
Regional Newsletter

AGO NORTH
CENTRAL REGION

◆
November 2024



A Word from the Regional Ambassador

As I write this letter it is the morning after our traditional Pipescreams concert at St. Olaf. This year we had over 200 students and community members in the audience. They enthusiastically applauded and cheered the organ students who were playing - beginners all the way through advanced organ majors. There was equal appreciation for Bach and Mendelssohn as well as for Harry Potter and Psycho. I don't think I've ever experienced such overwhelming love from the community and our students really felt the support. This concert comes at a time where I must admit I've felt real trepidation about the future of the organ department here, indeed the future of the organ across the country. It's no secret that it is difficult to recruit organ students and many organ departments are closing. Churches are having trouble finding players.

Young students are not exposed to the organ. Concerts like this are just baby steps to bringing the love of the organ to a wider audience. Our student organist group here at St. Olaf is more diverse than ever. Where we once had several organ performance and church music majors in each class, we now have secondary students who are piano majors, or even physics majors. I am loving this. There's an enthusiasm here that is palpable and these students who may go out and study law or engineering may also be the students who have part time church jobs or become big supporters of organ recitals. During my tenure as the North Central Regional Ambassador I hope we can meet together and discuss how chapters can engage young people. Some chapters are hosting Pedals, Pipes, and Pizza and building Orgelkids USA kits. But do we stay in contact with attendees after the event?



Do we encourage young people to practice at our churches? Have we established mentorship programs? The National Office is busy building resources to help us with all of these things. At the same time, it's also important to support those of us already working in the profession. I'd love to hear of your challenges and experiences, and I hope over these next two years I will have a chance to visit with you all in person. Thank you for the opportunity to serve you as we all do this important work!

Catherine Rodland





Chapter News

Twin Cities Chapter

A Night to Remember

On Friday, October 25, the Twin Cities Chapter of the American Guild of Organists (TCAGO) hosted a spectacular Fall Members Recital, themed "The Many Moods of Dance." The event was graced by an enthusiastic audience of over 120 attendees, who were treated to an evening of exceptional musical performances. The 1977 Schantz organ, with its three manuals and 36 ranks, offered a rich variety of sounds and masterfully captured the diverse sonorities of dance.

Talented musicians delivered a captivating and imaginative program, celebrating "The Many Moods of Dance" and the anniversaries of renowned composers such as Buxtehude, Bach, Dubois, Fauré, Lefébure-Wély, Widor, Stanford, Calvin Hampton, and Godwin Sadoh. Each piece resonated with the audience, showcasing the diverse and dynamic nature of dance music.



Omaha Chapter

Hymn Festival with Richard Webster

The Omaha Chapter of the American Guild of Organists will present a Hymn Festival led by Richard Webster on March 2, 2025. The event will be held at St. Wenceslaus Catholic Church, 15353 Pacific Street, Omaha, Nebraska. Grammy-nominated organist Jan Kraybill will play the church's three-manual, 65-rank Cassavant organ, installed in 2021. Sing Omaha's Master Chorale and Creighton University's Chamber Choir will join a brass quintet with members of the Omaha Symphony. The program will take us through the Church's liturgical year.

Richard Webster is an internationally renowned organist, composer, and conductor. He was honored at the American Guild of Organists 2023 Gala and has led inspirational hymn festivals across the United States.

