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Grand Rapids AGO  
2021-2022**

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Competitions

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Chaplain

# THE CIPHER

October 2022

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

We opened our program year on September 19 with inspiring words from our Chaplain, Rev. Dr. John Witvliet, then heard a varied program by six members. Thank you Mayflower, for hosting, thank you colleagues, for performing, thank you all for attending.



This month's program continues the theme of "Live Music". Our AGOYO recital will feature six young performers at Westminster Presbyterian church on October 17, 7pm. The performers represent a diverse group of musicians studying and working in various denominations throughout West Michigan. Organists Vincent Andrews (a senior at Calvin University studying music composition and psychology), Alex Cross (Senior Organist and Accompanist at Christ Memorial Church in Holland, Michigan. He is also a Senior at Hope College, studying Vocal Music Education), John Deppe (graduated from Hope College with an engineering degree while studying organ with Dr.

Huw Lewis). Matthew Jakubisin (Director of Music and Organist at the Cathedral of Saint Andrew), Jim Renfer (Organist and Choirmaster at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Grand Rapids), and Alexis VanZalen (organ scholar at St. Mark's Episcopal Church and program coordinator at the Calvin Institute of Christian worship) will offer a varied program of music on Westminster's 1937 Aeolian Skinner organ. Come celebrate the dedication of local young organists and enjoy their music in a historic downtown church.

We have added a program in November – a visit to two churches in East Grand Rapids. We will visit the Noack at Grace Episcopal Church, hosted by member Mary Baas and two organs at East Congregational, with Jameson Thompson hosting. Please add Monday, November 14 at 7pm to your calendars.

*Julia and Carol*



## **2022-2023 Programs**

**October 17, 2022, 7:00 p.m.**

### **AGOYO Recital at Westminster Presbyterian Church**

Westminster Presbyterian Church

47 Jefferson Avenue SE

Grand Rapids, MI 49503

Six young organists of the Grand Rapids AGO Chapter will perform in recital on October 17 at Westminster Presbyterian Church. The performers represent a diverse group of musicians studying and working in various denominations throughout West Michigan.

Organists Vincent Andrews, Alex Cross, John Deppe, Matthew Jakubisin, Jim Renfer, and Alexis VanZalen will offer a varied program of music on Westminster's 1937 Aeolian Skinner organ. Come celebrate the dedication of local young organists and enjoy their music in a historic downtown church.

The program begins at 7:00 p.m. on Monday October 17, 2022. Westminster Presbyterian Church is located at 47 Jefferson Ave SE in Grand Rapids. The parking lot and main entrance is off Jefferson Avenue, across from State Street.



**Vincent Andrews** is from Grosse Pointe, MI and currently a senior at Calvin University studying music composition and psychology. He has been learning organ for about a year under the instruction of Rhonda Edgington. He has also been playing piano for 12 years and bass for 5 years. He is also a composer of numerous musical works including symphonies, solo piano music, jazz songs, chamber music, and more.



**Alex Cross** is privileged to serve as the Senior Organist and Accompanist at Christ Memorial Church in Holland, Michigan. He is also a Senior at Hope College, where he is studying Vocal Music Education (K-12). Alex has taken lessons under the instruction of Dr. Elizabeth West and Dr. Huw Lewis throughout his college study. In addition to Christ Memorial and other professional engagements, Alex is employed at Holland Public Schools as an Accompanist/Instructional Aide, where he supports the 6-12 Choral Program and Theater Department. Prior to Hope College, Alex attended Westminster Christian Academy in St. Louis, Missouri, where he accompanied all ensembles in grades 7-12, as well as theater productions and soloists. In 2019, Alex was nominated for Outstanding Musical Direction by the St. Louis High School Musical Theatre Awards for Westminster's production of *Meet Me in St. Louis*. Lastly, Alex serves as a Reserve Firefighter/EMT for the Boles Fire Protection District in Franklin County, Missouri.



**John Deppe** studied organ with Dr. Huw Lewis at Hope College where he graduated from in 2016 with an Engineering degree. Presently, he serves as a substitute organist at several area churches and has been playing the organ for 13 years. John is a mechanical engineer at Automatic Spring Products in Grand Haven and in his spare time enjoys cooking, attending concerts, and working on his house in Grand Rapids.



