



AMERICAN GUILD OF ORGANISTS

Chapter Leadership News

September 2022

COMDACS: Member-Focused

Dear Chapter Leaders,

Serving as staff liaison for the Committee on Membership Development and Chapter Support (COMDACS) continues to be a very rewarding experience. Under the leadership of Vicki Schaeffer, councillor for membership, and director Conner McMains, dean of the Dallas chapter, each meeting focuses on supporting chapters and enriching the member experience. We strive to identify additional resources that can be provided to chapter leaders, create new strategies for membership development, and brainstorm about what specific assistance can be provided to chapters that are struggling. One of the wonderful results of the free membership that was offered during the Year of the Young Organist was discovering that 22 of those who had joined were under the age of 13. One of this year's goals, spearheaded by Zach Bowyer (a young organist and sub-dean of the Charlotte chapter), is to create relevant resources for these younger organists within a new page on our website. Last year's dynamic online programming truly supported career development, but let's face it: these younger organists are not at a stage where they need to consider retirement plans and résumé writing. We envision that this new web page will feature short videos, music stories, and an organ coloring book that can be downloaded. Additionally, exciting plans are underway to jump-start the Nairobi chapter, through identifying what specific AGO membership benefits they will find to be of most value. COMDACS is also researching mentoring programs that will connect robust chapters with smaller chapters that may not have the necessary financial, educational, or leadership resources to support their members. Both chapters will benefit from this initiative. Is your chapter financially stable and blessed with active leadership? If so, I encourage you to think about other chapters in your region that may not have the same resources, and to think about opportunities where help might be greatly appreciated. The vision of the AGO is to engage, support, and uplift every organist. Let's pay it forward.

This issue of **Chapter Leadership News** will cover the following:

- ✓ Leadership Profile: Maria (Lyn) Francisco, Dean, Durham-Chapel Hill Chapter
- ✓ Nassau Chapter Celebrates the AGO Achievement Awards
- ✓ Denver Rocky Mountain's Successful Scholarship Program
- ✓ Upcoming Webinars
- ✓ Chapter Leader Monthly Brown Bag Lunches on Zoom
- ✓ New Hampshire's Lilies, Langlais, and Liebfraumilch
- ✓ AGO Certification Exams
- ✓ Consider 2022 NYACOP Finalists for a Chapter Program



Elizabeth George, CMM
Chief Membership Officer
American Guild of Organists
elizabeth.george@agohq.org

Profile of the Month: Maria (Lyn) Francisco, Dean of the Durham-Chapel Hill (NC) Chapter

What's sitting on my desk right now: Receipts, computer accessories (I was just issued a new laptop at work), and the 1982 Hymnal. My desk is in an academic office at Duke University.

If I weren't doing this, I'd be in Hawaii, basking on the beach and enjoying as much shaved ice as I can stand.

When I'm not at work: I'm in the kitchen baking breads, cakes, or cookies. Or basking on the beach and enjoying as much shaved ice as I can stand.

The best advice I ever got: Don't sweat the small stuff. Life is too short to be stressed.



What keeps me motivated serving as chapter dean: Knowing that this COVID pandemic will soon pass, and hoping to be able to meet chapter members, old and new, as we resume our in-person activities. I am very grateful to our previous dean, Jackie Nappi, for holding us together through COVID, and to members of the executive board for keeping things running as smoothly as possible throughout the pandemic.

The Nassau (NY) Chapter Celebrates the AGO Achievement Awards



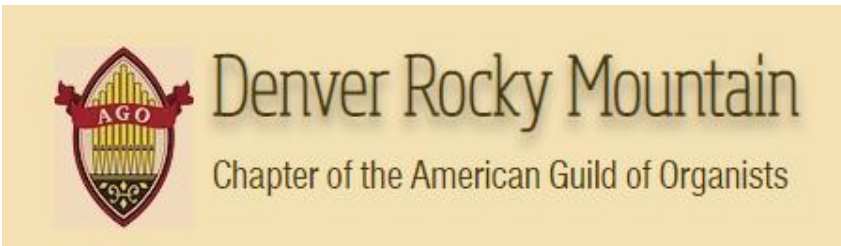
In reading the Nassau chapter's August newsletter, I was thrilled to learn about members who had received AGO Achievement Awards.

