

Lehigh Valley Chapter

American Guild of Organists

March 2019

March 2019



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www.lvago.org

Dean's Mixtures

Several years ago I was interviewed by a young newspaper reporter for one of my CDs, and when the article appeared in print, I laughed to myself when I saw that he referred to my traditional classical approach to music as “handmade music.” I was not surprised, though, because much of our discussion was centered on the techniques of playing and recording classical music. He was heavily involved in rock music, and the processes in that field are very different than in traditional classical music. In popular style music, technology is used to produce the end result, but in traditional classical music, we try to keep technology as transparent as possible. Every aspect of the music is controlled by the performer as it is taking place, and technology is used to transparently reproduce exactly what the artists’ skills produce. This was astounding to him.



For whatever reason, this interview came to mind recently. The memory caused me to muse on how many young people are so steeped in music made with computers and electronic equipment that the idea of making music “by hand” seems quaint to them. I tend to be a person who wants to understand other points of view, so I found myself asking why they should even be interested in our “quaint” way of producing art. (Why do we even bother

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March Meeting

Annual Bach Marathon

Sunday, March 24, 3 pm
St. John's Lutheran Church
37 South 5th Street, Allentown

Dean's Mixtures

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trying to “sell” it?) Which led me to ask why I should even try to keep the “handmade” tradition alive in my church. Why not start using microphones, click tracks, prerecorded tracks, computers, etc? I think we do have to sit down and face the fact that traditional organists and musicians are trying to sell fallible human achievement to at least one (if not more) generation that is steeped in music where much of the technical “stuff” is achieved by twiddling knobs ... and sometimes music is even “composed” using computer generated chord progressions, etc. A certain sterile “perfection” is possible with very little effort.

Why is it important to keep the tradition of “handmade” music alive?

Hmmm. That got me thinking about my new hobby that I mentioned in a previous newsletter—shirt-making. Why would one want to make a handmade shirt, or even buy a professionally handmade one, when you can go to a store and buy one made with computerized accuracy? Times have changed since the days of my mother’s youth when women made their own dresses out of feed bags. (She grew up on a farm, and the bags that animal feed came in were sometimes made of colored and printed fabric that could be used to make clothes.) Nowadays, it’s a quaint hobby to make your own clothes by hand. It’s an interesting mental exercise to think through some of the reasons I became interested in making shirts by hand and see whether there is a correlation to music-making. I’ll list some of my reasons. How many of them can be applied to what we traditional musicians do?



- The act of making a shirt can have a therapeutic effect on the maker, who overcomes challenges of skill (with practice) in order to make the shirt.
- The handmade shirt may have irregularities or slight imperfections, but these tend to draw the interest of viewers who then look at it more

closely, knowing a person made it with human skill. It is interesting, maybe even because of slight imperfections.

- The shirt has a story. Rather than mindless mass production, there is a story about how one sleeve took three tries to ease in, how the bobbin thread ran out in the middle of this seam, etc. There are stories to tell about the challenges that were overcome. And that gives the finished product more personality.
- A handmade shirt can be tailored to fit a specific person.
- A handmade shirt can be personalized with the exact colors or types of fabric one wants.

Aside from these things, there is another very important clincher to me. I believe computerized beats and rhythms are unnatural to the human body. A computerized rhythm is like a perfectly straight ruler. But where in the human body do we find a perfectly straight line? Musicians typically count out rhythms, then they apply a mysterious human factor—they “feel” the rhythm, which takes it one step further. It adds slight imperfections (usually without realizing they are doing it, because they are natural) that make the rhythm more human. The ancient Greeks were aware that for the lines in a very big building to appear straight to human eyes, a curve had to be incorporated that would make up for distortions in human perception. (Google “entasis” to learn about this.) I find that when I listen to old recordings of “pop” music made before computerized drumbeats, the rhythms seem to “pop,” because I think the “handmade” drumbeats incorporate the slight imperfections that make rhythm feel natural. I find that modern computerized rhythms make me physically uncomfortable, as I am very sensitive to how my body reacts to music. And I have found in recent years that students who grew up with computerized music have a difficult time “feeling” rhythms.

In churches, the traditional “handmade” ways of making music are being more and more pushed aside in favor of more electronic and computer-generated techniques. I think when these techniques are used to replace human effort and achievement, the resulting art is devalued and sometimes dehumanized. I am not against “pop” musical style itself, as I am a fan of the Beatles and other popular music. (And do not take

this as a statement about non-pipe organs. I'm talking about musical techniques.) But I do feel that replacing human effort with electronic shortcuts is like replacing real flowers in church with plastic ones every week. You can eliminate the irregularities of nature and have something more convenient, but at what expense?

