

Chiff Chat

Springfield, Massachusetts
Chapter
American Guild of Organists



October 2010

A message from the Dean...

"Play your mistakes with confidence" my mother told me when I was just beginning to be a church organist around age 14. Play my mistakes with confidence? What in the world could that mean? Beginning students, as we all know, want to play perfectly and when an error appears, the tendency is to stop and go back and fix it. The problem with music, however, is that the performer cannot stop and do-over in the middle of a performance. Unlike the miracle of word-processing where the writer can immediately stop, edit and correct before publishing, the musician, like the athlete, has no second editions. So when a note is dropped, the feet come down on the pedals incorrectly or the page turn is a disaster, it is impossible to stop and correct it while the congregation is singing, the choir chanting or the prelude's great moment is six measures away. It becomes tremendously important to 'just move on' and hopefully not skip a beat. Equally important is to dismiss the error and play on with confidence. Do not let performance anxiety rear its ugly head. Sometimes this is more easily said than done. Here are some little voices that may help:

1. Choose wisely... this is the #1 mantra for both organ and choir. Choose preludes within your reach. If you cannot play the Bach Ten Little Preludes and Fugues, don't attempt the Boëllmann *Suite Gothique*! I love the Boëllmann and as a young organist went down to the church late at night with no one around, put on full organ and played it very badly and very loudly, loving every minute of it. Some little voice in my mind went off, however, and I never attempted it in performance. Thank God. The same goes for

choir. Do not embarrass your choir by insisting on an anthem they simply cannot or will not sing. It is always a disaster and takes weeks for recovery. I know. I've been there.

2. Practice faithfully. Do not schedule music that you know is in your repertoire but you haven't played in some years, thinking you can just read it off at sight. Disaster, again! This is a problem for older organists who have been playing for zillions of years. Let's face it: the faculties wane and the right pistons are never found in a fraction of a second. Aim for piston 3 and hit piston 2 and guess what happens...disaster. The climactic sound just changed to a solo oboe. Alas.

3. Don't party hearty on Saturday night--use Friday or Sunday night instead! Nothing's worse than being on the organ bench on Sunday morning with bleary eyes from lack of sleep or a big head from too much wine the night before. Save your partying for other nights. The church organist must be alert and sharp! Even if the church pays you a pittance of what you're worth, you still want to be honest to your craft and your God.

4. Be prepared! The old boy scout motto is very appropriate here. Get to church early and have everything set up before the first choir members show. Meet with the priest or pastor and communicate! Know your clergyman! Bring him or her to the pastor-organist dinner in November and do a little one-on-one. And when mistakes come flocking, be in command, play them with confidence and most of the congregation will never be aware that a mistake occurred.

I don't think anyone has to contend with the great critical 'music committees' of the past century who had opinions about every musical ornament. In a way, it's sad because at least they cared...Today, YOU have to be

the one who cares and you need to model your conscientiousness and your skill by playing your mistakes "with confidence". –
Martha

Springfield Chapter Leadership

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Dean | Martha Sienkiewicz |
| Sub Dean | Don Hooton |
| Secretary | Mary Jeanne Tash |
| Treasurer | James Barnes |
| Directors | Barbara Boudo, Quentin Faulkner, Alan Dickinson, Mark Jacobson, Roger LaCross, Larry Picard |
| Chaplain | Fr. William Wallis |
| Education | Martha Sienkiewicz, Don Hooton |
| Membership | Karen Banta |
| Chiff Chat Editor | Larry Picard |
| Web Site | Allan Taylor |
| Investments | Charles Page, E Lary Grossman, William Czelusniak, James Barnes |

Next Chapter Event: Phantasmagoria, a Halloween Organ Concert
Come dressed in costume for the event of the season when Monica Czausz, Eugenia Sullivan, Peter Beardsley, Larry Picard and others play scary and comical music for the organ at South Congregational Church UCC, 45 Maple Street, Springfield on October 30 at 7 p.m. Want to be part of the fun? There is still room for a few more players! Contact Larry at 413-732-0117 or lpicard@sococh.org.

And more chapter events...

November 15 (Monday) 6:00 PM at Wilbraham United Church, **Pastor-Organist dinner.**

February 19 (Saturday) 10:00 AM at Church of the Atonement, Westfield, **Anthem Reading.**

March 20 (Sunday) 3:00 PM, **Members' Recital** at All Saint's Episcopal Church, South Hadley.

April 9 (Saturday) 7:00 PM, **Peter Krazinski accompanies the silent movie "The General"** at United Congregational Church of Holyoke.