**Matthew Jakubisin** is Director of Music and Organist at the Cathedral of Saint Andrew in Grand Rapids. He is originally from Cicero, IL and attended Saint John's University in Collegeville, MN where he received a B.A. and M.A. in Liturgical Music while studying organ with Dr. Kim Kasling. Following graduation, Matthew served for three years as music minister at Our Lady Star of the Sea in Grosse Pointe Woods, MI. He began ministry at the Cathedral of Saint Andrew in 2019 and directs a diverse music program while serving as Cathedral and Diocesan organist.





**Jim Renfer**, a lifelong resident of Michigan, graduated in May 2019 from the University of Michigan, majoring in Organ Performance and sacred music. Jim has been a regular performer in both the Detroit and Grand Rapids area. A previous winner of the AGO's Student Commissioning Project, Jim has also served as a board member and Dean of the Ann Arbor AGO chapter. He currently serves as Organist and Choirmaster at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Grand Rapids. In his free time, Jim enjoys cooking, video games, and singing as part of local choral ensemble VOX GR.



A native of Holland, MI, **Dr. Alexis VanZalen** began her musical studies on piano with Jane Cronkite and Roberta Kraft. After an inspiring summer experiment with secondary organ lessons at the Interlochen Center for the Arts during high school, Alexis began regular organ lessons with Huw Lewis. She later studied with Kathrine Handford at Lawrence University in Appleton, WI, earning a BM in organ performance and a BA in history. From there Alexis moved to the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, NY, where she completed an MM in Early Music, studying with Edoardo Bellotti, Anne Laver, Paul O'Dette, and Christel Thielmann. In 2020 Alexis earned her PhD in Musicology, specializing in Baroque music. Her dissertation discusses the influence of French Catholic liturgical reform on French Baroque organ music, and especially the stylistic innovations of Guillaume-Gabriel Nivers. Alexis currently serves as the organ scholar at St. Mark's Episcopal Church and as a program coordinator at the Calvin Institute of Christian worship.

**November 14, 2022, 7:00 p.m.**

### **East Grand Rapids Church Visit**

Grace Episcopal Church

1815 Hall St. SE

Grand Rapids MI 49506

East Congregational Church

1005 Giddings St. SE

Grand Rapids. MI 49506



**Mary Baas**



**Jameson Thompson**

We will visit the [Noack](#) organ at Grace Episcopal Church, hosted by member Mary Baas and two organs at [East Congregational Church](#), with Jameson Thompson hosting.

**December 31, 2022, 7:30pm**

**New Year's Eve Concert with Adam J. Brakel at Central Reformed Church**

Central Reformed Church

10 College Avenue NE

Grand Rapids, MI 49503

Adam Brakel Director of Music of St. James Cathedral and the Diocese of Orlando, Florida.

Hailed as “an absolute organ prodigy” by National Public Radio and “one of the most talented organists in the world” by the Chicago Tribune, concert organist Adam J. Brakel is a preeminent artist “with the technique and virtuosity that most concert pianists could only dream of.” (NPR) Adam’s celebrated performances span the globe—from coast to coast in the United States to across Europe and Asia. His expansive repertoire includes the entire spectrum of styles featuring the complete organ works of Bach, Bruhns, Buxtehude, Couperin, Liszt, de Grigny, Franck, Mozart, Mendelssohn, and Duruflé.



**January 22, 2023, 4:00 p.m.**

**Jewish Music Through the Ages**

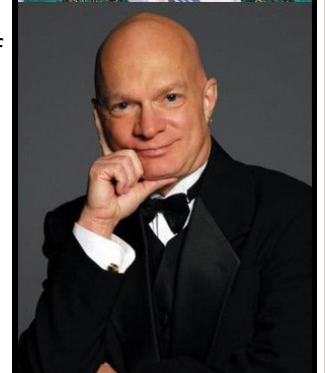
Temple Emanuel

1710 Fulton Avenue NE

Grand Rapids, MI 49503

Cantor David Fair, Shir Shalom Choir and pianist Philip Pletcher at Temple Emanuel.

Cantor David Fair joined Temple Emanuel in 2021. A native of Baltimore, Maryland, he earned a B.A. in Theater and a minor in Music from the University of Maryland College Park. He received a Professional Studies Diploma and an Artist Diploma from the Cleveland Institute of Music. He received a Master of Sacred Music degree from Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion in New York City in 2020, where he wrote his thesis on the topic, “Tsiporah’s Children: The Music and Lived Experiences of Black Jewish Americans.” He was ordained in 2021.