Getting back to the interview with the young reporter—he was very surprised when I said that in traditional art, computerlike accuracy is not a goal. My former teacher, James Boeringer, used to say that true art must include human imperfection. I agree with this and explained to the interviewer that my interpretations of music include intentional imperfections to enhance its effect. After our lively and very involved conversation, he went home and listened to the CD and wrote a very nice review. He wrote me saying how much he loved the music after hearing the explanation.

I am asking questions and bringing up these topics in many of my Dean's Mixtures because these are issues and questions that many of us are facing in our positions, and I believe we need to think carefully about them. I wouldn't expect that everyone would agree with my thoughts, but I do hope that these articles help provoke personal soul-searching on these topics. And I hope my experience with the young reporter points out the importance of thinking about these things and explaining our thoughts to those who may not understand why we do not want to take shortcuts that might make our jobs easier.

—Tom Dressler, Dean

March Meeting

Bach Marathon Concert

Calling all performers to play in the LVAGO annual Bach marathon/birthday celebration on Sunday, March 24, 2019, at St. John's Lutheran Church, 37 South 5th St., Allentown, and hosted by Eric Gombert. You may play any music by JS Bach, or music by other composers who influenced Bach, or whom Bach had an influence on in later times. So far we will hear music by Bach, Walther and Reincken. The concert begins at 3:00pm, and assuming we get enough performers, will end at 7 or 8:00pm. You may play for only a few minutes, or 30 minutes or more... all are welcome.

Please contact Lou Carol Fix, coordinator, LCFix@moravian.edu, no later than March 10, if you are interested to play. Thanks for your willingness to perform and support this popular LVAGO event.

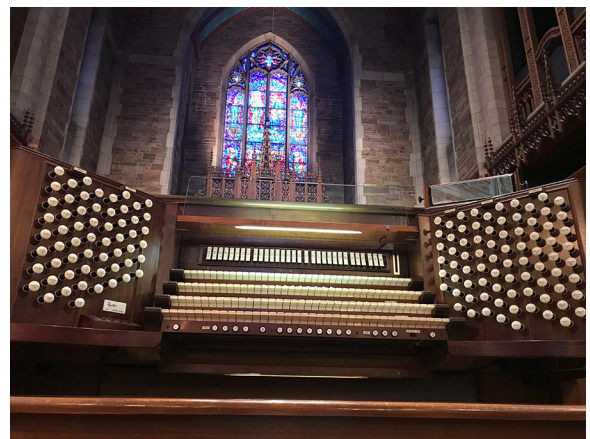
—Lou Carol Fix, Coordinator

Parking at St. John's

Free parking for evening and weekend events at 5th and Walnut Street parking lot

Parking meters on 5th Street are free on Sundays — \$2 per hour at most other times

Community Parking Deck at 6th & Walnut — \$1 per hour



St. John's, Allentown, 1993 IV/87 Reuter

February Meeting

Our Pedal's Pipes and Pizza was held at the First Presbyterian Church of Allentown on February 9th from 9:30 to 1. We had 18 individuals who participated. The morning began with registration and greetings, followed by a performance of the Bruhn's E minor Prelude "Grosses" by Luke DiGiacinto. Michael Krentz gave a succinct and user-friendly introduction to the basic workings of the pipe organ augmented with props. Dean Thomas Dressler gave a discussion of the differences between the organ and piano and their respective touches, Luke DiGiacinto,, Lou Carol Fix, Mike Krentz, and Thomas Dressler demonstrated the different families of organ sound with musical demonstrations.

Following the presentations, time was allowed for playing the organ, and for questions. The group then climbed up the spiral staircase for a tour of the pipe organ chambers. Afterwards, everyone came back to

hear Tom perform the Toccata in F major by Johann Sebastian Bach. Pizza served in the choir room concluded the day. It was indeed a grand event.

—Luke DiGiacinto

2018–2019 Programs

Sunday, March 24th 2019 at 3:00 p.m.

Annual Bach Marathon

St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church
37 South 5th Street, Allentown

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Saturday, April 6th 2019 at 10:00 a.m.

AGO/Quimby Regional Competition for Young Organists—Chapter Level Competition

Cathedral Church of the Nativity
321 Wyandotte Street, Bethlehem

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Sunday, April 28th 2019 at 3:00 p.m.

AGO National Chaplain Donald Saliers presents “Reinvigorating Ourselves”

Wesley Methodist Church
2540 Center Street, Bethlehem

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Sunday, June 2nd 2019 at 4:00 p.m.