Congratulations to Stephan Garamy, Nassau chapter member, who qualified for *all* of the Achievement Awards: the Organ Console, Organ Registration I, Manual and Pedal Technique, Transposition, and

Harmony II! He received certificates for meeting the requirements at our Rising Stars recital. Our past dean, Elizabeth Bailey, also received a certificate for the Transposition Achievement Award. We hope to see many of our members qualify for these certificates in the near future!

The AGO Achievement Awards are a great way to learn basic organ playing skills, to fill in your existing skill set, to start on the road to AGO Certification, to structure organ teaching, and to get involved in the chapter. You can learn more about getting started [here](#).

Denver Rocky Mountain's Successful Scholarship Program



*In July, the AGO celebrated the Denver Rocky Mountain chapter's successful recruitment efforts during the **Year of the Young Organist**, presenting them with \$1,000 for achieving a net growth of 22 new young organists. How did they do it?*

Dean Billie Busby Smith shared the following:

When Elizabeth asked me to write an article about our chapter and recruiting young organists, I pulled notes I had made while preparing for the panel discussion that occurred in the midyear webinar **Success Stories about Recruiting and Retaining Young Organists**. The young organist has long been on my radar—so much so that I begged to become the scholarship coordinator for our chapter years ago. As the pandemic has become longer and more complicated, it has caused numerous challenges and problems for those in our profession. I also realize that addressing the recruitment and retention of the young organist extends well beyond the ideas I have written in this article. We need to be successful in recruiting the young organist; however, we also need to understand why our colleagues leave or retire early from the profession. Knowing this might answer the question of why many of those who are passionate about the organ and church music are not willing to prepare for that career. Most importantly, we must be willing to spend time finding solutions to the problems that exist for us as church musicians.

The Denver Rocky Mountain chapter has a long history of working with young organists. Individuals who maintain organ teaching studios view their role as one of a mentor and instructor. Since 1994, the chapter has provided a summer high school scholarship program. It includes an application/audition process and study with a faculty made up of chapter organists; it ends with a well-publicized concert in the fall. The scholarship award also includes a year's membership in the AGO. We generally fund between five and nine successful scholars each year. Besides the private lessons, the curriculum includes opportunities to network with the other scholars and their teachers. We begin the summer with Organ 101, a class attended by all of the students. It includes organ construction and general console skills. There is also one performance class, presented in order to prepare for the recital. We had several additional opportunities on the drawing board for the 2020 season, which of course did not occur. One idea was that the Organ 101 class would be extended to referring piano teachers in the area, providing them with additional information about the organ in order to build a wider community.



I believe that the more we “market” our chapter and the Guild, the more we will be noticed by budding young organists. The AGO’s educational offerings are remarkable. Our chapter attempts to make these as accessible as possible. This past year, we brought all education together under the direction of one board member. Building a continuum of educational opportunities certainly supports our credibility as a viable source for education. Learning to communicate with young organists through social media has also been a major step in the right direction. Denise Lanning, our education coordinator, suggested designing a designated area in our chapter newsletter called the YOU Corner (Young Organists Update Corner). A board member or volunteer would contact our young organists monthly by email, sharing information about the next chapter event and asking them to send an update to our editor on anything interesting in their lives—a part in the school play, a part-time job, playing the anthem at church, having a new dog. I really appreciated Denise’s ideas, because this starts to build relationships and lets young organists know that they have a chapter full of mentors.