Before coming to Grand Rapids, Cantor Fair served as the Cantorial Intern at Temple Beth Israel in York, PA; Congregation Beit Simchat Torah (CBST) in New York City; and Washington Hebrew Congregation in Washington, DC.

Philip Pletcher is a West Michigan pianist, teacher, conductor, actor, composer, arranger and singer who began picking out his favorite tunes on the piano at the age of four. His career has taken him throughout the United States and Canada. Phil operates a private piano studio, and actively performs both as a soloist and as a collaborative pianist.

### March 13 – Quimby and Rotman Competitions

Location TBD



The Annamae Rotman Young Organist Competition was founded in 2013 by Dr. Richard Rotman in honor of his mother and is an annual competition. Eligibility – A competitor must be 24 years of age or under as of August 1 of the competition year and be a resident of Kent County, MI or any county adjacent to Kent County and/or a resident student attending a junior high school, senior high school, college, or university in Kent County or any county adjacent to Kent County (Ottawa, Muskegon, Newaygo, Montcalm, Ionia, Barry, or Allegan Counties)

For more information visit our website at [grago.org/competitions/](https://grago.org/competitions/)

AGO/Quimby is for more advanced young organists. The purpose of this competitions is to encourage younger organists to pursue excellence, to gain performance experience, to develop service playing skills, and to receive recognition for their achievements. These competitions begin at the chapter level and conclude at the seven regional conventions. The winner of each regional competition will be invited to perform as a Rising Star at the 2024 National Convention in San Francisco, Calif. The AGO/Quimby Regional Competitions are made possible by a generous grant from Michael Quimby, president, Quimby Pipe Organs Inc.

For eligibility, repertoire and competition rules please visit <https://www.agohq.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Rules-2023-AGO-Quimby-competitions-May22r5.pdf>

**March 27, 2023, 7:00 p.m.**  
**Workshop with Nicole Keller**  
**Calvin University**  
**Covenant Fine Arts Center**  
**1795 Knollcrest Circle**  
**Grand Rapids, MI 49546**



“Preparing for a Performance” (approaching performance in the broadest sense – concert, competition, worship service). How do we best prepare with the time available and the instrument we have?

Recently appointed to the faculty of the School of Music, Theatre & Dance at the University of Michigan. As a teacher, Ms. Keller strives to foster and model a commitment to excellence in performance, scholarship and self-growth as students deepen their love of music and their instrument. She is in demand as a concert artist, adjudicator, and clinician.

**April 30, 2023, 3:00 p.m.**  
**Nathan Laube in Concert**  
Basilica of St. Adalbert  
654 Davis Avenue NW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49504



Nathan Laube is a leading performer and pedagogue who is beloved around the world. His extensive recital career includes major venues spanning four continents. In April 2019, Mr. Laube launched the documentary-style radio program, “All the Stops,” on the WFMT Radio Network Chicago, consisting of four two-hour programs which feature many of the world’s most famous organs in Europe and the United States and explore their unique histories and repertoire. For more information, visit [www.wfmt.com/programs/all-the-stops/](http://www.wfmt.com/programs/all-the-stops/). In October 2020, Mr. Laube joined the organ faculty at the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst in Stuttgart, Germany, succeeding his mentor, Ludger Lohmann, at his alma mater. There he takes part in one of most dynamic and international centers for organ study, situated in the heart of Europe. Prior to his move to Europe, he served on the organ faculty of the Eastman School of Music from 2013 to 2020.



**May 15, 2023, 7 p.m.**

**Carillon Recital with Helen Hofmeister, Carillonneur**

Beckering Family Carillon Tower  
Fulton Street Campus of GVSU  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

The carillon recital will include selections of regional music, including music from England, Canada, and Appalachia. There will also be arrangements from the church, which will mainly be music based on chant. Helen Hofmeister has performed carillon recitals in 17 states as well as Belgium and the Netherlands.



## **Community Concerts**

**Tuesday, October 4, 2022, 7:00 p.m.**

Basilica of St. Adalbert  
654 Davis Avenue NW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49504

### **Peter Kurdzeil, Organist**

The restoration of The Joseph A. Westdorp Basilica Centennial Memorial Organ is complete!

