

PipeNotes

American Guild of Organists – Milwaukee Chapter

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Volume 72 – October 2025



American Guild of Organists
Milwaukee Chapter and
Mount Carmel Lutheran Church ELCA
present:

David Cherwien

Hymn and Choir Festival for All Saints

Sunday, October 26, 2025 | 3:00 PM



Mount Carmel Lutheran Church ELCA
8424 W. Center Street | Milwaukee, WI
www.mountcarmelchurch.org

Free will offering received.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qFyKgo4PVKQ>



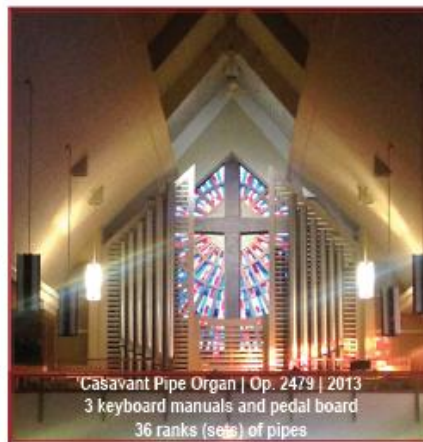
<https://www.youtube.com/live/kCG9VN99CXY?si=Gf>



Experience the vibrant All Saints' Hymn and Choir Festival with David Cherwien, a talented organist and improviser, alongside the AGO Festival Choir. This event will showcase powerful hymns and songs from "Evangelical Lutheran Worship" and "All Creation Sings", complemented by inspiring organ improvisation. Members of Mount Carmel Church will deliver impactful reflections from "Crossings: Meditations for Worship" and "To God I Give My Melody: Reflections for Worship" by Susan Palo Cherwien. Don't miss this opportunity to celebrate faith and spirituality through music!



Dr. David Cherwien, served as Cantor at Mount Olive Lutheran Church, Minneapolis from 2001-2024, continuing the tradition of creative hymn singing begun and sustained by predecessors Paul Manz and Mark Sedio. From 2001 until 2022 he also served as Artistic Director of the National Lutheran Choir.



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AGO MILWAUKEE CHAPTER EVENT



Photo Credit Karen Buker

AGO Milwaukee Chapter, September 21st, at St. Peter's Episcopal Church in West Allis, WI. Music, community, and food event.

The AGO Milwaukee Chapter launched its 106th season with a showcase of chamber music for piano and organ. The Hinners/Crane pipe organ (with 19 ranks and two manuals) and the 1998 Yamaha C1 Piano echoed throughout the splendid nave acoustics of Saint Peter's Church. Chapter members, Maria Koester and Tom Koester, performed Franck's: Prelude, Fugue, and Variations, Opus 18 (Harmonium and Piano), Adolf Hesse's: Fantasie in C Minor for Organ, Opus 35 (Four Hands and Pedal), and Brahms': Five Waltzes (from Sixteen Waltzes, Opus 39). Jeffrey Peterson and David Bahrke played Gerald Near's: Aria for Piano and Organ. Father Tom Lijewski, the Chaplain, installed the Board and Officers. New chapter members were welcomed, and Dr. Sheri Masiakowski introduced Robert Danner, CAGO, Jonathan Esser, SPC, and Keri Kelly, SPC, all of whom have completed the AGO Exams. The event concluded with a Food, Dessert, and Wine Reception. Seventy-five people from the Chapter, Saint Peter's Church, and the community attended. The event, **attended by 75 people**, was a resounding success, fostering community spirit and promoting organ music in its many evolving forms.

Seated: Maria Koester, Jeffrey Peterson

Standing from left to right: Tom Koester, Marilyn Schrader, David Bahrke, Craig Sproat, Sharon Adel, Lee Erickson, Rick Ewert, Father Tom Lijewski, Mary Seboldt, and John Schubring. Michael Batcho and Paul Kasten are not in the picture.

OCTOBER EVENT

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2025

3:00 PM

HYMN AND CHOIR FESTIVAL FOR ALL SAINTS

DAVID CHERWIEN

MT. CARMEL LUTHERAN CHURCH

8424 W. CENTER ST.

MILWAUKEE, WI

Co-sponsored with Mt. Carmel Lutheran Church

October 2025

5 (Sun) 3:00 Heather Boehm, Violin;
James Grzadzinski, Piano, and Organ
Brookfield Congregational UCC
16350 Gebhardt Rd
Brookfield, WI

5 (Sun) 4:00 David Jonies, Organ
St. Stephen the Martyr Lutheran Church
6101 S. 51st St.
Greendale, WI

12 (Sun) 2:00 AGO Milwaukee Chapter Board Meeting
All Saints Cathedral
818 E. Juneau Ave
Milwaukee

