



AMERICAN GUILD OF ORGANISTS

## Chapter Leadership News

August 2022

### Notes from the AGO's National Convention in Seattle

Dear Chapter Leaders,

As I write this newsletter, I am still recovering from having attended my first AGO national convention. It was amazing, exhilarating, and exhausting. I am in awe of those of you who are seasoned convention attendees; your stamina is truly impressive! For me, one of the most special things about being in Seattle was having the ability to meet chapter leaders in person—shaking someone's hand or, better yet, hugging them. I had to laugh as, having interacted with so many of you through Zoom meetings, I was only able to see the upper part of you. I had no idea how tall many of you are! Phylcia Ross (our manager of member engagement and chapter support) and I facilitated two "Chapter Leader Connect and Network" workshops, which gave chapter officers the opportunity to share best practices and discuss any challenges they were facing. We all agreed that we would adhere to the principle that "what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas," so that everyone could speak honestly and not feel as though they were being judged. I posed the question "What's keeping you up at night?" and received many common responses. One item in particular was the difficulty chapters are experiencing in finding members to serve as officers, and the challenge of aligning officer responsibilities with the actual needs of the chapter. We talked about the importance of giving detailed job descriptions to members-at-large, so that they will feel more engaged and aspire to serve in other officer positions. Asking younger members to get more involved as volunteers (you will hear more about this in next month's newsletter) was another topic we discussed. Inviting members to attend your board meetings, so that they might become interested in serving as volunteers, was also mentioned. Another suggestion, which I think is a great idea, was to create the position of "young organist" on your officer roster.

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

- ✓ Leadership Profile: Nathan Lively, Dean, Fairfield West Chapter
- ✓ Year of the Young Organist Recruitment Contest Winners
- ✓ Twin Cities Project with Minnesota Public Radio
- ✓ Sacramento Valley's Scholarship Students and Teachers Recital
- ✓ Southern Illinois Chapter's Successful Collaborations
- ✓ New Wording for Officer Installations
- ✓ Programs in a Box
- ✓ In Memoriam: René Zajner
- ✓ Participate in AGO's Organ Scholar Program
- ✓ Upcoming Webinars



Elizabeth George, CMM  
Chief Membership Officer  
American Guild of Organists

## Profile of the Month: Nathan Lively, Dean of the Fairfield West (Conn.) Chapter

**What's sitting on my desk right now:** Coffee, laptop, Reese's Peanut Butter Cup, August's UK residency music, and Stephen King's book *On Writing*.

**If I weren't doing this, I'd be doing what I love as much as music:** teaching high school early British literature. Give me ten minutes and you'll be hooked on early English ballads.

**When I'm not at work:** You can find me at home or at the Greenwich beach reading, meeting with friends in Manhattan, or having friends visit.

**The best advice I ever got:** "Don't sweat the small stuff; it's all small stuff."

### **What keeps me motivated serving as chapter dean:**

Engaging with our members and keeping in close communication with them. Our weekly e-blast that I sent out during the pandemic is probably why I ended up as dean. The responses each week, even just to check in, kept me motivated. I love seeing our folks network. My true passion is getting the AGOYO members of our chapter integrated into the community—and with one another.



# YEAR OF THE YOUNG ORGANIST

*“Investing in the Future”*  
July 1, 2021–June 30, 2022

## Congratulations!!!

We wish to congratulate the following chapters, who will each receive \$1,000 for encouraging the largest net growth of new young organists.

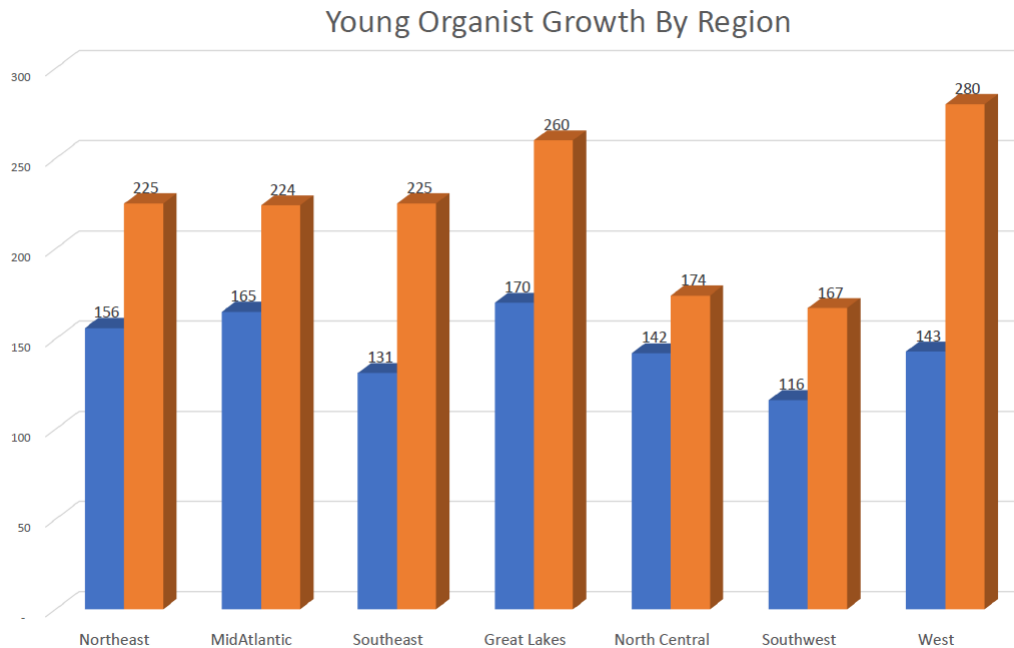
**Small Chapter: Hong Kong**, with a net growth of **20** new young organist members.

