



THE CIPHER

March 2021

**The Executive Committee of
Grand Rapids AGO
2020-2021**

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From Our Dean

Hello Everyone!

As we are looking forward to spring, we are also looking forward to the opportunity as we look at ways to meet in person safely and online. In the past, we rely on venues that are gracious to us in hosting events. Due to the local health COVID situation this past year, those venues were not open to outside events. As in all changes, improvements and medical advances, so does our opportunity to have programs for the chapter also change and improve. This month, we are now looking at having programs that will be offered either in person and/or online. Thanks to the generosity of Calvin University and their technical team, LaGrave Avenue CRC and their technical crew, and the Cathedral of St. Andrew.

We encourage you to take advantage of the programs in March and April as we work in partnering with the presenters and the venues in working out the technical details in bringing these to the chapter safely.

The board has been working on the 2021-2022 season and are looking forward to it being in person! We have tentatively scheduled a couple of "reprise" programs that were canceled and are looking for opportunities for other events and programs. We fully intend to get back on a regular monthly program schedule. As these events are confirmed, we will be informing the chapter of them. We are also looking forward to the competitions being back in April of 2022. This leads to program suggestions. As the board is working on the program for next year, we are also looking for program ideas that you may have. We have a few in mind, but if you have something that you would like to have the board consider, please feel free to suggest it to myself or someone on the board.

The GRAGO board: we said farewell to Jonathan Bading as a board member. Due to other growing commitments, he was unable to invest into the board. We thank him for his input on the board and his time and efforts. John Dibble will be finishing his term. We thank John for stepping in and being on the board. We are looking for board members to serve a 2 year term. If you or someone you know would be willing, please contact me or another board member.

I hope all of you have been safe during these times, we look forward to these program offerings in the next two months.

Kevin Soodsma, Dean



Programs for 2021

Online Masterclass with Elizabeth West

March 22, 2021, 7:00 p.m.

LaGrave CRC Organ

[Franck--Prelude, Fugue, and Variation](#) (focus on the fugue & variation)

[Grigny--Recit de Tierce en Taille](#)

[Gigout--Toccata in B minor](#)

[Click on links to download the scores](#)

These scores are from the IMSLP Petrucci Music Library and are in the Public Domain

Link to online program will be forthcoming



Dr. Elizabeth (Claar) West serves as an assistant organist at La Grave Avenue CRC, following 11 years as organist at Trinity Lutheran Church. She has taught organ and theory at Hope College and Cornerstone University, and this semester she is teaching organ literature at Hope, where she is also a staff accompanist. In addition, she teaches private organ students of all ages. Dr. West earned her Bachelor of Arts degree from Houghton College in New York and her Master of Music and Doctor of Musical Arts degrees from the University of Michigan. She also completed a certificate in music theory pedagogy. Her organ teachers have been James Kibbie, the late Robert Glasgow, Huw Lewis, William Haller, Judy Congdon, and Susan Klotzbach. In addition, she studied harpsichord with Edward Parmentier. West

directed two highly successful Pipe Organ Encounters at Hope College for the American Guild of Organists, and she served on the national AGO Committee on the New Organist, which supervises all Pipe Organ Encounters. Dr. West spent the 2006-2007 school year in Armenia, where she immersed herself in Armenian culture and researched Armenian organ music. She resides in Holland with her husband and son.

Online Program

April 9, 2021, 7:30 p.m.

Margaret Sandresky Concert 100th Birthday Celebration

Rhonda Sider Edgington, Organ

Calvin University Chapel

[Dobson Opus 44, 1989](#)

April 24, 2021, 7:00 p.m.

Repeat of program at The Cathedral of St. Andrew

[Orgues Letourneau, Ltee. Opus 77, 2002](#)



Rhonda Sider Edgington

[Link to online program will be forthcoming](#)

The Music of Margaret Sandresky – An American Original



Margaret Sandresky will turn 100 years old in April 2021. This American composer has been commissioned to contribute pieces for multiple AGO National and Regional conventions over many decades. She was awarded the AGO Distinguished Composer Award in 2004. Sandresky studied composition at Salem College, Eastman School of Music, and under a Fulbright scholarship in Germany. She taught composition at Oberlin, University of Texas-Austin, headed the organ department at Salem College, and founded the organ department at the North Carolina School for the Arts. After retiring in 1986, she has concentrated more on composing, and is still going strong, with the latest volume of her organ works published in 2018!

Her compositions range from larger cycles, based on sacred and secular themes, to variation sets, and many hymn settings, practical and useful for weekly Sunday preludes and postludes. She has a uniquely American style that is both accessible and innovative. I've performed her works around the US and in Germany, and never fail to hear appreciative comments from both organists and non-musicians alike. I'm looking forward to introducing her music to a wider audience, and celebrating this gracious, Southern pioneer in our field by performing a concert (or two) of her works this April in Grand Rapids, to celebrate her 100th birthday.