17 (Fri) 7:30 Olivier Latry, Organ
St. Chrysostom's Church
1424 N. Dearborn St.
Chicago, IL

19 (Sun) 1:30 Karen Beaumont, Organ
St. Hedwig's Church
1702 N. Humboldt Ave
Milwaukee, WI

19 (Sun) 3:00 Eastwinds Chamber Ensemble
Music for Horn, Oboe, Wind Quintet and Strings
St. Mark's Lutheran Church
3515 E. Van Norman Ave
Cudahy, WI


19 (Sun) 3:00 Michael Hoerig, Organ
Bethany Calvary UMC
7265 W. Center St
Wauwatosa, WI

Chapter Event

26 (Sun) 3:00 David Cherwien Hymn &
Choir Festival for All Saints
Mt. Carmel Lutheran Church
8424 W. Center St.
Milwaukee, WI
Co- Sponsored with Mt. Carmel



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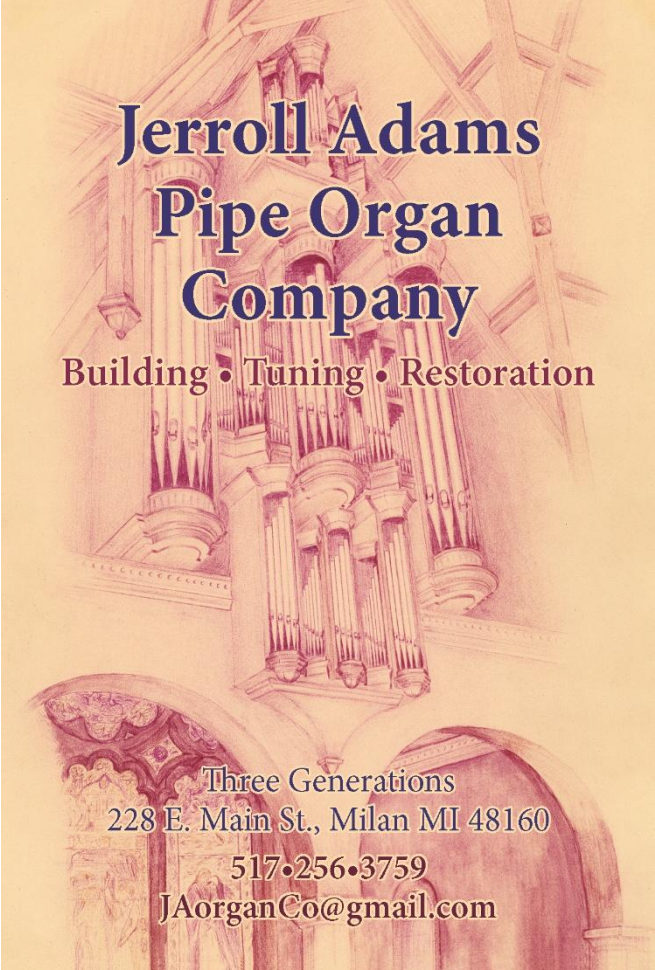
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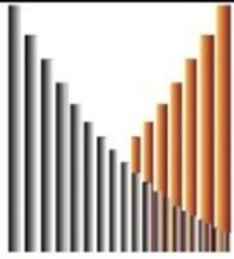
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FROM THE ARCHIVES

Liz Walloch, Archivist/Historian
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This month the Archives shares a profile story on one of our Chapter members. Her active years of music ministry spans over 70 years of leading the Catholic church in worship. Our Chapter is truly blessed to have her as an active member who has served in leadership roles of Dean, a member of the Executive Board and AGO Exam Coordinator to name a few. As we all know, our music ministry positions have more seasons than the church's liturgical year. There are seasons of ups and downs, life direction and redirection, musical and personal growth, spiritual pauses to refresh our energies and more. In the midst of all we offer to our churches, we are always being prepared during these varying stages of transition to yet another new stage. I recently sat down with Chapter members Sr. Mary Jane Wagner and Sheri Masiakowski. We listened to Sister Mary Jane speak of her musical journey spanning the decades of family influences, music study opportunities, being an organ teacher/professor, recitalist, a religious sister, and pastoral musician. Her musical stories are not ending there; they are beginning anew.

♪♪ of Grace and Gratitude, Musical Reflections From Sister Mary Jane Wagner Part 1

The musical beginning...

"I come from a musical family" that resided "on a small dairy farm 10 miles north of Sheboygan...I remember listening to my dad play the reed organ...in our living room. He also sang in the church choir. My older brother played the accordion and formed a band called the Cleveland Rhythm Kings.' My mother sang...as she worked around the house, in the garden, doing laundry...taught us songs of her youth...around the piano. I would play by ear what my siblings had performed." A budding musician is marking her entrance from early influences of family.

