



**The Executive Committee of
Grand Rapids AGO
2021-2022**

Officers

[Julia Brown](#), Co-Dean

[Carol McNally](#), Co-Dean

[Chris Witte](#), Treasurer

[John Tiemstra](#), Secretary

Council Members at Large

[Matthew Jakubisin](#)

[Larry Biser](#)

[Miah Han](#)

Members Ex-Officio

[Dennis Buteyn](#),
Webmaster, Cipher Editor

[Kevin Soodsma](#)
Membership & Directory

[Peter Kurdziel](#)
Competitions

[Rebecca Snippe](#)
Competitions

[The Rev. Dr. John D. Witvliet](#)
Chaplain

THE CIPHER

April 2022

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Many of us are currently focused on Lent, Holy Week and Easter music. We wish you a peaceful, smooth and awe-inspiring few weeks. Thank you Barbara Dulmage and members of Second Congregational Church, for hosting our March meeting with composer John Dixon. For more details please see Larry's article below. Also in this newsletter is an interesting article by Rhonda Edgington, introducing us to the idea of pairing organ students with practice time on organs at area churches.

Our next meeting is a two-day event, with Scott Dettra performing Cèsar Franck's major organ works at LaGrave Church, and Larry Visser as our host. We will include dinner prior to the Monday concert, with a brief, informal election of board members for the coming year. We look forward to seeing all of you on Sunday, May 15 at 3pm for program #1 and Monday, May 16 at 6pm for dinner & business meeting followed by Franck program #2 at 7pm. More information can be found below and will be included in next month's newsletter.

Meanwhile, know that your board is working on reaching out to our membership to compile accurate information for an upcoming directory. You may still be receiving this newsletter, even if you have let your AGO membership lapse. If that is the case, now would be a great time to renew! We are back, providing in-person programs and eager to reconnect with each of you.

Carol and Julia



Recap of March Meeting

The Grand Rapids American Guild of Organists
March 21, 2022, 7:00 PM Meeting
Second Congregational Church
Grand Rapids, MI

The March meeting of GRAGO was held at Second Congregational Church with John S. Dixon as our guest recitalist. Mr. Dixon was first scheduled to present this program in 2020. It finally became a reality at March's meeting. A good representation of our membership attended the event at which Mr. Dixon played through a number of his 800+ compositions. We were especially enticed by the St. Denio Suite as it was dedicated to the Grand Rapids Chapter for the 2020 program that didn't happen and now the piece two years later, is already in print! After the recital of 22 compositions, some of which Mr. Dixon shared as handouts or gave us web links to download, we enjoyed a reception with delicious desserts and drinks.

Larry G. Biser

Election of Officers

Chapter members will have the opportunity in May to vote for the following slate of incumbent officers for the 2022-23 program year:

Julia Brown, Co-Dean
Carol McNally, Co-Dean
Chris Witte, Treasurer
John Tiemstra, Secretary

Barbara Dulmage, chair, Nominating Committee



John S. Dixon and host Barbara Dulmage

Upcoming Chapter Events

Sunday, May 15, 3: 00 p.m., LaGrave Avenue Christian Reformed Church

Monday, May 16, 6:00 p.m. dinner, 7:00 p.m. concert, LaGrave Avenue Christian Reformed Church

**LaGrave Avenue Christian Reformed Church
107 LaGrave Avenue S.E.
Grand Rapids, MI 49503**

César Franck Bicentennial:

In collaboration with the Muskegon-Lakeshore AGO Chapter Scott Dettra performs the complete organ works of Cèsar Franck in two recitals at LaGrave CRC.

Hailed as a “brilliant organist” (*Dallas Morning News*), an “outstanding musician” (*The Diapason*), and described as a “prodigy” by *The New York Times* at age 13, Scott Dettra is acclaimed as one of America’s leading concert organists. Mr. Dettra’s playing is praised for its clarity, rhythmic intensity, and

musical elegance, and has been described by *The American Organist* as “music making of absolute authority and sophisticated expression.” He combines an active performance schedule with his post as Director of Music at the Church of the Incarnation in Dallas, where he leads a vibrant music ministry in one the country’s largest Episcopal parishes. In addition to his work at Incarnation, he is a member of the organ faculty at Southern Methodist University, and is organist of The Crossing, the Grammy-winning professional chamber choir based in Philadelphia. Prior to his appointment in Dallas, he was Organist of Washington National Cathedral.



Encouragement of Young Organists

As a dean of the Holland AGO for 8 years, and an organ prof at Calvin, I frequently have received phone calls and emails asking me "Do you have an organ student/ know of an organist, who would be interested in playing for our church services?" These inquiries surround a fact we are all well-acquainted with, and which we know to be getting worse - there are not enough organists to play for all the churches and services who would like to have organ music. Let's side-step for now the obvious and important discussion about how well these churches pay, or how desirable these positions might be, and get a little more personal.

Because the factors leading to our current situation are complex, many-layered, and almost entirely out of our control, it can be easy to feel helpless. Or, as I've often been guilty of, passing the buck. How many of us have simply replied, "Not right now, but I'll let you know if I happen to hear of anyone!", knowing full well such a person is as likely to materialize as a palm tree growing by the banks of the Grand River.