<p>Thursday, January 16th, 8:00pm Leo Sowerby Webinar with Michael McCabe Via Zoom Meet in person at St. Cecilia Cathedral 701 N 40th Street, Omaha, NE 68131 Join us via Zoom for a guided discussion with highly esteemed and beloved Omaha AGO member Michael McCabe as he delves into his time studying with American organ virtuoso and master Leo Sowerby. Details at omahaago.org</p>
<p>Saturday, February 22nd, 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. Mid-Winter Workshop St. John Lutheran Church - 633 Willow Ave, Council Bluffs, IA 51501 Explore new ideas for the music + Hymn and Service Playing ideas On-The-Go Improvisation Skills + Contemporary Music on the Organ Lunch included + \$20 registration fee Details at omahaago.org</p>

Richard's impressive biography is found at <https://advent-press.com/>

The Omaha chapter is participating in a pilot program with national AGO leadership to strengthen, engage, and retain membership. The chapter has implemented a strategic plan to test various approaches to meet these goals. This hymn festival seeks to provide an opportunity to promote the organ to audiences that may not normally attend an organ recital and to develop stronger relationships with area organizations.

Admission is free. A reception will follow. Further information may be found at www.omahaago.org or by contacting Jeff Hoffman at omahaago.org or 402-317-8887.





Milwaukee Chapter

Workshop and Recital with Bruce Bengston

On Sept. 28 and 29 - The Milwaukee Chapter hosted Bruce Bengston at Mt. Carmel Lutheran Church in Milwaukee. On Saturday morning Bruce presented a workshop on service music. On Sunday after Bruce presented a Recital and Interactive Hymn Sing, where audience members submitted written hymn requests that were then drawn out of a basket and then a couple stanzas of each hymn were sung.



Southeastern Minnesota Chapter

Officer Installation

The Southeast Minnesota chapter of the AGO installed their officers on September 15, 2024 at The Congregational UCC church in Rochester, MN. After the service, the chapter had a picnic on the church grounds. Catherine Rodland, Regional Ambassador for the AGO North Central Region, was the installing officer and guest organist.

Advent Recital

The Southeast Minnesota AGO chapter will be having a members Advent recital at 3:00 pm on Sunday, December 1 at St. Martin's Lutheran Church in Winona, MN.

The church is located at 328 East Broadway Street. Reception follows.



Topeka Chapter

Pickering Duo Recital

Beginning the 2024-2025 season, The Topeka AGO Chapter, in conjunction with Washburn University Department of Music & Theatre, presented organists David Pickering and Audrey Pickering in a duo recital at White Concert Hall on 11 October 2024.

Audrey, David's daughter, also a cellist, performed in both capacities. Audrey performed two organ solo works: J.S. Bach's Prelude in E-flat Major, BWV 552, and Vierne's Choral, from Symphony No. 2.

Then the two of them performed "Prayer" from Jewish Life by Ernest Bloch, followed by Dances with Clams by Daniel E. Gawthrop, with Audrey on cello accompanied by David. As an organ duo they performed Charles Callahan's Evensong.



Gawthrop's Symphony No. 1 ("O Jerusalem") rounded out the evening, and was performed by David Pickering.

David Pickering is on faculty as Associate Director of the School of Music, Theatre, and Dance at Kansas State University. He recently completed a new book on the history of the organ department at Brigham Young University.

Audrey Pickering is a music student at the University of Kansas and is pursuing a Master of Music degree in Organ Performance, under the tutelage of James Higdon. She is also Director of Music at Peace Lutheran Church in Kansas City, MO.





An Invitation from the Great Lakes Region

The Rockford (IL) AGO Chapter is hosting the Great Lakes Regional January Jubilee this coming January. It will be hosted at the historic Court Street United Methodist Church in downtown Rockford.

The date will be January 18th. Registration (in person) will begin at 8 am; and we will be finished by c. 3:30 pm.

This year's Jubilee—as in past years—will have three different “tracks.” Folks attending the Jubilee can choose whatever sessions interest them. There is no restriction to stay with the same track throughout the day. (Much of the music presented will be music you can use for the upcoming Lent and Easter season. Ash Wednesday is March 5, 2025.)