From playing by ear...to sub organist at the age of ten...

Her sister Roseann was guiding her younger sister Mary Jane to read music. *"One perk was Roseann became an organist while still in high school. That set her for beginning a Bachelor of Music degree at Alverno. That summer of 1952, Donna Mae, another sister, was home from the convent and able to sub for Roseann's 6-week summer school at Alverno."* Their uncle, Msgr. Anthony J. Knackert, was influential in seeing that each of the Wagner nieces had bench time. And so, the progression began. *"The next summer, 1953 Donna Mae was at Holy Family Convent, so Mary Jane became the new substitute for Roseann who was at Alverno for her second summer. [Roseann commuted from Sheboygan to Alverno to earn her degree in 4 years and 4 summers and continued to work as organist at Holy Name.]* These were pre-Vatican II days with all Latin sung responses, the ordinary of the mass and hymns. Sister Mary Jane shared *"that was a mouthful of Latin for a 10-year-old."*

Pedagogue on piano...and organ...

One constant in Mary Jane's sharing was the influence of her sister Roseann. From the age of 5 and her ability to read, Roseann would teach her to read the musical notes as before Mary Jane would play music by ear. Mary Jane studied piano with the same teacher as Roseann. Her teacher Marion Grotelueschen had seen the musical potential in Mary Jane by ever challenging her to *"try new and more difficult pieces."* Again, the learning of organ basics also came from her sister Roseann. The lack of Mary Jane's pedal technique was clearly evident. *"I [Mary Jane] was too short to reach the pedals, so I was a 'manual only' beginner."* All of this turned around during her

freshman year of high school with Sister Mary Edmund, SSND as her organ teacher. The study of pedal technique was brought together with her manual skills. All throughout high school, Mary Jane continued to study both piano and organ continuing with her first piano teacher Ms. Grotelueschen and moving on to organ teacher

Mr. Donald Frazee. Sister Mary Jane praised him *“as an outstanding teacher for [her]. Before I realized its significance, I was playing the Bach Trio Sonatas. By the end of my senior year, I could play the first five sonatas.”* What initially May Jane lacked in pedal technique *“had grown and trios were [her] delight.”* She shared she played a solo organ recital her senior year that *“looked like a college graduation program.”* Again, a music teacher tapping into the musical gifts of Mary Jane that gave momentum for the years ahead. It was also during these teen years *“Mary Jane had opportunities to accompany diverse choirs, singers, and instrumentalists. At the Annual Holy Hour (Roman Catholic) held in summer at Vollrath Bowl and accommodating several thousand people, that Mary Jane had her first experience on an electronic organ.”*

Milwaukee bound to attend Alverno...

The opportunity for Mary Jane to attend Alverno was made possible by her auditioning for and receiving *“the Father Raymond Zeyen scholarship from Alverno College’s Music Department.”* This was a *“natural decision, given her consistent love and talent for both instruments. She studied piano with Sister Seraphim Stoecker, was part of a duo piano team, and performed the Kabalevsky Concerto with the Milwaukee Catholic Symphony.”* Alverno had *“many vibrant professionally outstanding School Sisters of St. Francis”* on the faculty. Two faculty that stand out who *“influenced her greatly were Sister Theophane Hytrek and Sister Maurelia (now Mary) Hueller...as did the excitement of the Second Vatican Council which began during her junior year. Sister Theophane was a central figure nationally in creating new liturgical music during that time, so Mary Jane, as part of the college’s schola, had the opportunity to sing liturgical music composed in the vernacular; as well as Gregorian chant.”*

Sister Mary Jane shared that there are *“so many things you learn by observation”* in life. Maybe you are not even conscious of it, but it leaves a positive impact on your life, career and opens one’s vision for a lifetime. One such individual was Mary Jane’s 5th grade piano teacher Ms. Marion Grotelueschen, who had also been her older sister Roseann’s teacher who *“solidified the foundation for her musical education.”* Sister shared she was an amazing teacher. *“I imbibed much of her sensitivity in teaching into my approach to teaching.”* She treated each student uniquely. There was no rubber stamping with the music repertory, it was individualized based on level and offered her students challenges with subtle nudges. From challenges learned from notes on a page, to the reward of the musical ownership and interpretation by students became key with Sister from her early formation. *“Being an exemplary teacher, I learned...about music by observation.”* Relating an opposite experience of her sister Roseann’s early learning of music with a parish organist who was not prepared to teach. Roseann had to backtrack and relearn from qualified teachers, and she didn’t want me [Mary Jane] to suffer as she did. Roseann wanted me to learn it right the first time to build a solid foundation of musical skill. This approach impacted the importance of the student and teacher partnership for Mary Jane *“as she always knew that she wanted to teach someday.”* Mary Jane graduated with a Bachelor of Music degree from Alverno in the spring of 1964.

