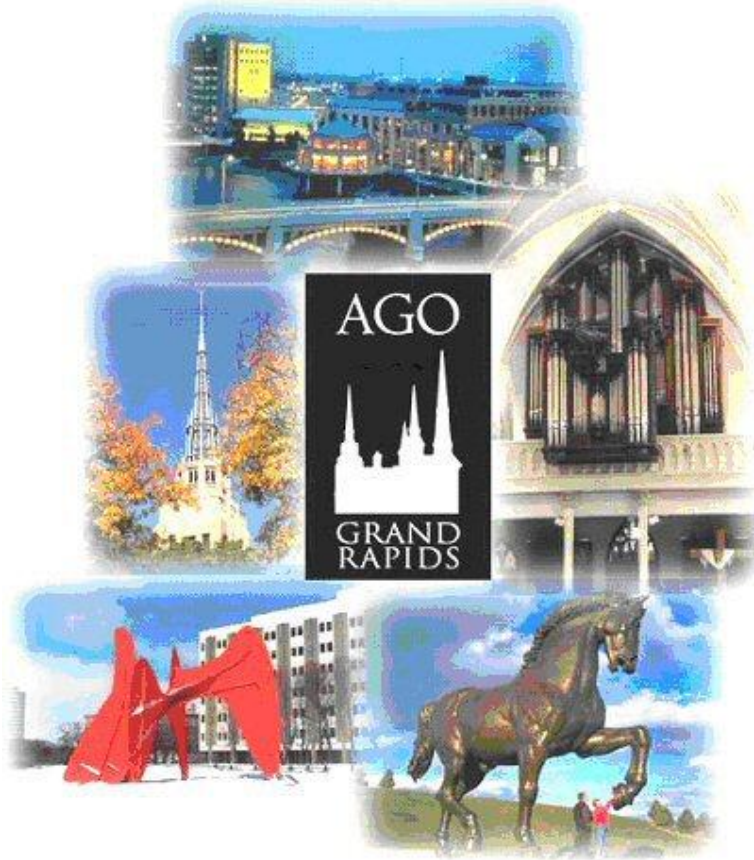
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*For information on our chapter activities,
organs in Grand Rapids, and more, visit*

www.grago.org



From the Dean

August is the cruelest month. Summer is almost over. Every time you had time to go to the beach, the water was too cold to go in swimming. You spent many hours pulling weeds, but they just kept coming up stronger than ever. You didn't do half of the summer projects you had planned, including that weekend getaway you were looking forward to. In a few weeks you will have to go back to teaching your classes, meeting your choirs, giving lessons, playing for several services each Sunday, and eventually even shoveling snow.

But there is something to look forward to. On the third Monday of each month our AGO chapter will meet. There will be good company, good food at low prices, and a world-class program, often featuring a shining star in the organ firmament. All this for ten dollars, plus the low annual registration fee, which you sent in with grateful and glowing heart several weeks ago.

On **Monday evening September 18**, we have our annual organ crawl. Bernard Moore is our host at 6:30 at the Central Seventh-Day Adventist Church on Sheldon Avenue, where we will enjoy punch, an appetizer, and an introduction (or re-acquaintance) with the vintage tracker organ there.

At 7:30 we move next door to LaGrave Avenue CRC, where Larry Visser is our host. Dinner is served here in the Fellowship Hall, followed by a mini-recital on the Austin organ.

At 8:30 we walk over to Westminster Presbyterian Church. The new Director of Music, Helen Hawley, is our host for dessert, and she will preside at the Compline service at nine o'clock. The Choral Scholars, a recently-formed professional choral group in Grand Rapids, will sing service music by Mendelssohn and Byrd.

Please phone in your reservations to Treasurer Errol Shewman (616-456-9232). The deadline is Wednesday, September 13. See you on Monday, September 18!

Howard Slenk, Dean

A few reminders:

1. If you have not yet paid your dues, please do so ASAP (contact Errol Shewman) so you can get your name in the directory to be distributed at our September meeting.
2. Also contact Errol if you would like to be added to the Substitute Organist List.
3. Invite new people to our meetings! This year, however, since we're expecting several new members, the council decided that we'll not be able to offer first-timers a free meal, but at \$10.00, it is still a bargain—for everyone!

Schedule Overview for 2006-2007

Monday, September 18	Progressive dinner and organ crawl at three downtown churches
Monday, October 16	Members Recital at Grand Valley State University in celebration of the Mozart Anniversary Year (Greg Crowell, host)
Monday, November 20	Michigan Composer of the year: Raymond H. Haan. A program of his organ and choral music at Cutlerville East Christian Reformed Church (Ray Haan, host)
Monday, January 15	Workshop on Articulation at the organ with Janette Fishell at First United Methodist Church (Mark Loring, host)
Monday, February 19	David Cherwien at LaGrave Avenue Christian Reformed Church (Larry Visser, 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)

AGO Music Calendar for September

Sunday, September 24, at 7:00 pm. Paul Jacobs will present a recital at First United Methodist Church, 227 East Fulton, in downtown Grand Rapids. Tickets are \$10, available at the door (call 451-2879 for more information). Be sure to promote this recital with bulletin announcements in your churches! This is the first of two appearances this year in Grand Rapids by Paul Jacobs, a young outstanding performer who even at his young age is chair of the organ department at the Juilliard School. He will also be performing during our AGO co-sponsored event with the Bach Festival next April.