A little over a year ago on the Feast of Corpus Christi, the organ failed during the 11:00am mass. Upon review of a full assessment of the organ, the rector gave the approval to proceed with a full restoration. A major component of the restoration is the new console built by Goulding and Wood of Indianapolis. The organ will be rededicated



to the glory of God during the 11:00am mass on Sunday, September 25. Basilica Organist Peter Kurdziel will play the inaugural recital on Tuesday evening, October 4, at 7:00pm. All are welcome and encouraged to attend!



# Festival Organ Concert at Central Reformed Church

## 40th Anniversary Celebration of the Organ Installation

Sunday, October 23, 2022 | 4:30 p.m.

doors will open at 4:15 p.m.

*The Program Includes*

**George Frideric Handel**

Organ Concerto in F Major HWV 295

"The Cuckoo and the Nightingale"

&

Organ Concerto in F Major HWV 292

with the Chorus "Alleluia" in the final movement

**Dietrich Buxtehude**

Toccata in F Major BuxWV 156

**Johann Sebastian Bach**

Fantasia and Fuga in G minor BWV 542

*Featuring*

Festival Choir—Central Chancel Choir with Guest Vocalists

Instrumentalists from the Grand Rapids Symphony  
and the Holland Symphony,  
conducted by Central's director of music ministries, Taemin Han

Central Reformed Church  
10 College Avenue NE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503  
616.456.1773



With special guest organist, Dr. Julia Brown,  
director of music and organist at Mayflower Congregational Church

## **Don't forget to renew your membership!**

It has come to our attention that several members have not renewed their membership. It's a quick and easy process online through AGO National's website <https://www.agohq.org/oncard-login/> you'll need your membership number to login. We can help if needed – just let us know. We are planning to print a chapter directory this fall, and would like it to be as accurate as possible. By renewing now, you will help us with the project. Our chapter is covering membership costs for young organists, so anyone under 30 can join for FREE.

It's not too early to start planning for the **2023 Regional Convention!** Many of us planned and participated in the Regional Convention we hosted here in Grand Rapids in 2019, so you know how much work it is, how much money and commitment it takes, and how fulfilling it is.



Here is a note from Karl Bruhn, member of the Steering Committee:

I am the former Great Lakes Regional Councillor, but I write today as a member of the Steering Committee of the upcoming Great Lakes Regional AGO Convention scheduled for next summer.

We have probably met at some previous Great Lakes Regional event. Historically we have a terrific Region that has sponsored many fantastic events in the recent years including: Regional Conventions, Pipe Organ Encounters, POE+'s and POE Techs, January Jubilees, and "Pedals, Pipes and Pizzas." Perhaps we met at one of those previous events.



As you are probably already aware, our **2023 Great Lakes Regional Convention** is being hosted by the **North Shore (IL) Chapter**. (The North Shore chapter includes villages, cities, and suburbs north of the city of Chicago along the west shore of Lake Michigan, and continues west to the Fox River Valley chapter's area.) **It will happen from Sunday June 25 thru Wednesday June 28, 2023.** Visit this link to view the

exciting basic schedule of artists and events: [Schedule | Northshore AGO Convention 2023 \(nsago2023.org\)](https://nsago2023.org). More specific details will follow in the near future.

We need your help in two ways. First of all, we need you to help us **publicize** our upcoming Great Lakes Regional Convention.

Secondly, as with all such endeavors, events like this are rather expensive, and that is the second reason for this e-mail to you (and your chapter). Our North Shore Chapter has already solicited and received thousands of dollars in donations from our chapter members and friends; but we still need additional funding in order to have a marvelous convention. We are hoping that you would like to make a contribution (small or large) to the Convention.

If you would like to donate to underwrite a specific program, check out the schedule of artists and churches at the link (above) and contact [program@nsago2023.org](mailto:program@nsago2023.org) with the amount you would like to donate and to which artist or event.

You can make a donation to the Convention (either by check or by credit card. Here is how to do that:

[Donate | North Shore Chapter of the American Guild of Organists \(northshoreago.org\)](https://northshoreago.org)

We greatly appreciate you helping to sponsor the Convention, and we hope to see you—and many of your chapter members—in Evanston—in June.

Watch the Convention website ([nsago2023.org](https://nsago2023.org)) for additional updates and details.

Sincerely,

Karl Bruhn

(Member of the North Shore Chapter, Steering Committee for the Great Lakes Regional Convention 2023, and Former Great Lakes Regional Councillor for the AGO)