June 5 (Sunday) 2:00 PM, **End-of-year cookout** at the home of Charles Page, Enfield, Connecticut.

Wanted: Director of Music

St. Anthony of Padua Church, a medium-sized parish in the Willimansett section of Chicopee, is looking for a Director of Music to begin the first weekend of Advent (Nov. 27-28, 2010). Formal music training preferred with past music experience. Candidates should submit a written résumé with salary requirements no later than **November 1, 2010 at 5:00 p.m.** and be willing to audition for the position. Mail or fax résumé to St. Anthony of Padua Church, 56 Anthony Street, Chicopee, MA 01013. Telephone: 413-538-9475; Fax: 413-538-9859.

Upcoming Events

October 2010

Tuesday, October 5, 2010 at 10:30 a.m. The Tuesday Morning Music Club presents the Pioneer Consort. Trinity United Methodist Church, Sumner Avenue, Springfield. www.tuesdaymorningmusicconcerts.org

Sunday, October 10, 2010 at 4:00 pm
Toccatas & Tunes, an organ and piano recital by Allan Taylor and Joel Martin. Bach organ favorites, Dvorak Slavonic Dances and Jazz favorites. First Congregational Church, 18 Broad Street, Westfield, MA 01085. Free admission.

Monday, October 11, 2010 Worcester AGO Chapter Fall Organ Crawl. Venues to include Mt. Holyoke College Chapel, St. Theresa RC, South Hadley, United Cong. Church Holyoke, St. Mary's RC Church, Westfield, and the First Congregational Church, Westfield. \$20 fee includes lunch. Contact brettwmaguire@gmail.com.

Tuesday, October 19, 2010 at 10:30 a.m.
The Tuesday Morning Music Club presents the Becky Isaacson, organ, Devon Bakum and Teri LaFleur, sopranos, and Kirsten Lipkens, oboe. Trinity United Methodist Church, Sumner Avenue, Springfield. www.tuesdaymorningmusicconcerts.org

Saturday, October 23, 2010 9:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Alice Parker Workshop at UMass Amherst. Topics include The Anatomy of Melody and Rehearsal Techniques. For more information and to register online, visit www.umass.edu/music.

Sunday, October 24, 2010 at 2:00 p.m. "Jazzical, a Marriage of Classical and Jazz" at United Congregational Church, 395 High Street, Holyoke. 413-532-1438 or www.uccholyoke.org

Saturday, October 30, 2010 at 7:00 p.m.
(Chapter Event) Phantasmagoria: a Halloween Organ Concert. See page 2 for details.

November 2010

Tuesday, November 2, 2010 at 10:30 a.m.
The Tuesday Morning Music Club presents Mark Fraser, cello, Edward Rosser, piano, and John Salvi, baritone. Trinity UMC, Sumner Avenue, Springfield. www.tuesdaymorningmusicconcerts.org

Sunday, November 7, 2010 at 2:30 p.m.
Schola Nova performs at **Providence Place**, Holyoke. www.scholanova.org.

Sunday, November 14, 2010 at 3:00 p.m.
Martin Kasik, pianist from Prague, Czech Republic, will play music by Chopin and Rachmaninoff at the First Church of Deerfield, 71 Main Street, Old Deerfield. Kasik will be piano soloist with the Springfield Symphony Orchestra on Saturday, November 3rd. Suggested donation \$10.

Sunday, November 14, 2010 at 3:00 p.m.
Anthology, a Boston women's a cappella group, performs at a historic Forest Park home as part of the CityMusic Springfield Series. Free-will donation. lpicard@so-coch.org or 413-732-0117.

Monday, November 15, 2010 at 6:00 p.m.
(Chapter event) Pastor-organist dinner at Wilbraham United Church. See insert for details.

Tuesday, November 16, 2010 at 10:30 a.m.
The Tuesday Morning Music Club presents Sonya Funk, soprano, and Estela Olevsky, piano. Trinity United Methodist Church, Sumner Avenue, Springfield. www.tuesdaymorningmusicconcerts.org

Sunday, November 21, 2010 at 4:00 p.m.
Larry Schipull is the soloist playing with the UMass Orchestra, Lanfranco Marcelletti, Jr., conductor. United Congregational Church, Holyoke. Suggested donation \$10. www.uccholyoke.org.

Call Off the Organ Builder

By Mark Jacobson

I met Herb Vieira back in 1996 when I became the Organist and Choir director at Wilbraham United Church. Herb was on the organist search committee and after some conversations with him it was evident that I was in the presence of greatness.

