

# Sacramento Valley Chapter of the American Guild of Organists Newsletter



July 2020

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## Dean's Message

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing to you on Independence Day to say that we have "liberated" the Centennial organ from the hands of the Philistines! Never let it be said of our chapter nor any of the organ lovers in our pleasant valley, that there is no support for the organ because that is not true! We not only support each other as colleagues but also promote and protect the organ for posterity!

Let me explain. About a month ago our very own Marian Metson sent me a link that had a curious message, so much so I thought it was fake. Unadorned nor addressed it simply said: "To think it has come to this". Grimacing I was going to delete it when I read the word Centennial organ in the link. Clicking on it my heart sank and I was physically ill for the rest of the day (and a few subsequent ones).

The State University at Chico had put the finest Central German Organ (outside of central Germany) up for Public Auction (!!!!). It could be had at that point for just over a hundred dollars. An organ that is estimated at 1.7 Million. (I wish there was an exclamation point that denoted fainting, I would use it here)

But regardless of the money, it is the finest example of that style of building during the life and times of Johann Sebastian Bach, a great composer to be sure, but who's pulpit, his personal medium of expression, was the organ.

The intricacies of his music are illuminated by this instrument - it is an incredible teaching tool and window into a bygone era. When your fingers touch the keys of the organ, you are transported to another time and the sonorities that follow lift the music to extraordinary heights of understanding.

It is the perfect medium to comprehend the organ music of J.S. Bach.

After a month of handwringing, Dr. Rothe and I decided to join forces to save the organ with our own money, then soon, within three days, the love for the organ was manifest by people, supporters, fans, AGO members, who threw their lot in with us and by Monday the auction was hot and heavy.

Daniel Joe Sidhu II was at the computer running the auction whilst I paced the floors of my office rubbing my chin and firing commands for the bids - it would turn out that we were competing with a gentlemen from the Czech Republic for the organ. Things were touch and go the entire time. Then Mr. Bourey called my cell phone and threw in with us some more and by Providence we saved the organ from leaving the country and our golden valley. The auction abruptly ended, the servers went down, and after 3 minutes of sheer terror - we won. (WE WON!) The figures will of course astound you - but let there be no doubt, we saved the organ from an uncertain fate in a land far away.

If you've not seen it, here it is: (By the time you receive this newsletter, the dismantle of it will have begun)



Continued on page 2



## AGO Board Members

### Dean

Ronald Paul Sidhu  
[rpsidhu@comcast.net](mailto:rpsidhu@comcast.net)

### Sub Dean

Rex Rallanka  
[rrallanka@cathedralsacramento.org](mailto:rrallanka@cathedralsacramento.org)

### Secretary

Gayla Mott  
[GMKeyserv@aol.com](mailto:GMKeyserv@aol.com)

### Treasurer

Adrienne Leach  
[aleach6@netzero.net](mailto:aleach6@netzero.net)

### Members at Large

Ryan Enright, Lars Gjerde  
& Sue Miller

### Newsletter

Ron  
(916) 765-6562  
[rpsidhu@comcast.net](mailto:rpsidhu@comcast.net)

### National Executive Director

James E. Thomashower  
[jet@agohq.org](mailto:jet@agohq.org)

### National AGO President

Michael Bedford

### Region IX Councillor

Matthew Burt  
[matthewburt@gmail.com](mailto:matthewburt@gmail.com)

### Northern CA District Convener

Michael Varlas  
[mvarlas@yahoo.com](mailto:mvarlas@yahoo.com)

## Dean's Message (cont)

*Continued from page 1*

I'll keep you updated to the progress and offer an opportunity to donate to the Endowment Fund.

After this roller-coaster week I am ready to retire, but I have more to accomplish in this my final year as Dean.

The first thing of chapter news that I went to tell you is that we held a meeting of the Executive Board at my home on Saturday June 27th and we voted to create a new concert season, held in person, and abiding but whatever the rules from the Governor or the church that hosts us at that time.

I should also say that I apologize to the Members at Large because we cannot accommodate them in my little house. Thus, our next meeting scheduled for August 29th will also be limited to the executive board.