Annual Young Artist's Recital

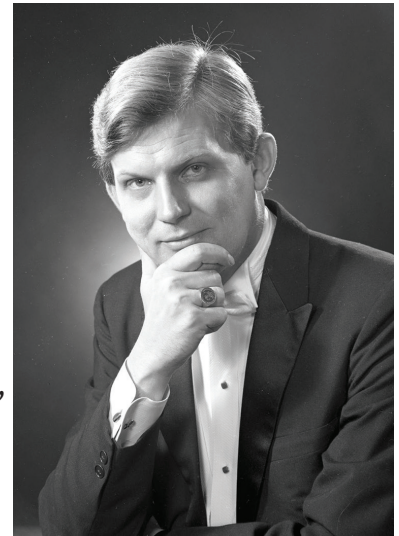
Featuring **Aaron Patterson**, current AGO Pogorzelski-Yankee Scholarship Awardee
Annual Banquet and Annual Meeting
Christ Lutheran Church
1245 West Hamilton Street, Allentown

Joseph Flummerfelt

Many of you may have heard about the death of Andre Previn, and Friday evening the world experienced the loss of another of the greats. Joseph Flummerfelt was the director of the Westminster Choir and Westminster Symphonic Choir from 1971 to 2004. The Westminster Choirs have long been known as among the great choirs in America. And Joseph Flummerfelt brought the choirs to a tremendous peak. Westminster Symphonic Choir was always in demand with the great conductors—Stokowski, Toscanini, Leonard Bernstein, to name a few; these and other great conductors always asked for the Westminster Symphonic Choir when they were performing in New York and Philadelphia. During my years at Westminster, we sang under Riccardo Muti,

Kurt Mazur, and Raphael Kubelik with the New York Philharmonic, The Philadelphia Orchestra, and the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchester when they toured North America. We sang at Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall, the Philadelphia Academy of Music, and the Kennedy Center. And I was part of the choir when we recorded twice with the Philadelphia Orchestra for Angel Records. This was all due to the great musicianship and leadership of Joseph Flummerfelt.

I had already experienced a lot of big performances by the time I went to graduate school at Westminster. Some of you know that my high school band, the Danville Ironmen Band, was nationally famous. I played trumpet and marimba, and by the time I was 18, I had performed at NFL halftime shows at the Orange Bowl, the Superdome, the Astrodome, Atlanta Stadium, Yankee Stadium, Giants Stadium, Tampa Stadium (as well as halftime shows for Canadian Football League at Montreal Expo Stadium and in Toronto.) But I was still not prepared for the awe of the first rehearsal at the Philadelphia Academy of Music under Riccardo Muti, and how the choir had been led to a world class level by Dr. Flummerfelt. In the years I was there, the choir was always performing at incredible levels of artistry. We were treated with the highest respect at venues where the greatest musicians of our time performed. I have scores autographed by Jessye Norman, Arlene Auger, and Agnes Baltsa, to name some of the great singers who were soloists with us. I sat on the stage at Lincoln Center a number of times and saw Werner Klemperer (son of the great conductor Otto Klemperer and who played the part of “Colonel Klink” on Hogan’s Heroes) sitting in the audience, enthralled by our performances with the New York Philharmonic. I sang in the choir when we had a special invitation to sing the Brahms German Requiem with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchester when they did a North American tour featuring the music of Brahms. When we sang the Brahms Requiem at Lincoln Center, we experienced a rarity with New York audiences. Normally if they like



a performance they are up on their feet screaming and clapping before the final cut-off. This time, they were silent. For many seconds. THEN the screaming and applauding started. And there were many more of these experiences that were at the very pinnacle of musical performance during my years. This could not have happened without Joseph Flummerfelt.

He took a music conservatory of aspiring singers, organists, pianists, and conductors to the highest level of choral singing possible. This is why we were in such high demand by the world's greatest conductors. Flummerfelt was not a household name like Bernstein or Muti, but believe me, those conductors knew and respected him.

I think all of us who experienced Westminster Choir College while "Flumm" (as we called him) was artistic director are mourning the loss of one of the great musicians of our time. He inspired a great number of choral directors to bring out the best in our own choirs, no matter who we are working with. And the "Westminster way" incorporates deep caring for the people we work with along with bringing them to their highest levels of capability. I cannot stress enough how much of this was due to the caring and work of this great man.

Joseph Flummerfelt passed on to the heavenly choirs last evening. Imagine what kind of music must be happening there!