**Medium Chapter: Denver Rocky Mountain**, with a net growth of **22** new young organist members.

**Large Chapter: Los Angeles**, with a net growth of **17** new young organist members.

At the national convention, Jillian Gardner (former councillor for young organists), Phylcia Ross, and I presented a workshop—**The Year of the Young Organist: Inspiring Growth**—that explained the program’s inception and overarching goals. We highlighted the many concerts and workshops that were presented over this past year, culminating with the AGOYO Bach-a-thon, which featured 89 young organists:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/GuildofOrganists/videos>. I also talked about how critical it was for our chapters to be involved in recruiting and engaging young organists, and how the Year of the Young Organist Recruitment Contest contributed to successful recruitment. This graphic was included in our PowerPoint presentation, demonstrating the growth we achieved in each region beginning July 1, 2021-June 30, 2022.



I want to thank each of you for your hard work in recruiting your chapter’s new young organists, and in making them feel welcomed and engaged. I have no doubt that you will each strive to keep them involved in the life of your chapter. Many may be moving to attend colleges or conservatories, so please keep in touch with them!



## Twin Cities Project with Minnesota Public Radio

*Twin Cities chapter dean David Jenkins recently forwarded me an email featuring three videos that the chapter had produced with Minnesota Public Radio. I was so impressed with Twin Cities and MPR's collaboration that I asked for more details. David connected me with Phil Asgian, who handles many of their education programs, and I encouraged him to write an article for this newsletter.*

One of the recent collaborations from our chapter's educational programs has sparked some national attention. This is a project with Michael Barone and Minnesota Public Radio's classical music station. MPR's **Class Notes** website offers a variety of short videos on different instruments, ensembles, and genres of music for music teachers to use in the classroom. Until just recently there had been nothing featuring the organ. Class Notes now features three videos about the organ, which MPR has indicated we are all free to use. The material in these videos builds on several educational programs that our chapter has developed for young learners. I have been leading educational programs for over 30 years and wanted to share some of what we have been doing in the Twin Cities chapter to educate young people about the organ.

For many years, our chapter's educational programming consisted mostly of an annual **Pipe Organ Discovery Day**, during which we offered short programs on how the organ works, mixed with hands-on opportunities for students to play at least a couple of different organs, with TCAGO colleagues ready to assist with registration and playing. Over the years, we have also invited Minnesota organbuilder Charles Hendrickson and Michael Barone of *Pipedreams*, among others, to contribute to educational activities over a pizza lunch. When the pandemic hit, we started to work on digital offerings, including a recent video contrasting the piano and the organ, which we used at this year's Pipe Organ Discovery Day.



Around 1998, I wanted to add some more depth to our educational programs and looked for ways to connect with local schools and church education programs. In conversation with AGO colleagues, I learned about a new program that the Guild was piloting in Seattle under the guidance of Ruth Caswell, of the University of Washington, and the Seattle chapter. **PipeWorks** is an interdisciplinary program that combines information on the musical, scientific, and historical context of the pipe organ; it involves the use of a demonstration instrument in the classroom. I attended the pilot program's workshop at the 2000 AGO National Convention in Seattle and spoke to Ruth Caswell and her team. Back in Minnesota, I got to work with local TCAGO colleagues, music educators, staff from the Science Museum of Minnesota, several organbuilders, and local volunteers. We

implemented the pilot program and continued to add additional modules related to composers for the organ,

featuring more historical context and science lessons. We expanded the program, which initially showcased Bach, by adding lessons on 20th-century composers such as Olivier Messiaen and John Williams.

