



THE NEW YORK CITY CHAPTER
of the
American Guild of Organists

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John Bishop, editor

Visit the website of the NYC AGO Chapter

Don't miss events presented by your friends and colleagues.
Visit the Concert Calendar of the NYC Chapter,
and attend some concerts!

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Dean's Message

It is a great privilege and pleasure to write this letter, my first to you as Dean of the NYC AGO Chapter. Many of you will have enjoyed (or are looking forward to) some well-earned vacation time this summer – and many of us, no doubt, will have attended the magnificent National Convention in Kansas City last month. In this age of constant distractions, it's all the more important to truly vacate from our work, allowing us to return with a renewed sense of vigor and energy in the fall.



It's that sense of energy and excitement that I can't help but feel about our Chapter. Membership has grown steadily over the past few years when numbers in most Chapters have decreased. Attendance at our events is at an all-time high. There are several obvious reasons for that, of course, including the fact that we are located in a great city with many fabulous instruments and world-class musical institutions. Our Chapter programs and educational initiatives have been entertaining and fulfilling, and the advantages of membership to the National Chapter (including the monthly *The American Organist* magazine) remain attractive.

But for me, I think, the most compelling reason to be a part of the Chapter is the ability to connect in person with those who have similar interests. This present era of so-called "communication without community" (which indeed has its uses – including the ability to read this newsletter from anywhere in the world!) continues to wage war on more traditional forms of interaction. The programs of the NYC AGO Chapter, however, enable us to unite behind a common cause – the appreciation of great organ music and fabulous instruments – and to gather as one to celebrate the same. To that end please consider yourselves active recruiters for the Guild! Tell your friends and colleagues about us, and consider bringing them along to our events, many of which are open to the public or admissible for a small fee.

Organizations such as the NYC AGO Chapter rely on the dedicated work of their trusty board members. I know that you will join with me in thanking our outgoing officers and board members, and in particular our immediate former Dean, David Enlow, who has led the Chapter with great skill and wisdom over these past four years.

It's all too easy for institutions such as ours to bask in the glory of over a century of storied history, a bygone era of organ recitals attended in droves, and concerts given by the likes of Virgil Fox, Marie-Claire Alain, and Marcel Dupré. The strength of our organization relies on our ability to be versatile. Though I believe the Chapter offers a great deal of relevance today, I also want to ask these questions: What can the NYC AGO Chapter do for you? What types of programming would you like to attend? Please share your thoughts, requests, and comments. We'd love to hear from you!

With my very best wishes,

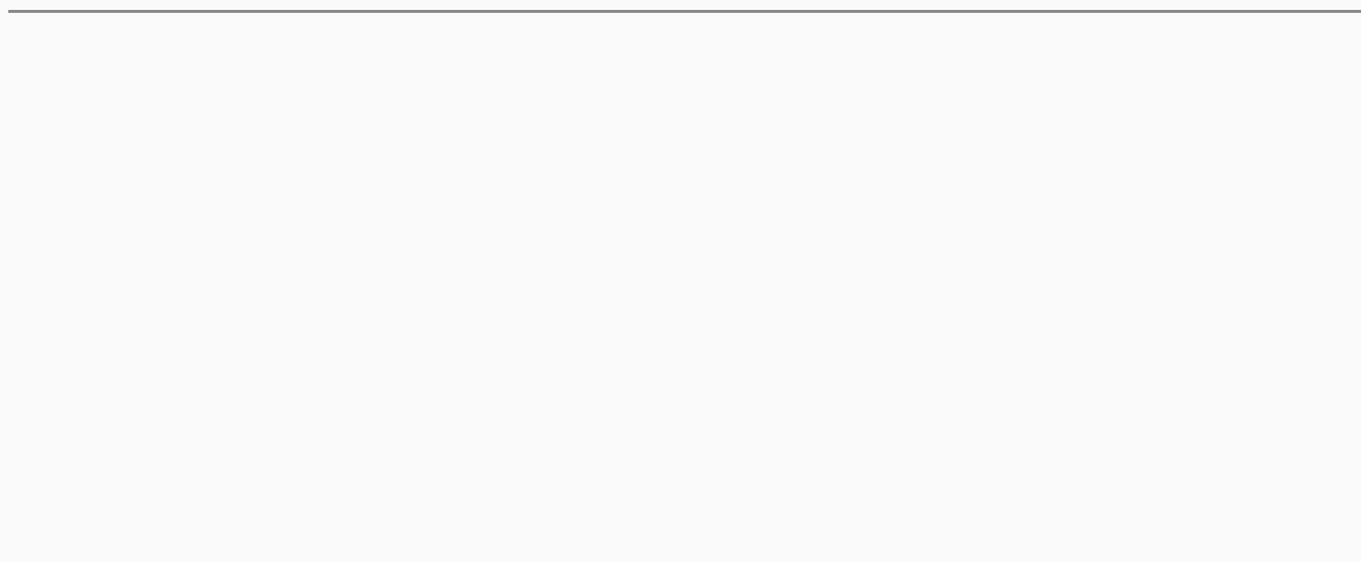
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

