



The Executive Committee of  
Grand Rapids AGO  
2006-2007

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# THE CIPHER

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

March 2007

## From the Dean

When I was fifteen years old and a beginning organ student, I lived near Hope College. When walking home from practicing the organ at Pillar Church, I often stopped at Dimnent Chapel to hear the college students practice. They didn't seem to mind being interrupted. They talked to me, showed me the huge Skinner organ, displayed an interest in my organ study, and even took me along to hear the great organists play recitals in Grand Rapids. Thanks to these kind people—several of whom later became colleagues and friends—I heard Claire Coci, Marilyn Mason, Alexander Schreiner, E Power Biggs, and Virgil Fox play recitals that held me spellbound. I still remember the repertoire, the large audiences, and the magical spell they cast over me..

When recalling these formative years, I ask myself if I would have shown the same consideration to a high school youngster who regularly interrupted my college practice hours, and if I would have allowed him to accompany me and my organ major friends to a concert in another city. I doubt it.

But had I not experienced the thrilling energy of Biggs playing the Little G Minor Fugue, or delighted in the romantic excesses of Virgil Fox's transcription of "Come Sweet Death," I might not have decided to keep taking organ lessons, or join the AGO as a high school student, or participate in the Grand Rapids chapter's competition for young organists, or study organ in college. I owe these Hope College alumni a deep expression of my gratitude.

In an effort to expose local young keyboardists to the pipe organ, and to encourage them to consider learning to play one, the American Guild of Organists offers the Pedals, Pipes, and Pizza program. This is a one-day event in which high school pianists are introduced to the organ. The GRAGO Executive Committee, with the co-operation of the Piano Teachers' Forum of Grand Rapids, has decided to mount a PPP day during our next season. Jonathan Tuuk, Director of Music at Mayflower Congregational Church, and Cynthia Bristol, Program Director of the Piano Teacher's Forum—both of whom are members of our EC—are planning this event.

There is also an event **this** season which will be of interest to young people. Our March meeting will feature the AGO's **Competition for Young Organists**. At eight o'clock p.m. at Park Congregational Church, young organists from western Michigan will compete for monetary prizes and a chance to compete in the Regional CYO at the AGO convention in Columbus, Ohio next June.

Please contribute your support to the future of our profession by attending this event. If you have a young organ student, bring him or her with you. If you have a high school piano student who might consider studying organ in the future, bring him or her with you. They will be our guests for a pizza supper at Park Church, and join in the voting for the \$100 audience prize.

And they just might decide to study organ.

Howard Slenk



## March Meeting

Our meeting on Monday, March 19 is the AGO/Quimby Regional Competition for Young Organists at Park Congregational Church located at 10 Park Avenue downtown Grand Rapids.

There are three contestants. The winner of the chapter competition will go on to compete at the Region V Convention in Columbus, Ohio this summer.

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.

As usual we will gather for punch at 6:30, dinner at 7:00, and the competition will begin at 8:00. A member of the Executive Committee will be calling you March 12 or 13 to take your dinner reservation. If for some reason you are not called, please call in your reservation to Errol Shewman (616-456-9232) by Wednesday, March 14. You may also make a reservation by email to [EShewman@hotmail.com](mailto:EShewman@hotmail.com).

## ELECTRONIC FLYERS

Each month many of you will receive one or more electronic flyers announcing local organ and choral events. These are paid advertisements approved by our Executive Committee and the Webmaster. Members of the Grand Rapids Chapter may have their organ or choral events advertised at **no charge**.

Please forward these items electronically to friends and family who have an interest in organ and choral music. The flyer reaches nearly 100 people. If each member forwards the flyer to five persons, the advertising for these events will increase to 500 items.

Advertising in the Grand Rapids Press is extremely expensive. Making attractive posters is costly; distributing them is time consuming; and their effect is limited. This method is free and quick.

Please join in spreading news of the activities that promote the profession we all love so passionately.

## Election of Officers

Our annual election of officers will take place on April 16.