East to Eastman School of Music...

Sister’s mentor, Sister Theophane, encouraged her to *“pursue a master’s degree in Organ Performance and Literature at Eastman School of Music.”* She had the opportunity to study *“with David Craighead and completed her two-year program in only one year and a summer, while also working part-time at an Episcopal parish.”* One would wonder why the rush? *“In the summer of 1964,”* upon graduating from Alverno, *“she took time off from her job in data entry at the Milwaukee VA Hospital to attend the annual Liturgical Music Workshop in Boys Town, Nebraska. There, she met Flor Peeters, who encouraged her to apply for a Fulbright scholarship to study organ with him in Belgium. Finishing her”* master’s *“degree early made this possible.”*

I was curious how the progression was for her with her Bachelor of Music degree completed to pursuing a master’s at Eastman in Rochester New York? Sister replied, *“It was pretty smooth.”* This was a major step in her journey from her home state of Wisconsin to study at Eastman in Rochester New York. Here is a delightful story Sister shared. *“We got to New York and found 30 Vick Park A, which was our address. We were welcomed in and discovered this was a boarding house for both men and women.”* This was a new dimension to her living experience from her family life on the farm in Sheboygan.

Europe bound...

With suitcases packed, Mary Jane “crossed the Atlantic on the SS Rotterdam with other Fulbright-students, professors, researchers-and studied at the Royal Flemish Conservatory in Antwerp” in the fall of 1965. Those who knew of her studying abroad encouraged her to explore the music and culture by travelling during her free time. Sister Mary Jane said she did travel “extensively throughout Europe.”

Call to religious life...

It was during her time in Europe that she had decided to enter the convent. Sister Mary Jane shared the connection of her mother’s time living among the School Sisters of St. Francis in her youth. Mary Jane’s mother came to live at the Mother House after the passing of her biological mother. At age 11, her mother had to decide to stay at the Mother House and enter the convent or move on. Her mother chose to move on to St. Mary’s Academy and she shared with her daughters that these were the best years of her early life. Although her mother responded with a “no” for herself to the School Sisters of St. Francis, two of her three daughters entered the order. The influence of mother and older sister, now Sister Roseann brought Mary Jane to follow and enter the religious order herself on August 28, 1966.

This brings us to the end of Part 1
November PipeNotes will complete Sister’s musical journey.

Sources:

Personal Interview with Sister Mary Jane Wagner—July 15, 2025

Additional information from Sister Mary Jane Wagner—September 21, 2025

ALMA Award booklet pages 4-5 Biography by Sarah Stefanko—May 20, 2016

VIRTUAL PEDAGOGY CONFERENCE WILL INCLUDE ONLINE COLLEGE FAIR

In addition to a full schedule of keynote presentations, panel discussions, and networking opportunities, the **First Annual AGO Virtual Pedagogy Conference, Oct. 9 – 11**, will offer an online College Fair, with the opportunity for students to meet faculty and explore the organ and related programs at two dozen leading schools of music. [Registration is now open, with special discounted rates for members. Click here to learn more about the conference program.](#)



ZOOM STUDY GROUPS FOR FALL SPC, CAGO EXAMS

Monthly online study groups are being offered for the 2025-26 [Service Playing Certificate \(SPC\)](#) and [Colleague \(CAGO\)](#) exams. Sessions take place on Zoom at 7 p.m. ET / 4 p.m. PT.

SPC: [Monday, Oct. 20](#) / [Monday, Nov. 17](#)
CAGO: [Tuesday, Oct. 14](#) - Repertoire and Keyboard Skills

Recordings of past webinars are also available on demand.

National Webinars

The Weekend Organist: Working with Instrumentalists Monday, Oct. 6, 7 p.m. ET / 4 p.m. PT

With the festive Advent and Christmas seasons rapidly approaching, this practical workshop will help you to identify, contract, and effectively lead freelance musicians. Whether you hire a soloist, small ensemble, or an entire orchestra, you will be prepared for those special services and concerts!



[Click here](#) to learn more and register.

Beyond the Bench: Exploring Creative Side Gigs as a Young Organist Monday, Oct. 13, 7 p.m. ET / 4 p.m. PT

The second installment of "From Console to Career: Professional Issues for Emerging Church Musicians," our five-part, monthly online series, will feature moderator **Jillian Gardner**, with panelists **Paul Griffin**, **Lindsey Johnson**, **Connor Larsen**, and **Sol Rizzato**.



[Click here](#) to learn more and register.



SAVE THE DATE!

Friday, November 14, 2025

7:30 pm

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