James Kennerley, Dean

NYC AGO Election Results, 2018

With many thanks to all who were willing to serve, and to those who voted for the next chapter leadership.

<p>Dean James Kennerley</p> <p>Sub-Dean James Wetzel</p> <p>Secretary Raymond Nagem</p> <p>Treasurer Christopher Babcock</p> <p>Registrar Larry Long</p> <p>Auditors Claudia Dumschat Steve Lawson</p>	<p>At-large (Class of 2022) Samuel Bartlett Gregory D'Agostino Donald Meineke William Randolph Jason Roberts J. David Williams</p>
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Program News

From the Sub-Dean

Dear friends,

I am profoundly grateful to the Chapter for electing me as Sub-Dean and will make every effort to uphold my office with the same aptitude that my predecessors have so diligently modeled. The chief responsibility of the Sub-Dean, with the help of my colleagues who have been conscripted onto the Program Committee, is to organize the yearly slate of Chapter activities that articulate its mission and shape its members. From these programs we should be able to draw inspiration from the art, edification from the scholarship, and encouragement from the fellowship. I trust that what the Committee submits will fulfill these tenets, offering a broad range of events appealing to enthusiast and neophyte alike.



One of the challenges in a year with a new executive committee is that the next season's planning cannot begin in earnest until the summer. So, while much work has already been done, we are not quite ready to publicize the schedule. Nevertheless, please do mark your calendars for our annual Presidents' Day Conference (Sunday, February 17 and Monday, February 18) and stay tuned for forthcoming details in the coming weeks!

Beyond our 'Chapter Programs', please continue to utilize the NYC Metro Concert Calendar (<http://www.nycago.org/html/calendar.html>) so heroically maintained by Steve Lawson. And if your institution is planning an event of special interest, let me know, and hopefully the Program Committee will be able to aid in its promotion. Also, any programming ideas and suggestions are most welcome! Is there a type of repertoire, a specific organ, an artist, or a topic for continuing education that you want the Chapter to foster? If so, please do write! To that end, you may want to first peruse the program archives, available here: <http://www.nycago.org/html/programarchives.html>

At this onset of my term, may I say that since moving to New York in 2005 for my undergraduate studies, I have continually been amazed at the kindness and generosity of those with whom I am proud to share this worthy vocation. It is such selflessness that enables this Guild to continue to share our gifts with each other and with the wider world. I am particularly indebted to James Kennerley for all of the guidance he has given me in the translation of duties and am very much looking forward to working with him over our tenure, especially since he and I live just two blocks apart on the Upper West Side!

Hoping to hear from you and to see you at an event this year, may I remain,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James".

James.



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Quote of the Month

"Music gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, and life to everything."

- Plato



David Enlow, FAGO
Juilliard Faculty
Organ Lessons, Coaching,
AGO Exam Preparation

Won't you be my neighbor?