With some local funding, as well as help from and collaboration with Dobson Pipe Organ Builders and the Schantz Organ Company, in 2004 our chapter welcomed a new, custom-made demonstration organ, which we named “mini opus.” Mini opus is designed for teaching young students. It is portable (fits in a cargo van) and has features that highlight the workings of the organ, such as a clear plexiglass window to view the mechanical action, a demonstration rank with pipes from each family of pipes found in larger organs, and slider stops that are easily drawn by smaller children.



As we planned the PipeWorks program in the Twin Cities, we realized that we would need a place to store the teaching materials and the demonstration instrument. I initiated a discussion between the Westminster Presbyterian Church in Minneapolis (where I am a member) and our local TCAGO board to establish PipeWorks as a joint venture. As our programs and teaching materials have grown, it has been very beneficial for PipeWorks to have a home base, so that it can be stored at the church.

We keep focusing on new ways of learning and have developed lessons that we call **Bach in Outer Space**, featuring the Golden Records aboard both *Voyager* spacecrafts, which contains three recordings of the music of J.S. Bach, the only composer or cultural sound image with more than a single listing on the Golden Records. At one suburban St. Paul school we presented a series of classes to all 250 students, grades three to five, followed by a field trip to Westminster Presbyterian Church to experience larger organs. The music teacher I worked with was quite insistent that we involve a local science teacher in classes that contained any science-related content. In the middle of teaching a Bach in Outer Space lesson, the science teacher shared that she had worked at NASA during the launch of the *Voyager* spacecrafts and detailed her experiences with the class. It was a truly unforgettable lesson for everyone.



Since 2004, when we received “mini opus,” we have brought PipeWorks into public and private schools, churches, and various adult education programs, focusing on the correlation between science and music. Because of the variety of lessons that we have developed, we often use portions of PipeWorks programs for Pipe Organ Discovery Days and various adult education programs. PipeWorks modules were included this past March at the Pipe Organ Discovery Day in St. Paul, along with lessons on the history, science, and sounds of the pipe organ for the **Cannon Valley Elder Collegium**. During the

pandemic we were able to bring “mini opus” to Saint John’s Lutheran Summer Music Camp, located in the rural Minnesota town of Howard Lake. Most PipeWorks classes are promoted by word of mouth, and upcoming requests include another summer music camp that will focus specifically on science, music, and the organ.

Several students who have attended Pipe Organ Discovery Days over the years now have professional careers as organists, and I recently learned that a former student, now a sophomore in high school, had just won a statewide music composition competition.

You can view the MPR recordings here:

- first video: <https://www.yourclassical.org/story/2022/06/02/yourclassical-music-lessons-instrument-exploration-meet-the-organ-part-one>
- second video: <https://www.yourclassical.org/story/2022/06/09/instrument-exploration-the-organ-part-two>
- third video: <https://www.yourclassical.org/story/2022/06/16/instrument-exploration-the-organ-part-three>

Additional information about TCAGO PipeWorks programs can be found here:

<https://tcago.wildapricot.org/page-1502683>.

*The AGO is creating a new web page that will feature videos, recordings, and other resources specifically targeting organists under the age of 13. MPR has graciously allowed us to include these videos.*

*Twin Cities PipeWorks has inspired the AGO to begin planning a nationwide initiative that will allow chapters to bring Orgelkids kits into local schools to introduce the correlation between science, art, history, and music, in support of the next generation of organists. Stay tuned for further information!*



Congratulations to the Sacramento Valley chapter for producing a recital that included performances by scholarship winners and their respective teachers. The recital, which took place on June 5, featured six students—three men and three women—ranging in age from 14 to 24. The program included works by J.S. Bach,

Buxtehude, Vierne, and Duruflé. Sacramento Valley's scholarship program has been running for 15 years, offering scholarships to young pianists who are interested in learning more about the organ. Each pianist receives 20 one-hour complimentary lessons. Many of these students have continued organ study, and quite a few have subsequently been hired as organists in churches.



SOUTHERN ILLINOIS CHAPTER OF THE AGO

## **Southern Illinois Chapter's Successful Collaborations**

*Southern Illinois dean Jane Otte shared the following:*

We are a small chapter of 42 members, and we cover areas in three states: southern Illinois, western Kentucky and southeast Missouri. We have experienced great success collaborating with others beyond the walls of our chapter.

### University Connections at Halloween

Our Halloween concert, held at Southern Illinois University (SIU) last fall, featured seven AGO members and two SIU members. Roughly 140 people attended! It still amazes me. Yes, we worked hard on publicity. And yes, there was great appeal on campus for coming in costume. Would we have had even 40 people (much less 140 people) if we had held this concert on our own? No.