Topics for this year include:

- Organ Registrations
- Transitioning from Piano to Organ
- Maximize your Practice Time
- Creative Introductions, and Hymn Playing
- Manual and Pedal Technique
- Anthems for the Aging (and smaller) Choirs (including SAB and SB anthems)—including a “repertory list”
- Professional Concerns Discussion
- A session on ringing choir chimes—including a “repertory list”
- A session on ringing handbells (for beginners and intermediate ringers)—including a “repertory list”

One of our “Rising Star” Organists, Nicholas Hansen, will be presenting a 30 minute (mid-day) concert on the church's 4 manual (1969) Moeller pipe organ.

Lunch will be included, as well as refreshments throughout the day.

The cost for the event (including lunch and refreshments) will be \$30 per person (if mailed in early); and \$40 “at the door.”

Our (short) opening worship service will feature our chapter's Chaplain, Rev. Cal Culpepper

“Official” Registration Forms for this event will be available in about a month.

Rockford is a large northern Illinois community—about 60 miles north-west of Chicago. There are many fine (national chain) hotels in Rockford—if you wish to arrive the night before.

If you have any questions, please contact Karl Bruhn, the publicity director for the January Jubilee at: karl.bruhn.ago@gmail.com



North Central Region Nominating Committee Members: Jeff White (Chair), David Pickering, Sheri Masiakowski, Laura Edman, and Phil Radtke

National News

News from National Headquarters

The National Office has been extraordinarily busy this fall with the launch of the new AGO website. Please be in touch with AGOHQ if you need help setting up your new password, and please be patient as this is still a work in process!

October was also when AGO members voted on the changes to the national elections and bylaws. Stay tuned for more information about the results.

In a meeting with new Director of Education Michelle Kardos, we learned that there will be many changes to the upcoming Professional Certification exams. There is a committee hard at work on this, and it is possible it may have a regional coordinator in the future, and possibly even move to an online model. Follow this link for more information.

<https://www.agohq.org/Ago/Ago/Education/Professional-Certification.aspx?hkey=a383501d-e443-4b95-9ee0-209a928ec04a>

This will also be the first year that the RCYO competition for young organists will be held in the new format of an online submission, and then two centers for the live rounds. See the competitions page for more information.

<https://wp.agohq.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Updated-2025-RCYO-Guidelines-September-2024-TAQ.pdf>



Pipe Organ Encounters

**St. Olaf College, Northfield, MN
June 15-20, 2025**

<https://www.agohq.org/Ago/Ago/Education/Pipe-Organ-Encounters.aspx?hkey=deaf7531-f58d-4c59-a8c3-1aa73448d9cb>

Task Force for Gender Equity

The AGO Task Force for Gender Equity invites members to begin considering what repertoire they might use to celebrate Woman Composer Sunday on March 9, 2025. Click on the following [link](#) to be directed to a helpful list put out by the AGO a few years ago for possible ideas.

Certification Recipients from the Region

Congratulations to the following newly-certified North Central members! Please acknowledge these successful candidates in your chapter newsletters and in person at chapter events. Encourage other chapter members to begin the process of preparing for future AGO exams.

Central Iowa Chapter

- Richard Tanimoto, SPC

Chippewa Valley Chapter

- Lynn Emmons, SPC

Madison Chapter

- Robert A. Eversman Jr., CAGO

Milwaukee Chapter

- Robert Danner, CAGO
- Jonathan J. Esser, SPC
- Keri Barbara Kelly, SPC

St. Louis Chapter

- Nannette W. Tornblom, SPC

Twin Cities Chapter

- Jeremiah Knudson, SPC
- Robyn C. Stoller, SPC
- Tate Shannon, SPC

Wichita Chapter

- Bassem H. Roupahel, SPC



Summer 2025

Conventions

Phoenix, AZ June 16-19, 2025
<https://phxago2025.org/>

Fort Worth, TX June 30-July 3, 2025
<https://www.ago2025fw.org/>



The mission of the American Guild of Organists is to foster a thriving community of musicians who share their knowledge and inspire passion for the organ. The vision of the American Guild of Organists is to engage and uplift every organist.