As we move forward to our new season, it is time to renew, and for some in the North Valley to become active members again. You will find my letter of renewal attached to this newsletter; however, you will also receive a copy from our illustrious treasurer Adrienne Leach mailed directly to your home. (You will receive it by the 15th of July) In it, you will find the renewal paperwork to fill out and an addressed - already stamped envelope to return your dues and contributions with. There is also a survey about what you might like to see our chapter add to the season. The Sacramento Valley Chapter is an OnCard opt out chapter so you must fill out and return your check to the chapter directly.

Which brings me to another thing, did you notice anything different in how I addressed our chapter? That's right, we added the word "valley" to our name.

Hence forth we will be known as the Sacramento Valley Chapter of the AGO - which runs from Stockton to Redding.

In the renewal letter, you will find that I have issued a challenge to all our members, to give an additional \$75 (as I am) to our future program, especially if we are able (fingers crossed) to host the Titular organist for Notre Dame Cathedral, Oliver Latry. Even if travel complications continue, we could host him in a subsequent year, but we need your extra support to do this confidently.

You can give over that amount to the program fund, or the \$75 to my challenge, any and all contributions are tax deductible and go to promote the organ and support each other as colleagues.

There is so much more to tell, and I hope to do so in an article apply named by Marian Metson: "How to buy a million-dollar organ and not have a heart attack!" (I might have to rename it to "come close to having a heart attack")

What magnificent, magnanimous, benevolent supporters of the organ you are. You mean the world to me. The Philistines may storm the gates but with sword in hand, our arrows of desire, we shall rebuild the Centennial Organ in our valleys green and pleasant land.

With sword in hand, I remain, an ardent promoter of the organ and determined to support you as a colleague,

*Ron*

PS This newsletter features Rebecca Nelson, The AGO Organ fest online, the Nunc Dimittis for Dr. Edmundson, and delightful book reviews by our UK colleague Mark Jameson.

## Available: Reed organ available for the taking

It is the size of an upright piano, however more ornate than most uprights. The brand: Needham (New York) - Bellows seem to be operating but it does not speak at the moment -- perhaps because of accumulation of dust in the reeds. Thus, some kind of restoration is required to make it sing again. It has been sitting in our garage for several years although it was operating when it arrived.

Location:  
20 miles east of Marysville.  
Call Roger Austin at (530) 218-0004



## Membership Profile



Rebecca Hathaway Nelson feels blessed to be back in Stockton after many years away. A native of Southern California, she earned her Bachelor of Music degree in Organ Performance at the University of Redlands. She has been a featured alum at the celebrated Feast of Lights on several occasions. She completed her Master of Arts degree at Santa Clara University where she studied with noted international organist, Dr. James Welch.

Rebecca has worked in a number of Roman Catholic and main-line Protestant churches, primarily in California (Redlands, Stockton, Salinas, Monterey, San Francisco), New Jersey, and Missouri. She has served as an organist, choir director, children's choir director, and/or handbell director. Rebecca is married to her college sweetheart, the Rev. Dr. Kim L. Nelson, a Presbyterian minister, now retired. Most of their careers have been serving in separate churches.

When she first lived in Stockton, Rebecca was the organist at the Cathedral of the Annunciation. The priest told her that she would learn their liturgy, and indeed she did. After moving to the Central Coast, Rebecca continued to thrive in her new and various Roman Catholic liturgical settings. She gives credit for her training to her under-grad college professor, coach, and mentor, Dr. Jeffrey H. Rickard (Canon and Minister of Music at Trinity Episcopal Church, Redlands, and Director of Choral Activities, Emeritus, U. of Redlands). Rebecca was the organist for the Papal Visit of John Paul II at the televised outdoor mass at Laguna Seca in Monterey County.



*Please send your member profile, picture (not required) and short bio of yourself with organ experience to [rpsidhu@comcast.net](mailto:rpsidhu@comcast.net)*

## 2020 Organ Fest!



The American Guild of Organists is thrilled to announce the first online OrganFest, which will take place July 20-24. Each evening's broadcast

will premiere a new work which had been commissioned for the 2020 National Convention in Atlanta, accompanied by interviews with the composers.

Featured performers will be Jens Korndörfer, Amanda Mole, Alan Morrison, Thomas Ospital, and Catherine Rodland. Additional recorded performances by recent international organ competition winners will be presented, and short presentations will share exciting news and updates from the AGO.

