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Grand Rapids AGO  
2006-2007

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# THE CIPHER

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

October 2006

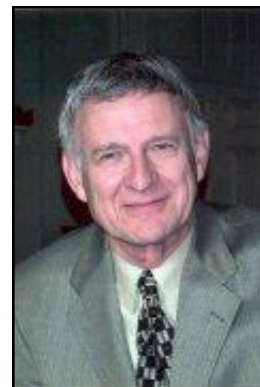
## From the Dean

Although I didn't have the nerves to see the film "Saving Private Ryan," I did read Stephen Ambrose's fine book about the Allied invasion of Europe, *Band of Brothers*. When someone told me that this book had been made into an HBO miniseries for television, I watched all ten episodes. Since then I have read several first-person accounts of what it was like to be a paratrooper landing on French and Dutch soil in those important days before and after D-Day.

Several paragraphs in these books made me think of the AGO. What words about war could possibly make a person think about organ and choral music? They were words like "assuming leadership in the face of danger." The danger facing us is that the profession of church music is under attack: from pop culture, from consumerism, from clergy indifference, from the entertainment industry, from the music publishing industry. One could compile an even longer list.

The challenge to the AGO at the beginning of this century is to take on leadership. Each one of us is a leader in some context: classroom, rehearsal, private lesson, or church service. In these contexts the great organ and choral music of the past and the present has enriched us all, both emotionally and spiritually. These treasures need protection and distribution. We have a debt to the large band of organists and choral directors who have encouraged us in the past. Many of these people were members of the AGO who helped us with advice and kindness when we were in high school and college. Now it is our turn to teach and inspire and encourage persons younger than we are, so that their lives may be similarly enriched, and so that they may in turn enrich the lives of those coming after them.

Our chapter of the AGO is an organization with a common and concrete goal, one so lofty and worthwhile, that it should evoke a degree of comradeship similar to that known in war. We are a platoon, a company, a band of brothers and sisters, considering not our own agendas, not our own personal needs, but the common good, the needs of the young, the promotion of the praise of God through music, and the glory of His name.



Howard Slenk



**“Our little Wolfgang romped about on the organ and played so well, that the [listeners] ...came running to choir loft, and nearly died of amazement.”**

*Leopold Mozart, on his son's performance on the organ at Ybbs, Austria, in 1762*



**W. A. Mozart**

## October Meeting Music of Mozart on the Organ

Our next meeting is Monday, October 16, when seven members of our chapter will perform at Grand Valley State University in celebration of the Mozart Anniversary Year. Greg Crowell, who teaches at Grand Valley, organized the program and will be our host for the evening. As usual, phone in your reservations to Errol Shewman, by Wednesday, October 11. And please note that the Executive Committee has decided to charge \$12.00 for dinners from now on. That's still a great bargain!

6:30 Punch bowl and 7:00 Dinner (\$12) will be in the Pere Marquette Room (Room 204) of the Kirkhof Center, which is the building next door to the Cook/De Witt Recital Hall. Both buildings are directly next to the Carillon Tower.

8:00 The all-Mozart program will be held in the Cook/DeWitt Recital Hall. Performing will be Cynthia Bristol, Greg Crowell, Chris Dekker, Mark Loring, Marilyn Ossentjuk, and Karl Schrock.

*Here is an "appetizer" by Greg Crowell to the program:*

At the age of two, Mozart is said to have replied to a pig's squeal by identifying pig's pitch (it was a G-sharp). What was history to do, then, with this tiny child, whose very presence seemed to elicit tales of superhuman musical feats and mystical inspiration? The tales continued throughout his life (and into our own times) of course, and the image of Mozart the prodigy seems still to overshadow an understanding of the mature man. Indeed, a movie like *Amadeus* serves to keep Mozart in his infancy—a conduit of heavenly inspiration for which even he supposedly had no explanation.

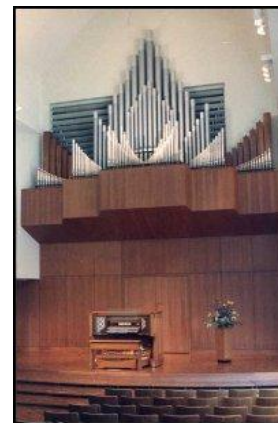
The truth is, I think, to found in part when we encounter Mozart at the organ bench. Let's make no mistake—the organ played an important role in his life as a musician. He was an accomplished improviser and interpreter at the organ, and he is said to have played the organ better than he played piano. His early employment at the Salzburg court was rather quickly trumped by a significant promotion in 1778 to Court Organist. Mozart himself claimed that “the organ is my passion.” His years as an active organist certainly formed much of what he knew about counterpoint and the music of J.S. Bach; the *Jupiter Symphony* would likely never have been composed had Mozart not spent his time on the organ bench.