Living in Greenwich Village, Wendy and I are surrounded by stars. When walking Farley, we frequently run into Alec Baldwin who lives halfway around the block. (He has two little dust-pushers in Burberry Scarves.) F. Murray Abraham is a regular in the Bar and Grill at the corner, where we also saw Philip Seymour Hoffman a few times. I had fun shaking hands with Steve Schirripa (Bobby on *The Sopranos*) on University Avenue.

A couple of months ago, a doorman told us that J. K. Simmons and Michael Moore had come to see an apartment in our building, and it turns out that Simmons bought one. We see Simmons frequently on television as the slightly goofy spokesman for Farmers Insurance, he voices the Yellow M&M, and plays Dr. Emil Skoda on *Law & Order*. But I know and admire his work best from the 2014 film *Whiplash*, for which he won an Oscar for Best Supporting Actor. Simmons played the demanding music teacher and conductor of a jazz ensemble who tyrannized his star student, a drummer, to the point of bleeding hands.

As a student of music, I found the film deeply moving, and invited a performer friend to join me when I went a second time. Simmons' character pushed the edge of divide between "tough love" encouragement of a talented young musician, and unabashed physical and emotional abuse. Seeing him in the flesh coming and going from our building reminded me of that extraordinary film. I recommend it as a meaningful watch for any serious musician.

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Joke of the Month

Over thirty years ago, the company I was working for was installing an organ with a magnificent case and beautiful, polished facade pipes. My boss and I were working late in the evening, installing the tubes that would convey air from the Great windchest to those facade pipes. There wasn't much space between the chest and the organ case, and it was a long reach across the organ, so we were standing on opposite sides of the organ, each handling one end of a tube. Working up the "C Side," we struggled to get low CCC done, then DDD was worse. Looking at the next one, I said, "To tube E, or not to tube E, that is the question."

David Lloyd ben Yaacov Yehuda Klepper
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From the Editor

You say Chaconne, I say Ciacona...

Damariscotta, our neighboring village in Maine is home to the Salt Bay Chamberfest, a brilliant festival of chamber music concerts presented in a large bucolic barn. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Wilhelmina Smith, a different troupe of artists comes to town to present five concerts during August. Last night, Wendy and I attended the annual benefit at which the brilliant violinist Jennifer Koh played Bach's Solo Violin Partita No. 2 in D Minor.



Bach's music for solo string instruments, notably the Violin Partitas and Cello Suites, are rich and varied works in which Bach's harmonic genius is on display. Many organists have studied Bach's "371 Chorales," which I believe stands as one of the most eloquent treatises on four-part harmony, full of rich chromatic progressions, in which every voice is always melodic. When he wrote for solo instruments, the harmonies are just as complex, but since the expression is limited to the output of a solo instrument, they're implied. As Ms. Koh played the D Minor Partita in an intimate setting yesterday gave me a marvelous opportunity to flex my harmonic chops, and listen to the solo lines of music in three dimensions.

The last movement of the Partita is the towering Chaconne. Towering because it's as complex and perfect as a musical expression can be. Yehudi Menuhin is quoted as saying, "... it's the greatest structure for solo violin that exists." Joshua Bell goes much further, "... not just one of the greatest pieces of music ever written, but one of the greatest achievements of any man in history." (If you think that's great, wait until you hear what the women have done!) Though the variety is limited to sixty-four variations of the four-measure theme, Bach seems to have proven that the possibilities are limitless. He transforms the simplest of forms into the most complex of pieces.

Several years ago, a cellist who is an acquaintance of mine set off on a project of performing Bach's Solo Cello Suites, filling in the implied harmonies with actual chords. The first problem was that it was too difficult for him, and the performances were labored. But the real issue was that the apparent simplicity of implied harmonies is the essential mystery of those pieces. Single lines with occasional double-stopping, arpeggios and accidentals are all Bach needed to provide a rich harmonic experience. Filling in the blanks with actual chords was sheer frippery.

Organists are provided with multiple keyboards and pedals, allowing easy access to actual complex chords, but a look into Bach's literature for solo strings might inform a lighter, delightful approach to performance. Play Bach's organ music as if the harmonies are implied. It might free up some ear effort.