The daily YouTube premiere (8pm Eastern) and accompanying Festival website will be available at no charge.

OrganFest 2020 promises to be an exciting way to showcase our beloved instrument and the great work of the AGO. Please share this information widely with your music-loving friends.

While we are saddened by the cancellation of many musical events this spring and summer, including our National Convention in Atlanta, we look forward to celebrating the future of organ music together online next month.



James E. Thomashower  
Executive Director



Michael Wabing  
OrganFest 2020 Coordinator  
Council for Conventions



## Need an AGO Organist to play at your service?

We are compiling a list of all AGO substitute organists to be published here for churches to have for quick reference when they need an organist.

### Substitute list

Lars Gjerde

Email: [lars@larsgjerde.com](mailto:lars@larsgjerde.com)

Phone: (585) 200-8903

Randy Wurschmidt

Email: [rwurschmidt@yahoo.com](mailto:rwurschmidt@yahoo.com)

Phone: (260) 452-9751

*Do you want to appear on this list? If so, please email your preferred contact information to: [rpsidhu@comcast.net](mailto:rpsidhu@comcast.net) and you too can be listed here.*



Robert Edmondson passed away peacefully after a long and full life. He was born and raised in Waukesha, WI, discovering a love of music and the great outdoors and developing an interest in medicine from his physician father. After graduating with honors from the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine in 1954, Bob's irrepressible wanderlust took him

to Philadelphia, two years of medical service in the army in France, Boston, where he met and married Ann Tomlinson, his wife of 62 years, Cleveland, Salt Lake City, and finally Woodland. Bob joined the Woodland Clinic Medical group in 1961 as the first hematologist in the practice. He was a Fellow of the American College of Physicians, certified by the American Board of Internal Medicine in Hematology and Medical Oncology and enjoyed teaching hematology as a Clinical Professor at the University of California at Davis for 28 years. Bob was known for his thorough and sensitive treatment and management of the challenges of a cancer diagnosis and for his care in counseling families to accept their victories and their defeats. In his own quiet and thoughtful way, he improved the quality of life for many in the community and beyond. Bob and Ann were founding

members of the Woodland Presbyterian Church which was established in 1966. Over the past 54 years they have been contributing members of the Session, Deacons, Land and Building committees. Bob was the church organist for more than 40 years. He was also a founding member of the Woodland Chamber Singers and served as the director until 2007. He kept an active schedule of musical performances, trips around the world, and socializing. In later years a hereditary memory condition limited his activities but not his chipper mood and clever sense of humor. Bob left the world a better place for his efforts. Bob was a devoted husband and proud father of Jim, a retired neurologist in New York City, and Susan, a scientist in Cambridge MA. Bob is survived by his loving wife, Ann; his son, Jim and wife Patricia; their sons, Alexander and Eric; and his daughter, Susan, her husband, Allen Rutberg and their children, Benjamin and Nathan.

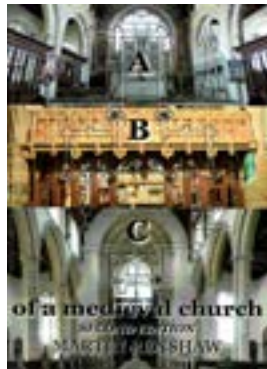
From Nancy Metzger: A longtime member of the Sacramento AGO, Bob Edmondson, was also an Oncologist. He passed away earlier this month. He brought his wife Ann with him at least a couple of times to my house for the AGO 12th Night party. He played the organ for several years (over 40) at the Presbyterian church in Woodland, near where he lived. He left the AGO when he retired from the church, but many of us remember him.

## Book Review



Our Colleague across the pond, Mark Jameson has given us another set of great reviews that first appeared in the Berkshire Organists' Association.

[www.berkshireorganists.org.uk/](http://www.berkshireorganists.org.uk/)



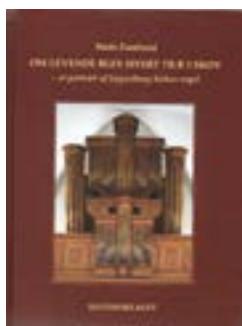
### **ABC of a Medieval Church, 2nd edition by Martin Renshaw ISBN 9780956710277**

The first edition of this book was published in 2017 and distributed by "At the Sign of the Pipe" - a publishing house run by David Shuker, an organ historian. Sales exceeded expectations so a second edition was published in 2019. Martin Renshaw was a chorister at St Paul's Cathedral and later at Canterbury Cathedral. He has spent his life restoring and making historically based organs, writing about them, and playing them.