Organists have always been somewhat apologetic, however, about what Mozart actually wrote for the organ. After all, the largest of the works were composed for a clock outfitted with a mechanical organ that would play the pieces at regular intervals—the organ virtuoso had removed himself completely from the picture. The truth is, however, that these commissioned works for a modest-sized organ elicited from the composer some of his truly marvelous and greatest writing. The F minor Fantasia (K. 608) deserves to be listed among the greatest masterpieces of his maturity. Indeed, virtually all of the works heard on the Mozart

*Continued from page two*

program on October 16 will represent the composer at his expressive best, from the lilting elegance of the Andante in F Major (K. 616) to the suave Adagio in C Major (K. 617a).

Mozart died young, but he did not die immature. Most of the works we will hear on this month's program were written within a year of the composer's death, when he must have been wrestling with his very nature as a composer. It is no accident, then, that his small body of works for organ pipes provides such varied and thrilling evidence of a composer at the height of his creative powers. Far from being apologetic, we organists have something to celebrate.



Reuter, opus 2142, 1991  
Grand Valley State University

## Other Events of Interest for October

### Music at Midday

#### Park Congregational Church.

#### Tuesdays from 12:15-12:45

(with lunch available for \$3.00 from 11:30 – 1:30)

October 3 – Chris Dekker, organ

October 10 – Jim Metzler, organ

October 17 – North American Choral

Company Singers

October 24 – John Hamersma, organ

#### Keyboard Area Faculty Showcase, including organist Karl Schrock, Sunday, October 8,

3:00 p.m. Dalton Center Recital Hall at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo. \$10.00 (Seniors \$5.00)

**“A Lofty Experience” with Dr. Michele Johns (University of Michigan), Saturday, October 14, 2006,** at First Presbyterian Church, 508 Franklin Street, Grand Haven, Michigan. A free session from 12:30-3:30, including a reading session, conducting from the console, and building a choir program. Contact Eileen Hoogterp 231-755-1953 x232; [e\\_hoogterp@sfnortonshores.com](mailto:e_hoogterp@sfnortonshores.com).

**“Celebrate the Seasons,” a hymn festival led by Michele Johns, Sunday, October 15, at 4:00 pm,** also at First Presbyterian in Grand Haven. Sponsored by the Muskegon-Lakeshore AGO Chapter.

**Sunday, October 15, at 5:00 pm. Jim Metzler,** newly appointed Organist & Director of Music at Park Congregational Church, will present

a recital on the Muller organ, with music of Bach, Widor, Langlais, Vierne, Franck and Durufle. Free and open to the public. Park Church is located at 10 East Park Place NE, across the street from St. Cecilia's Music Society. Jim recently moved to Grand Rapids from Trinity Episcopal Cathedral in Little Rock.

**Matt Haimovitz, cellist, Sunday, October 15, at 8:00 p.m.** at St. Mark's Church, 134 N. Division Ave. in Grand Rapids. One of the great cellists of the world, he will play a Bach cello suite, the solo cello sonatas of Ligeti and Kodaly, as well as some modern and pop music. (\$10, \$5 for students).

**Raymond and Elizabeth Chenault, Friday, October 20, 8:00 p.m.** LaGrave Avenue Christian Reformed Church celebrates the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the installation of its five-manual, 108-rank Austin-Allen organ with three events throughout the coming year. The first concert will feature internationally recognized husband and wife duo, Raymond and Elizabeth Chenault. The Chenaults, synonymous with “Organ Four Hands, Four Feet,” will play music of Rutter, Shephard, Moore, Callahan, and White, along with their signature closing piece, their own arrangement of Sousa's “The Stars and Stripes Forever” march. Free and open to the public.

**Music for Recorder and Harpsichord, Sunday, Oct. 29, 3:00 p.m.** Millwood United Methodist Church in Kalamazoo, featuring European recorder artist Yu-Lien The and distinguished resident keyboardist Phyllis Rappeport. Free will offering.

## Upcoming Chapter Meetings

(For pictures and comments on our September meeting,  
see <http://www.grago.org/chapter/programs.shtml>)

**Monday, November 20:** Michigan Composer of the year: Raymond H. Haan. A program of his organ and choral music at Cutler-ville East Christian Reformed Church (Ray Haan, host)

**Monday, January 15, 2007:** 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)

## THE CIPHER

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*Check out our website at [www.grago.org](http://www.grago.org)*