There is a simple step almost all of us can take, and it's this - being willing to let other organists practice on the organ at the church where we play. While in some places this just isn't possible, most of us don't play at the Cathedral, with services daily, and multiple events in the space in a week.

Usually, the hurdles to be surmounted include much more mundane ones. We've never done that before. I don't know if I can give out a key to a non-member. Maybe this person will change my hymn settings before Sunday! We might need to convince our consistory about the value of this idea. We might need to bring some doughnuts to the secretary or custodian to warm them up to the idea (because in most churches, those are the people with the most power, right?)

Who are these players who might need an organ on which to practice? First and foremost - those just learning, who might like to someday play for services, but aren't ready yet. Also, those without a church job currently, who learned in the past, and might be willing to play again occasionally if they were practicing. Maybe an organist who retired from a regular position, but would like to keep practicing, and playing occasionally (subbing for you?)

These could be people with other full-time professions, or maybe retired people, who want to pick up a hobby. Maybe their church doesn't use organ music anymore, but they still love the organ. Maybe they work 8-5 M-F, and those are the only hours available to them in most places to practice.

Maybe they aren't a member of a church, but they love the organ. Maybe they aren't Christians, and don't feel that comfortable around churches, but they love Bach, or Reger.

If you start thinking about it, there are all kinds of reasons someone wouldn't have access to an instrument on which to practice. Would you be willing to think how your church organ and sanctuary (which likely sit silent many hours of most days) could be shared with others? Would you be willing to go to bat at your church for one of those organists? And would you be willing to be part of a resource we are putting together, alerting such organists about which churches are available for them to practice.

And then! The next time someone from the church down the block, with an organ and only two 85-year old players, asks you how they can find someone else to play for their services, you have something real to suggest. You can tell them: Be willing to open up your space for others to practice, even if those organists can't put their hands and feet together yet. Start planting some seeds. The problem is bigger than any of us, so the solution will have to be also.

If you'd like to be included in this resource, Alexis VanZalen, new staff member at the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship (aav27@calvin.edu) has volunteered to keep a list, eventually available to members through the AGO website .

Rhonda Sider Edgington



The Music Department of Aquinas College presents:

Elegy

Senior Recital of Jordan Malone, Organist

Saturday, April 9 at 7:30pm

Cathedral of Saint Andrew
215 Sheldon Blvd. S.E., Grand Rapids MI 49503

Live Streamed @aqmusicdept

Park Congregational Church
10 East Park Place N.E.
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

MUSIC AT MID-DAY
A Free Concert Series in the City
Concerts (12:15pm - 12:45pm) are free to all.



Spring 2022

April 5 Roger MacNaughton, piano and Jon Montgomery, Saxophone

April 12 - NO CONCERT

April 19 - Grand Rapids Christian High School Chamber Chorale

April 26 - Bruce Robey and Friends

May 3 - Mary Rademacher Reed, Vocals

An optional \$7.00 lunch (11:15am - 1:15pm) is available
before or after the performance.

Soups, sandwiches, beverages, and cookies are served.



not just
ANOTHER
choir camp

IMMERSIVE
& ENGAGING

BEAUTIFUL & SERENE
CAMPUS SETTING

SMALL &
INTIMATE

JUNE 12-17, 2022

INSTRUCTION IN CONDUCTING, COMPOSITION,
ENSEMBLE SINGING, LITURGICS, VOICE & ORGAN

SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

CURRENT STUDENT/ALUMNI

Any current student or alumni of the
House can receive 50% off the CMW fee

UNDER 30

Any student under age 30 can
receive 50% off the CMW fee

**CHURCH
MUSICIANS**
workshop
— at Nashotah House —

GET MORE INFO
& REGISTER TODAY!
NASHOTAH.EDU/CMW



OREGON BACH FESTIVAL ORGAN INSTITUTE



June 20 - June 25, 2022

Led by Grammy Award-winning organist

Paul Jacobs

Daily master classes with special guests

Seminars on music theory, history, and organ design

All day tour of Portland area organs

Recital performance in the Festival

Free tuition, room and board for Institute participants

Participant auditions due by March 15, 2022

Auditors can enroll through June 1

For more information visit

oregonbachfestival.com/organ-institute

Applications are now open for the Organ Institute at the Oregon Bach Festival. Now in its ninth season, **the Organ Institute 2022 will run from June 20-June 25 in Eugene, Oregon**

Deadline for auditions is Tuesday, March 15, 2022. Auditors can enroll until June 1.

The OBF Organ Institute, **directed by organist Paul Jacobs**, offers organists the opportunity to immerse themselves in the masterworks of organ repertoire, and to explore technique and interpretation through specialized seminars, master classes, and performance.

Contributions from generous funders provide these talented musicians **tuition-free access** to the six-day course of masterclasses and performances, with **no cost for lodging**.

More information, including audition requirements, can be found on our [website](http://oregonbachfestival.com/organ-institute). Contact us with any questions at obforgan@uoregon.edu.