With that background, visiting churches, and understanding buildings in considerable detail, his experience is reflected in this book. The book shows the reader how to read the building looking at hidden history, both inside and outside. It is not a book just about organs, it is very readable, you do not need to be an expert to understand it. There are many photographs and It is written for all generations to enjoy our wonderful medieval churches. Very highly recommended.

To obtain this book please contact Martin Renshaw, **cost £8** plus postage to a UK address is £3.00, cheques made payable to Martin. Write to him at: **Garden Flat, 19 Froggnal Lane, London NW3 7DB.** To purchase via bank transfer please contact by e-mail: [Renshaw.martin45@gmail.com](mailto:Renshaw.martin45@gmail.com)

## Book Review (cont.)



### **OM Levende Blev Hvert TrÆ I Skov - Mads Damlund.**

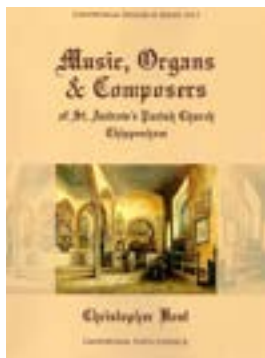
This book can be ordered from the publisher, Slotsforlaget: <http://www.slotsforlaget.dk/omtaleb.htm>

The website is in Danish. The easiest way is to contact the publisher, Jesper Jørgensen, by email: [jesper@slotsforlaget.dk](mailto:jesper@slotsforlaget.dk)

The cost is 200 DKK (around 24 GBP) + mail.

The book came to me from the Danish Organists' Association - their regular magazine "ORGLÆT" is a high-quality periodical and over the year either they or members produce high standard books. It was published in 2019 to mark the 75th anniversary of the organ in Jægersborg Kirk. Yes - in Danish, but organ books in most languages can be enjoyed; this book has an extensive summary in English ahead of each Danish chapter. Mads Damlund has been Organist at this church at least since 2006. The church is located in the northern suburbs of Copenhagen, and dates from 1941. The 3 manual 25 stop organ by Marcussen was built in 1944.

The book is a portrait of one organ, but also a very useful guide on Danish Organbuilding. It is on quality paper with high quality colour photos and many drawings. Tucked inside the rear cover is a 77-minute CD, with 18 tracks played by Mads Damlund - including music by Bach, Scheidt, Brahms and Viderø. This is followed by the choir singing a five-section piece by Pelle Gudmindsen-Homgreen "Lys". The recording ends with four "historic" recordings- Karl Richter in 1964 playing BWV565, Jørgen Hansen [1963] Sweelinck Ekkofantasi, Henrick Glahn [1949] Buxtehude BuxVW139 finishing with Finn Viderø [1948] Walther - Koral partita Jesu Meine Freude. An unusual book, full of interest.



### **Music, Organs & Composers of St Andrew's Church, Chippenham, By Dr Christopher Kent ISBN 978-0-9957619-0-2. Published by Chippenham Town Council, £12.95 plus £3.50 postage. A4 size, 140 pages.**

Christopher was President of Berkshire Organists' in 1989. He joined the music department of the University of Reading in 1980 and he was very much involved in

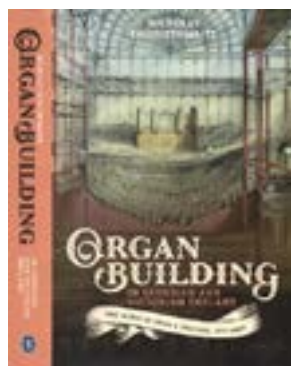
organ activity locally. He retired from Reading University in 2002 to give more time to research, writing and performances. This book about St Andrew's Church is the third edition released earlier this year after more information come to light. The original publication was

notified in another group's magazine, but when I ordered I had to wait for this revised edition to be printed.