According to AGO National rules, officers will serve a one year term and at least one person must be on the slate for each office. Our nominees for Grand Rapids Chapter officers for the 2007-2008 season are:

Dean: Howard Slenk  
Secretary: Christopher Dekker  
Treasurer: Errol Shewman

Members-at-Large retiring this year are Criss DeVries and Chris Dekker. Nominees for 3 year terms as Members-at-Large are:

John Dibble  
Bruce Klanderman  
James Metzler  
Lois Ripma

The two members with the highest number of votes will be elected. These persons have all agreed to serve if elected. There will be brief bios of these people in next month's *Cipher*.

Additional nominations may be made by petition of at least five voting members in good standing and should be received by the secretary no later than March 19 or at the March meeting.

Election will be held at the April meeting by secret ballot. Those members not able to be present may send the absentee ballot which will appear in the next issue of *The Cipher*. It should not have your name on it, but your name must be on the envelope in which it is sent. Absentee ballots must be returned by April 16th so they may be counted in the election. The winning slate will be announced after all the ballots are counted.

### Other Events of Interest for March

**Wednesday, March 14th - 7:30p.m.** First United Methodist Church 227 East Fulton Street. North Central College Choir, Naperville, IL. Music of Clausen, Bach, Palestrina, Stanford, Copland and others. Free of charge.

**Sunday, March 18, 7:30 p.m.** East Congregational United Church of Christ 1005 Giddings Ave. SE.

**Gruizenga Series:** Matvey Lapin, Violin; Kataya Lapin, Piano. Works of Johannes Brahms, Antonin Dvorák, and Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky. Free and open to the public.

**Sunday, March 18, 8:00 p.m.** St. Mark's Episcopal Church, 134 North Division Ave. Karl Schrock, Director of Music at St. Mark's will play a recital on the new J. W. Walker organ, the fourth concert in the St. Mark's Concert Series. Dr. Schrock has been a member since 1994 of the faculty of The Western Michigan University School of Music, where he is University Organist and has developed a new generation of university-educated organists. He earned a Doctorate in Organ Performance and three Master's Degrees at The University of Michigan, where his distinguished scholarship was recognized by the award of a prestigious Rackham Fellowship. This semester he is replacing James Kibbie, during the latter's sabbatical leave from The University of Michigan. He is preparing several Master's and doctoral organ majors for their upcoming degree recitals.

**Friday, March 23, 7:30 p.m.** Basilica of St. Adalbert, Fourth and Davis N.W. Music of the World **The Chamber Choir of Grand Rapids** Tickets, Adults \$18, Senior (65+) \$15, Students \$5.00

**Sunday, March 25, 11:00 a.m.** First United Methodist Church and **7:30 p.m.** Westminster Presbyterian Church. The choirs of First UMC and Westminster Presbyterian join for the *Requiem* of Gabriel Fauré with orchestra. Freewill offering.



GRAND  
RAPIDS  
AGO

### Position Available

**Organ Scholar** of Park Congregational Church, Grand Rapids

**Duties:** Approximately ten hours per week. Anthem accompanying at Wednesday evening rehearsal, Thursday evening rehearsal and Sunday morning 11:00 a.m. Service. Assist with organization of Tuesday Noontime Concert Series.

**Instruments:** Four manual, 80 rank Muller pipe organ in the Sanctuary. Two manual, 10 rank Lauck pipe organ in the Chapel. Several Kawai grand pianos

**Compensation:** \$8,000 (\$7,250 for nine month contract and \$750 for five Sundays during the year as substitute organist when the church organist is away)

**Start Date:** As mutually agreed upon by the church and candidate

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### Upcoming Meetings for 2007

For pictures and comments on our earlier meetings, See <http://www.grago.org/chapter/programs.shtml>

#### 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)

#### Monday, May 21

Choir crawl to St. Adalbert's and St. Mary's Churches. Carillon recital by Helen Hawley at downtown Grand Valley campus.