### Fair at the Market Street Music Conservatory in Marion, Ill.

This past May, a newly opened music conservatory held a fair that offered free lessons and prizes. They were happy to partner with us. We organized two "crawls" at a church within walking distance. At the fair, we brought five boxes of used music and had a table for AGO material.

### The benefits of this collaboration:

1. The fair was a platform that made our chapter more visible to the wider community in an unexpected venue.
2. The conservatory loved that we had the organ crawl and were offering free music, as they were unable to provide these benefits.
3. We did not have to do the work of organizing the fair.
4. We did not have to create any publicity but were included in it.
5. We gave away four boxes of music.

*Chapter leaders, we've talked a lot about the benefits of collaborating with other arts organizations. As Jane clearly states, collaboration can assist you with branding your chapter, lighten the load of event planning, and demonstrate the value to others of becoming a member of your chapter. You all have less time this year for serving as volunteers, so please, make it easier on yourselves. As you begin to plan your upcoming programs, start thinking right now about what arts organizations are in your area that you can collaborate with!*

## Updated Script for Your Chapter's Officer Installations

Leslie Wolf Robb, councillor for communications, recently installed the San Diego chapter's officers and updated the some of the wording for the installation. You can find under this document under the **Management and Governance** collapsible menu in the **Chapter Leadership Toolkits**:

<https://www.agohq.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Installation-of-Officers-2.pdf>



### Programs in a Box

Each month, we will be providing you with ideas, tools, and resources that you can use for chapter programs. We welcome suggestions for future programs in a box!

Does your chapter own an **Orgelkids Kit**, or do you know of one in your area? If so, contact your local schools to find out when they will be holding science fairs, then ask if you can bring your science project (i.e., Orgelkids kit) to it. For a map showing where kits are available, visit <https://orgelkidsusa.org/where-in-the-world/>.

### *In Memoriam: René Zajner*



It is with great sadness that I share the passing of René Zajner, sub-dean of the Gateway Confluence (Ill.) chapter. I first met René on Zoom when the chapter was just getting started. A dual member of the St. Louis chapter, he was a talented organist with a lifelong passion for music. He held the position of music director and organist at Our Lady of Providence (Crestwood, Mo.) and Faith Des Peres Presbyterian Church (Des Peres, Mo.). His skills were also used as a customer service manager for Thomson Reuters, where he was employed from 1989 to 2007. This job took him from Toronto to St. Louis, by way of London and Chicago.

I had several wonderful conversations with René about strengthening the AGO brand through social media. When I spoke to him about the new AGO logo we had created, he designed this powerful graphic that





included one of my favorite phrases—*membership is everybody's business*— which I used in one of my newsletters.

As Dawn Riske (St. Louis chapter) shared: *He was a great communicator and inspired us to strive to be the best when we were promoting our programs.* René will be remembered as a gifted musician, PR maven, photographer, and kind person.



The **AGO** Organ Scholar Program



The AGO Organ Scholar Program offers a young person the opportunity to experience a one-year internship within a significant music ministry program somewhere in the United States. This gap-year program will take place during the 2023-24 program year.

The program model is designed to include combined investments from AGO National Headquarters, a local AGO chapter, and a host church—\$10,000 each—totaling \$30,000. In addition, the host church is expected to provide housing and health care for the organ scholar.

Would your church be interested in participating in this prestigious venture? If so, we would like to hear from you! To find more information and the Organ Scholar Host Application, please visit [agohq.org/organ-scholar-program-hosting](http://agohq.org/organ-scholar-program-hosting). The application will be open from August 15, 2022, until September 30, 2022. If you have any questions, please send an email to [organscholar@agohq.org](mailto:organscholar@agohq.org).

The program model is designed to include combined investments from AGO National Headquarters, a local AGO chapter (or chapters), and a host church—\$10,000 each for a total of \$30,000. If your chapter is unable to fulfill the financial responsibility of \$10,000 on its own, it is possible to collaborate with another nearby chapter to share the financial obligation. In addition to \$10,000, the host church is expected to provide housing and healthcare for the organ scholar.

## Upcoming Webinars in August and September

**Monday, August 29<sup>th</sup>, 8 pm EDT: A 21st Century Facelift for the Certification Exams**

Presented by Vincent Carr, Councillor for Membership, this webinar will explore some of the changes to the exams in 2022. The Committee on Professional Certification has engaged in a rigorous self-assessment to see how they can better serve AGO members and support the certification program. Please register [here](#).



**Tuesday, September 13<sup>th</sup>, 7 pm 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, and trick for content creation and scheduling to help you make the most out of your time.

Please register [here](#).