Our board’s first meeting of the year will begin by discussing a more organized approach to engaging our young scholars. The Year of the Young Organist has allowed us to attract more young organists. It has been exciting to see former and current scholars, as well as other young organists, begin to attend our events. The rest—helping them begin the process of enjoying the organ for many years—is up to us as committed AGO members. We want to thank AGO Headquarters for making this initiative available!



Upcoming Webinars

Tuesday, September 13, 7:00 p.m. EDT

Social Media Marketing for Chapters

Presenter: Michelle Klima Thomas, AGO Technology Committee

Great digital marketing can make or break your chapter's success. Learn how to take advantage of websites and programs that make it easy to advertise your chapter and events. This interactive presentation will discuss social media and email marketing tips, as well as tricks for content creation and scheduling, to help you make the most of your time. Please register [here](#).



New! Monthly Chapter Leader Brown Bag Lunches, Last Friday of the Month

Friday, September 30th, 12:00 noon EDT – 5 pm EDT.

Topic: Education

We will be hosting “brown bag” lunches focusing on a specific topic, the last Friday of each month in Zoom. Zoom rooms will be open for five hours, to accommodate the different time zones across the U.S. Drop in during your lunch time and join a room to share ideas with each other. Some of you may still be looking for ideas for your upcoming programming or seeking an opportunity to collaborate with another chapter. No need to sign up – just show up! Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83813210217?pwd=NjZLeEZYNzFWbUIRMUVFZit5TnVMZz09>

New Hampshire's Lilies, Langlais, and Liebfraumilch

On a warm Sunday in July, members of the New Hampshire chapter got together for a garden party—the lilies part—and to hear about French composer Jean Langlais. The chapter was pleased to have our former dean, Susan Ferré, talk about her student years with the master. Susan's biography is too long to fully include, but

she has a DMA degree in organ, has taught at Pacific Lutheran University and the University of North Texas, and has played many recitals both in the United States and abroad. She also presented on this topic at the AGO National Convention in Seattle. Our small group allowed for a lively interchange with the speaker, including anecdotes that didn't make it into the Seattle talk; an article on this topic by Susan can be found at <https://susanferre.weebly.com/blog>.

Those familiar with Langlais know that he was totally blind from an early age. In spite of that, he became titular organist at Sainte-Clotilde in Paris, playing and composing there for many years. Our audience wanted to know how he played and taught, given that he was blind. It turns out that there is a braille system for musical notation, and Langlais would memorize music measure by measure, sometimes playing with one hand while the other converted the symbols into music. As an honored teacher, Langlais would be addressed as "Maître" or "Master" by his students. The teaching method he employed was to have students learn the classics from previous centuries. Susan's first assignment was to learn and master the entirety of Bach's *Orgelbüchlein* and Couperin's *Mass for the Parishes*. This was required of all students before they could move on to other organ composers, including the contemporary French school. Langlais had a two-manual tracker organ in his apartment studio, and he would give lessons on that as well as the Cavallé-Coll at Sainte-Clotilde. He was a gifted improviser, and we wondered if improvisation was largely connecting previously improvised motives. Susan said it was not, and that good improvisation involves a mental layout of the entire piece. It is far from just "letting your fingers do the walking."

Susan probably saved the master from a fatal fall on a recital tour. As he began playing a program at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia, the organ console slowly rose, thanks to hydraulics. Understandably, Langlais wondered if he was caught up in the rapture, but Susan explained what was happening. When he finished and started to take bows, he got dangerously close to the edge of the elevated platform, and Susan had to shout at him to "freeze" in French.

Susan's time with Langlais spanned ten years. She was allowed to play parts of the Sainte-Clotilde masses, which is a mark of accomplishment for any organ student. Not surprisingly, Langlais was taken with the beauty of Susan's gifts and care. He wrote an organ piece for her, dated April 6, 1966—"Poem of Peace"—and inscribed it, "To my dear Susan, this musical gift and best affections."