After studying piano as a high school student Herb became interested in the organ and persuaded his father to purchase an Estey reed organ from the First Cong. Church in Berkley, MA. The organ was used in the Sunday School until the late 1940s when Herb's dad bought it for \$175. Herb says of the old 2-manual instrument, "That's how I got used to a flat pedal board" and adds, "If I had that thing apart once, I had it apart a hundred times to fix it." Herb credits Lottie Gardner, a musical figure in Taunton MA, with nurture and encouragement when she loaned him a key to the West Congregational Church in Taunton. There he could practice the 3 manual Hook and Hastings late into the night. Thus began Herb's journey with the organ.

Herb's career was in engineering. He has two degrees from MIT in chemical engineering, and a mechanical engineering degree from WNEC (where he still teaches). Yet, Herb is almost always substituting somewhere in the Springfield area. We counted about fifteen churches where he has substituted. (I suspect there are actually more). The geographical perimeters of his travels are; Amherst, Suffield, Palmer, Westfield. Sometimes these are long term sub-positions. Herb recalls telling one organist who was out of action with an extended illness, "Don't worry, I'll keep the bench warm for you." Herb prefers playing old interesting organs but his experience has run the gamut from Wurlitzer to Johnson trackers with much in between. He says, "You never go to these old organs without your tool box and a flashlight." I asked Herb what some of the biggest surprises were that

he encountered as a substitute organist. His eyes twinkle, he laughs a bit and one suspects these stories will be good. A cipher in the 8' pedal rank was occurring in one church. The interim minister said, "Oh yeah that was going on last week. I guess we better call the organ builder." Herb discovered a mousetrap had been pushed under the pedal board, "fortunately unoccupied" dislodged it, repaired the contact and told the Pastor, "Call off the organ builder." Herb adds, "That's where your flashlight comes in handy.....that and a working knowledge of the organ." Herb describes another instance when he was called back to a church that he had subbed in a number of times before. He was prepared to play the 9 stop SS Hamill 1890 Mechanical instrument that "thumps, clanks and shakes at you" when the pastor told him, "Our building is unsafe for occupancy. We are worshipping at St. Patrick's church in Monson." Herb had the opportunity to play a wonderful instrument, (the new Southfield rebuild that was featured in our member's recital last year) but with absolutely no notice. In another instance, playing a wedding at a local Academy, the trumpeter was louder than the organ; the trumpeter kept saying to Herb that he needed more sound, Herb whilst playing had to tell him that was all the Hammond had. (I picture Scotty in the TV show Star Trek saying, "I'm givin' it all she's got Captain") Once he traveled 25 miles only to find he had been given the wrong key to access the church building. Before the days of cell-phones, he returned home, made a call and was told, "Oops, wrong key, meet me back at the church." Jo, Herb's wife said, "Do you HAVE to do this?" Herb replied, "No, but I like to."

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**A Farewell:** One of our "chapter friends," Jack Hague, died in hospital in Athol Friday, Sept 17, 2010 at the age of 70. He was the organist at St. Elizabeth Seaton in Northampton and prior to the merger of Catholic Churches this year, at Blessed Sacrament in Northampton.

# Pastor-Organist Dinner

Monday, November 15, 6:00 PM

*Wilbraham United Church*

*500 Main Street*

*Wilbraham Massachusetts, 01095*

## **The Menu**

Salad with Signature Dressings

Rolls and Butter

Roasted Stuffed Turkey with Gravy, Cranberry

Veggie stuffed Peppers

Scalloped Sweet and White Potato with Turnip

Chef's Vegetable

Apple Cobbler with Whipped Crème Fraiche

Coffee

## **Guest Speaker**

*Rev. Ted Thorton on "Islam"*

Cost: \$20 per person

Please make checks payable to:

American Guild of Organists – Spfld. Chapter

and mail with this form to:

Mark Jacobson

104 Pondview Drive

Springfield, MA 01118

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Number of persons attending \_\_\_\_\_ Amount enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**CHIFF CHAT**

**American Guild of Organists**

**Springfield, MA Chapter**

Larry Picard, Newsletter Editor

173 Thompson Street

Springfield, MA 01109-4036

## *Chiff Chat Newsletter*

**Springfield, Massachusetts Chapter of the American Guild of Organists**

**Celebrating 62 Years as a chapter!**

To submit information regarding positions, upcoming concerts, recitals, or area events, please email [newsletter@springfieldago.org](mailto:newsletter@springfieldago.org). Submissions are due by the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month. Also, visit our website at [www.springfieldago.org](http://www.springfieldago.org)!

*October Chapter Event: Phantasmagoria: a Halloween Organ Concert, at South Congregational Church, Springfield, Saturday, Sept. 12 at 7 p.m.*