The book is part of a series of publications in the Chippenham Research Series published by the Town Council and normally obtainable from the Town Museum shop [easily found on the internet, currently closed due to CV19]. This is one of the most detailed one location organ studies I have read for a very long time- with illustrations of documents, copies of text and specification through the history of this important organ.

It covers the history on the church from around 1670, along with the various plans. The current organ is housed in a 1752 case by Brice Seede - it is the sole surviving case by this builder- a highly regarded West Country organ builder. The organ was moved and expanded in 1879. The book includes many plans for alterations over the years. The organ currently needs a full restoration - the Swell is not functioning, and the church has set up an appeal for funds.

A most interesting book - and the meticulous care Christopher has taken is very evident. It is normally available via the museum above, but the Author does have copies at home. To contact, his e-mail is: [christopherkent9680@btinternet.com](mailto:christopherkent9680@btinternet.com) or write with cheque to him at The Laurels, Tytherton Lucas, Chippenham, Wiltshire, SN15 3RJ



### **Organ Builders in Georgian & Victorian England, the work of Gray & Davison 1772-1890, Nicholas Thistlethwaite. The Boydell Press 2020, ISBN 978-1-78327 467 3. Cost £65. Distributed by John Willey & Sons.**

This is a massive book - 552 pages, hard cover 16 x 24cm. I have included the spine view in the scan above. Nicholas Thistlethwaite is

known to many of us. The book is dedicated to members of BIOS who were able to get an introductory purchase discount of 35%.

This really is a book to take to the famous desert island - provided you can take your laptop and have internet access as before you start reading the book, a study of the introductory pages is required ["i to xxii], page xvii refers to an eight chapter on line supplement that needs to be downloaded to go with the book. This has work lists for 1775 to 1821, 1821 to 1838, and 1839 to 1890, then an index and work lists for their Liverpool branch 1865-1890. This supplement then follows with 8 chapters of documents which cross relate to chapters in the book.

*Continued on page 6*

## Book Review (cont.)

Continued from page 5

This on-line PDF supplement is 278 pages long. The link is: [www.boydellandbrewer.com/media/wysiwyg/Other/Organ-building\\_Online\\_Supplement.pdf](http://www.boydellandbrewer.com/media/wysiwyg/Other/Organ-building_Online_Supplement.pdf)

I have copied this text only document to my system, the document is 1.5MB

Now armed with your supplement you can start exploring the contents of the book – there are three sections:

Part 1 -The Grays – split into four sections – Beginnings, An Expanding Business, John Gray, instruments 1772-1840 – pages 3 to 220.

Part 2 - The Davisons – sets out Frederick Davison – pages 221 to 248.

Part 3 – Gray & Davison – split into four sections – Gray & Davison, Frederick Davison; Limited Company 1877-1890, Instruments 1840-1890. Pages 249 to 520

After this there is a 2-page Epilogue, Bibliography section and index completing the book. There are 99 black and white plate photographs and 17 tables where detail specifications are provided.

It is impossible within the confines of a short review to cover the total content; Nicholas has provided a very thorough history of Gray & Davison up to 1890. I asked him why the book ended at that point. He advised that apart from book size it was the point when Frederick Davison died and the business briefly liquidated. He said “that the business declined significantly in the previous decade, and whilst Charles Davison managed to rescue it and carry on until his own sudden death in 1906, it never regained its former distinction. After 1906, the business was managed by a series of builders brought in by the directors, and the standard of the work went downhill rapidly; by the 1950s and 1960s it was really bad”.

I have carefully studied references to Berkshire and the following may help for local records. It does add to the information already on the National Pipe Organs register. Gray & Davison [G&D] used job numbers which helps to identify organs from 1853 onward.

For a **Binfield** residence of Mr Richard [Surname?]- Gray supplied a second-hand organ to him in 1835 for £150. A Gray & Davison tuner – Mr Tuckwell spent a day in 1874 tuning the Willis organ in **Cranbourne** Church [much later vandals burnt that very early Willis]. There are many references to Eton College Chapel, and St George's Chapel in **Windsor** Castle. The 1849 2manual for St Peter's **Marlow** is not so well known, however in 1865 **Newbury Town Hall** had a 2m11ss organ costing £300, this may have been a loan, that is not recorded elsewhere.