—Tom Dressler, Dean

March/April Concerts

March 10 (Sunday) 3:00 pm; **Marisa Deshler, organ;** Featuring arrangements and transcriptions; St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Bethlehem; Freewill offering

March 10 (Sunday) 4:00 pm; **The Waters of Glacier;** Jill Haley, oboe & english horn; David Cullen, guitar; Susan McDevitt, piano; Trinity Lutheran Church, Perkasie; Freewill; \$5-\$10 suggested

March 17 (Sunday) 4:00 pm; **Erik and Anna Meyer, organ and flute;** Works by J. L. Krebs, Jehan Alain, Gerald Near, John Weaver, Dan Locklair, Frank Martin, and the new 'Lydian Suite' by Erik Meyer; Cathedral Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem

March 24 (Sunday) 3:00 pm; **Bucks County Gilbert and Sullivan Society;** Featuring patter songs honoring the memory of Rändel Wolfe; Trinity Lutheran Church, Reading; Freewill offering benefits the Reading Musical Foundation

March 31 (Sunday) 3:00 pm; **Lehigh University Soloists and Chamber Ensembles;** Lehigh students perform works ranging from classical to jazz; St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Bethlehem; Freewill offering

March 31 (Sunday) 3:00 pm; **Muhlenberg College Choirs;** Including *The Chichester Psalms*; St. John's Lutheran Church, Allentown

April 7 (Sunday) 3:00 pm; **Allison Kiger, flute and Oren Fader, guitar;** In collaboration with The Allentown Symphony Orchestra; St. John's Lutheran Church, Allentown

April 14 (Sunday) 4:00 pm; **Stephen Williams, organ,** A Palm Sunday program including Louis Vierne's complete Symphony No. 4; Cathedral Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem

April 14 (Sunday) 4:00 pm; **Brotherly Love;** Select chorus of the Philadelphia Gay Men's Chorus; Trinity Lutheran Church, Reading; Freewill offering benefits the LGBT Center of Greater Reading

April 23 (Tuesday) 12:10 pm; **Omri Barak, trumpet;** In collaboration with The Allentown Symphony Orchestra; St. John's Lutheran Church, Allentown

April 28 (Sunday,) 4:00 pm; **Neil Harmon, organ;** Recently appointed Professor of Organ at Brigham Young University, will include a number of his own compositions on the program; Cathedral Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem



Organist Substitute List

Find us on Facebook



If you would like to be included in the Organist Substitute List please forward your Name, Contact Information (phone/email) and Availability (Sundays, weekdays, etc) to Stephen Bueker, 2520 Clark Place, Easton, PA 18040; sfbueker@rcn.com.

Dale Bonenberger	Mon–Fri	917 328-9041
Ruthann Brandt	Mon–Sat	610 262-3304
Janice Butz	Mon –Fri	610 882-9388
Stephen Cable	Mon–Sat	484 866-6019
V. Mark Dennis	Mon–Sat	610 867-0385
Carol Dzurenda	Mon–Sat	215 538-7273
Kevin Freaney	Sun–Sat	610 283-1944
Ellen Erb	Saturday	570 350-0343
Charles Glandorf	Sun–Sat	610 416-1055
Eric Gombert	Mon–Sat	610 435-1641
Gail Hanzl	Mon–Sat	610 264-5859
Bryan Holten	Mon–Sat	585 633-8705
Michael Huffman	Mon–Sat	610 433-6563
Joe Kaczmarek	Sun–Fri	484 433-4336
Jacqueline Kuba	Mon–Sat	570 386-4480
Michael Kuhnert	Mon–Sat	215 536-4345
Dodd Lamberton	Sun–Sat	484 935-3505
James Matz	Sun–Sat	610 367-8094
Linda Maule	Mon–Sat	610 258-5006
John McEnerney	Sun–Fri	215 794-7338
Richard McIntyre	Mon–Sat	908 283-4691
Randall Perry	Mon–Fri	570 325-9440
Erin Petrella	Sun–Sat	484 863-9052
Maria Prochnau	Sun–Sat	610 866-2560
Karen Scott	May–Sept.	610 737-1701
Michael Seroka	Mon–Fri	570 386-2378
Brian Snyder	Mon–Thurs	484 838-0977
Donald Vaughn	Mon–Sat	610 966-0682
Matthew Wary	Mon–Fri	610 473-8777
Stephen Williams	Mon–Fri	610 737-5196
Stephen Ziminsky	Mon–Sat	610 417-2669
Freda Zimmerman	Sun–Sat	610 381-3089

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Placement Service

See the Placement page on www.lvago.org, for information and the Placement Service Information Sheet.

Newsletter Deadline

Next Edition: Thursday, March 21, 2019