Paul Jacobs has re-invigorated the American organ scene with his once-in-a-generation gifts as a performer. His fellow organists have been quick to applaud his phenomenal technique and memory, his charismatic stage presence, his huge repertoire spanning five centuries, and the sense of showmanship he brings to an instrument more usually associated with staid and reserved performances. Paul Jacobs is also creating new interest for the organ in the wider musical world, which has recognized him as a musician of rare stature. He is in great demand in the United States and has growing recognition as a performer of unusual merit in Europe, South America, Asia and Australia.

Friday, September 29, 8:00 p.m. The acclaimed French organist **Maurice Clerc** will present a recital at St. Lorenz Lutheran Church in Frankenmuth, Michigan. He currently serves as the Titular at the Cathedral of St. Benigne in Dijon, France, and also serves on the faculty of the National Conservatory in Dijon. He is noted for his skills as an interpreter of French literature and for his skills as an improviser (see www.mauriceclerc.com). The concert is free and open to the public. For more information, contact Scott Hyslop (SHyslop@stlorenz.org).

Reflections on the ChicAGO Convention

From Ron Krebs:

One of the most distinctive features of ChicAGO 2006 was the abundance of new works for organ. Two pieces were particular highlights for me. The first was presented in the opening concert on Sunday evening at Orchestra Hall. *Sleepy Hollow – a tone poem for organ and orchestra* was commissioned by the convention and written by Aaron David Miller. Washington Irving's story of the headless horseman came alive with ominous harmonies, complex rhythms and virtuosic dialog between organ and full orchestra. The other work was Naji Hakim's *Capriccio for Organ and Violin*. Brightly performed by organist Stefan Engels and Yuan-Qing Yu, Assistant Concertmaster of the CSO, this piece was an absolute delight, performed at Fourth Presbyterian Church on the Fourth of July.

From Howard Slenk:

There were many memorable events in the recent National AGO Convention in Chicago. We got to see the insides of several of those huge Catholic churches that one sees from the freeways and wonders about. Each was splendid visually inside and out and had marvelous acoustics for organ and choral music. The highlight for me as an organist was the incredible playing of Scott Montgomery, the winner of the AGO Organ Competition. His sensitive approach to a chorale prelude by Georg Boehm, and his rock solid, beautifully-phrased playing of Bach's *Fantasia and Fugue in g minor* bodes well for the future of organ playing in our country. As a choir director, I appreciated the high level of choral singing at the convention, especially by the choir of St. Clement's Catholic Church, and the Cathedral Singers under the direction of Richard Proulx. The highlight chorally for me, however, was the performance of William Albright's *Song of David* for choir, congregation, and organ, based on a poem of eighty-four short stanzas by Christopher Smart. The unusual juxtaposition of words and religious imagery in Smart's poetry, and the unusual hymn-tunes by Albright were at first off-putting and downright weird. Slowly one came under the spell of this mesmerizing language and sound. When one remembered that both men faced formidable psychological problems, the wedding of these words and these

sounds created a spiritual and aesthetic inspiration that was new to me. I saw several audience members brush away tears.

Looking Ahead to the Next Regional AGO Conventions

Congratulations to Ron Krebs, who was just appointed to the Guild's National Committee on Regional Conventions, undoubtedly because of his outstanding work on our Region V Convention in Grand Rapids in 2005. He will serve as the liaison for Regions I-III.

Plan now to attend next summer's regional in Columbus. Ron Krebs has had a number of conversations with Al Adcock, their Convention Coordinator, and he says they are right on target for another premier Region V celebration! Check out their developing website at www.agocolumbus.org.

And for your really advance planning, the Region V Convention returns to Michigan – Detroit in 2009!

Job Opportunity

Mamrelund Lutheran Church, in Kent City, is looking for a choir director in a part-time position, September, 2006 through May, 2007, requiring approximately 6-10 hours per week. Pay and mileage are negotiable. For more information, please contact: Leonard Dahlgren, pastor, at Mamrelund Lutheran Church, 4085 Lutheran Church Road, Kent City, Michigan 49330 (Phone: 616-887-8873; e-mail: mlc@wmis.net; fax: 616-887-8037).

We'd like your reaction to this first electronic edition of the *Cipher* (Members without email addresses will still have their copy mailed). We'll have a brief discussion at our September meeting. We're trying an email edition because:

- 1) It will save our chapter funds spent on postage and handling.
- 2) You can forward the *Cipher* to friends to let them know what our chapter is doing and invite them to join us.

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