Because of the state of the world, (and in spite of the difficulty of planning anything), I've made two possible plans for April, hopeful that at least one, and maybe both might work out – but aware that anything is possible, and perhaps neither will. On Friday, April 9 at 7:30pm, I hope to perform live

from the Calvin University Chapel, where I teach organ, on their Dobson pipe organ. The campus and chapel will not be open for non-students or staff, but this concert will be broadcast in a livestream on their event site - <https://vimeo.com/event/684136>
Hopefully a small group of students and staff can also attend this concert live as well.

On Saturday, April 24 at 7 pm, I will be performing a repeat of the concert on the Letourneau at St. Andrew's Cathedral, (provided that the Cathedral is open to the public for events at this time), thanks to the generosity of Matthew Jakubisin, Director of Music and the staff of the Cathedral.

These concerts will include a wide variety of styles and time periods of her output – including Sandresky's early Mass d'homme arme from 1979 (included in her very first volume of organ works), the programmatic Five Sacred Dances from her middle period, and the Prelude, Aria, and Finale from 2012, included in the most recent volume of her organ works. All ten volumes of her works are published by Wayne Leupold. We will also enjoy some of her shorter chorale and hymn settings interspersed between these larger cycles. I think organists will hear many individual movements and shorter pieces that would be easy enough to learn for regular Sunday services, and greatly enjoyed by their congregations.

In preparation for these concerts, I would like to introduce a few of Sandresky's works to you all – who may or may not be familiar with her oeuvre. We'll start with volume 4 of her complete works, which is full of hymn settings. From this volume, I have played the *Meditation on Amazing Grace* very often, on concerts and for church. I have found that a new and unusual setting of a very familiar hymn like this really gets audiences' attention. This setting is full of unexpected harmonies and chord changes, and I hear comments often from listeners who have enjoyed this piece.

Six Variations on a Ground Bass is the one piece from this volume that is not hymn based. This piece was originally written for a very small, historic instrument, and while modified since then for this version, is still very practical for a smaller organ with limited resources. It is not technically difficult, but each variation calls for distinctive colors, with its own charming character. This worked very well on a recital I played on a one manual, tracker organ with limited pedal, though could be played on larger instruments as well. *A Wreath of Carols* is a collage of various Christmas hymn settings, pulled together in an attractive larger piece. This was lovely on an Advent recital at Mayflower (it can end very big and dramatically), but could also be very practical if you need to prepare a longer Christmas Eve prelude, with a bit less sound at the end. *Ein Feste Burg* is a short setting of the hymn A Mighty Fortress, written in a Baroque style, complete with counterpoint – it almost sounds like Buxtehude, but with a bit more adventurous harmonies. This might be perfect for Reformation, if you're tired of always pulling out the Pachelbel!

If you are curious about Sandresky's works, Wayne Leupold has a very helpful website, that includes the ability to click on previews of the score and see one page of each piece. If you would like to look further at some of these works, follow this link.

<https://www.wayneleupold.com/index.php/the-organ-music-of-margaret-sandresky-vol-vi-soloorgan.html>



March 15, 2021 (Mon) - 7:30pm - Console-side Chat from Grace Episcopal: 10 Tips to Recharge your church keyboard playing

Steve Jenkins (Grace Episcopal) and Rhonda Edgington (Hope Church) will join forces to demonstrate practical ways you can bring some new life and energy into the familiar patterns and ruts we can all get into with weekly services. (an online link will be sent to members before the event)

April 18, 2021 (Sun) - 3pm - Bring-your-own-everything Picnic - Kollen Park (near the bandshell)

We are looking forward to joining together in person again, once the weather is nicer, with lawn chairs and BYO snacks, to catch up with all that's gone on in members' last year, musical and non-musical, on the beautiful banks of Lake Macatawa.

Muskegon Lakeshore Chapter

American Guild of Organists

AGO ORGANFEST 2021

beauty endures

June 28—July 2

More information forthcoming



Here are two YouTube links of Calvin Institute of Christian Worship services that feature organists and choral singing.

<https://worship.calvin.edu/resources/resource-library/worship-with-james-abbington-joyce-johnson-lisa-weaver-and-friends-in-atlanta-georgia>

<https://worship.calvin.edu/resources/resource-library/worship-with-duke-divinity-school-in-durham-north-carolina>

St. Ignatius Catholic Church in Luther, Lake County, Michigan would like to acquire a second-hand, modest-sized electronic organ. The church building is not large. If you know of a church or even an individual who may have access to an instrument that could be suitable, please contact Dick Hoogterp, h 231 755 0141 or w dhoogterp@holymfamilysparta.org. Thank you.

Dick Hoogterp