No garden party would be complete without food and drink. Our host prepared an elaborate buffet, accompanied by a local New Hampshire Liebfraumilch.

Philip Becker, chapter secretary





American Guild of Organists

Chartered 1896 by the Board of Regents, University of the State of New York

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS
475 Riverside Drive, Suite 1260, New York, NY 10115
212-870-2310; AGOhq.org

PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR 2023

EXAMINATION DATES

Service Playing Examination: Oct. 1, 2022, through Mar. 31, 2023
(application due between Sept. 1, 2022, and Feb. 1, 2023)

Colleague Examination: Nov. 18, 2022 (application due by Sept. 15, 2022)
May 12, 2023 (application due by Mar. 1, 2023)
Nov. 17, 2023 (application due by Sept. 15, 2023)

Choir Master Examination: May 31, 2023 (application due by Apr. 1, 2023)

Associateship Examination: June 1 and 2, 2023 (application due by Apr. 1, 2023)

Fellowship Examination: June 1 and 2, 2023 (application due by Apr. 1, 2023)

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

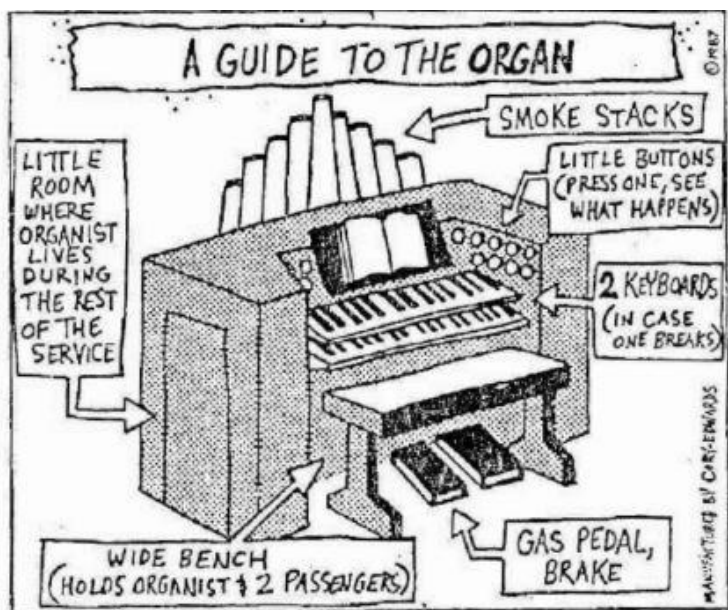
All exam applications may be submitted using the appropriate online application form, found at <https://www.agohq.org/certification/>. To request a paper copy, please send an email to the exams administrator at exams@agohq.org.

Each person interested in completing an application must click on the type of exam they wish to apply for, such as this link for the SPC exam: <https://www.agohq.org/service-playing-test/>. To proceed, simply click the large APPLY NOW button.

Consider 2022 NYACOP Finalists for a Chapter Program

I had the pleasure of attending the National Young Artists Competition in Organ Performance (NYACOP) at the Seattle convention. It was an amazing experience to hear the five final and very talented competitors playing at the final round on July 4th. To be honest, I can't imagine how difficult it must have been for the judges, who were seated with their backs to the organ so that they could not see who was playing, to come to consensus, to confirm the first, second and third place winners. The five finalists, James Kealy, Daniel Chang, Daniel Minnick, Jiyhe Choi and Ryan Chan all played beautifully, each bringing special nuances to the required repertoire.

Congratulations to James Kealy, First Place Award Winner; Daniel Chang, Second Place Award Winner; and Daniel Minnick, Third Place Award Winner (and audience favorite)! I encourage everyone to consider featuring any of these five finalists at one of your upcoming chapter programs. You won't regret it! Please contact competitions@agohq.org to obtain more information.



This cartoon recently appeared in a Fox Valley Chapter (IL) Newsletter.

If you have one you'd like to share, please email me, elizabeth.george@agohq.org