G&D activity in central **Reading** is limited to **Holy Trinity**, Oxford Road, work done in 1870 [job 10300 £310 2m, 18ss], sometime after 1973 ranks were added from a redundant Oxford organ. From 1979 B C Shepherd & Sons took on sorting issues. John Shepherd's report can be found in Handbook 36 of 1981. **St Michael's in Sandhurst** – 1882 costing £250 for 2manual and pedal and 11speaking stops. NPOR N12574 only shows the position after Hele restoration in 1970 [then 2/16]. **St Mary Thatcham** – the book records work done in 1843,1844,1850 and as job 10076 2m 15ss in 1857. The church then closed for renovation and the old organ sold. Job 10218 of 1865 records a new 3/26 organ, NPOR record for 1991 shows as 3/25. **St George, Tilehurst** BOA has visited in recent years, NPOR [N09868] gives the G&D organ as undated; this book records it as being **rebuilt** in 1890, job 10500 as 2m/16ss for £330. As the church dates from 1885/6, this sounds more like a new instrument.

St Mary **Wargrave**, New organ 1855 Job 10057 2m 11ss for £225 this was destroyed in 1914 when suffragettes burned the church. **Windsor** – apart from St George's Chapel, further buildings are recorded. First- in 1841 G&D supplied a 2m/p 16ss organ to the **Windsor Castle MUSIC HALL, Berkshire**. I cannot trace this building, but it is recorded as Berkshire. However, close to St Martins-in-the-Fields in central London there is a **Windsor Castle MUSIC HALL** that functioned from 1850 to 1859. Does anyone have local Windsor knowledge? **Windsor, Masonic Lodge** by Gray c1772 that moved at date unknown according to NPOR; a second entry, NPOR gives as 1793, but the G&D entry gives c1782-1786 organ suggests that the chamber or barrel organ moved to the residence of Michael Thomas of Hurley Manor, Hurley before in 1969 it was moved to the Great Queen Street Freemason's Hall Holborn.

In 2006 this instrument was in Lodge Room 3, I have photographs taken on a Club visit, and Michael Broadway was restoring it. **Windsor St John Baptist** is well documented by John Halsey, there are two additions – a sum of £15.15.0d was charged by Gray & Sons in 1836 for minor work. The new organ in 1845 by Gray & Davison of 2m/p with 17 stops cost £385. Finally, **St Mary, Winkfield** shows on NPOR as Gray c1820 – this is not in the indexes, the rebuild of 1878 is G&D Job 10403 and cost £140 whilst again the NPOR date of 1889 is not referenced in the book. This organ was most recently rebuilt in 2018.

American Guild of Organists  
Sacramento Valley Chapter  
2020 Membership Renewal Drive



Dear Colleague,

My best to you during this difficult time as many of us await the opportunity to return to our church job and the organ bench!

We took brief advantage of the AGO membership forbearance and now the time has come to renew our membership in the American Guild of Organist and your local Sacramento Valley Chapter. Your membership comes with The American Organist Magazine, and the full color PDF newsletter from our Chapter. It also allows you unfettered access to our workshops and many of our concert programs.

Last year's program was a smashing success although the last event was put on hiatus due to the national shut-down.

We are working on another brilliant program for the coming season which will be crowned by a concert "par excellence" by Oliver Latry at the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament (April 2021). We also hope to have another dinner and opening service this season. Our scholarship program is well funded for another six students.

Each of our programs are focused with you in mind; thus, I extend my personal invitation to renew your membership *today*. I also ask that you join with me in donating an additional \$75 to the local chapter, above your membership dues, to help in defraying the costs for the programming this coming season.

And I cannot express enough how thrilled I am with the North Valley joining forces with us! Welcome! Please renew your membership *now* with the Sacramento "Valley" chapter.

Our renewal campaign will run from July 15<sup>th</sup> to August 15<sup>th</sup>, when you receive this renewal packet in the mail please respond right away.

Although this has been a trying time these last few months, we are ready to pick-up with our new colleagues from the North Valley – Let's join together to renew our membership and provide extra financial support to your local AGO Chapter.

For we, united, promote the organ, and support each other as colleagues!

Very Truly Yours,

Ronald Pau Sidhu, Dean