



AGO Task Force for Gender Equity

.....

# January Newsletter

.....

**Sunday March 5, 2023**



**SWO DIRECTORY OF WOMEN COMPOSERS OF ORGAN AND  
LITURGICAL MUSIC WORK CATALOGUE**

# Composer of the Month

## Brenda Portman

Organist and composer Brenda Portman (b. 1980) was educated at Wheaton College, Northwestern University, and University of Cincinnati's College-Conservatory of Music. Her doctoral research was on minimalism in twentieth-century Dutch organ music. She has studied with John Behnke, Edward Zimmerman, Douglas Cleveland, Marilyn Mason, Roberta Gary, and Michael Unger.



Portman has received numerous awards in organ competitions, spanning a decade: from First Place in the Arthur Poister Organ Competition in Connecticut (2006) to Finalist and Audience Prize winner in the Sursa American Organ Competition at Ball State University (2016). In October of 2014, she was the only American woman to compete in the prestigious Canadian International Organ Competition in Montréal. Her performance there led to a collaboration with acclaimed Canadian composer Rachel Laurin and a recording on the 88-rank Casavant organ of HPCUMC Cincinnati: *Pilgrimages: Organ Music of Rachel Laurin Inspired by Sacred Themes*, which was released in April 2016 on the Raven label.

Other prizes include First Place in the Arthur Poister Organ Competition (2007), First Place in the Bank District British/American Organ Competition (2009), performing a winner's recital at St. Paul's Cathedral, London, and Third Place in the Rodgers North American Classical Organ Competition (2012). She has also been a finalist in the Fort Wayne National Organ-Playing Competition (2010) and a semifinalist in the AGO's National Young Artists Competition in Organ Performance (2010).

Learn more about her and check out some of her new music (perfect for Woman Composer Sunday) by clicking on one of the links below!

[BRENDA PORTMAN | WEBSITE](#)

[CHRIST IS THE LIFE: ORGAN SETTINGS  
FOR THE CHURCH YEAR](#)

[WONDROUS LOVE: HYMNS FOR LENT AND  
EASTER](#)

[THERE'S A WIDENESS IN GOD'S MERCY](#)

[BENEATH THE CROSS OF JESUS](#)

# Check It Out

When COVID shut down the Atlanta national AGO convention, OrganFest was born, and some pretty amazing videos were posted by people who would have been presenting at the convention, as well as videos that were created specifically for the online format. They are all wonderful, informative, and worth watching! You are encouraged to go to the OrganFest site on YouTube. But in the meantime, let's whet your appetite with a few videos from a series of short interviews with women composers who wrote commissioned works for the convention, all interviewed by organist/composer Chelsea Chen.

[CHELSEA CHEN IN CONVERSATION WITH RACHEL LAURIN](#)

[CHELSEA CHEN IN CONVERSATION WITH JUNE NIXON](#)

[CHELSEA CHEN IN CONVERSATION WITH BRENDA PORTMAN](#)

Please note that it is not our intention to exclusively include links to social media videos in this newsletter. Send us your upcoming events that feature women organists and/or composers, and we will include them all!

Here are some other articles of interest about the work women are doing in the world of music. The first is about Missy Mazzoli (CFA'02) who is one of America's preeminent composers, and how she's fighting to improve the path for women in classical music. The second is about the fact that women now make up a majority of players in the New York Philharmonic. Happy reading!

[OPENING DOORS](#)

[IN A SEA OF CHANGE](#)



## **AGO Task Force for Gender Equity**

Nancy Cooper, Director | Michelle Kardos, Newsletter Editor | Mary Newton | Lyn Loewi

Eileen Hunt, AGO President and ex officio member | Leslie Wolf Robb | Vicky Schaeffer