

June 2009

Chiff Chat

Springfield, Massachusetts Chapter
American Guild of Organists



A Hidden Treasure *by Mary Jeanne Tash*

I responded to an ad in the **Diapason** for an older used Allen Organ. 87 year-old David Gifford of Williamsburg played the Prelude and Fugue in C Major from Bach's "Eight Little Preludes and Fugues" from memory. I bought the organ and met a treasure.

David was born in Cambridge, studied under E. Power Biggs or "Biggsy" as he calls him for 4 yrs and went to Harvard receiving his Bachelor's degree in Music. WWII called and he answered twice. He was turned down the first time because of his vision, but the second time, impressed by his determination to join, he was put in the Military Police serving in England and in Normandy during the invasion. He was proud to say he was never shot at nor did he shoot anyone.

He received his Master of Music degree from Oberlin Conservatory. The day he got married he had 2 final exams in the morning and the wedding after. He had met Irene at a church function and they subsequently performed works for organ and violin together. Married for 50 yrs and one month, parents of twins, Irene died 10 yrs ago.

Unable to find a job teaching organ, he started building organs in Cleveland. He has worked for Fisk and Aeolian Skinner Organ Companies making pipes and working in the "tiny" voicing room. He met E. M. Skinner, who when in his 90's visited the AS plant. David said it must have been painful for EM to live long enough to see other companies rebuild his work.

After being an organist in Hingham, he eventually moved to Williamsburg playing at St. John's Episcopal Church, Ashfield, and retired after playing at the Community Church in Cummington. The last time he played in church was when he helped out last June in Ashfield.

So, it seemed appropriate to visit St. John's with him. We sat at the 1860 Johnson Organ while he explained the intricacies of such an instrument. There was even a pump in the back if the power failed and you could find someone to pump it.

As we drove home I asked him looking back over his life if there was anything he wished he had done. Without skipping a beat he said "I just wanted to play the organ". Amen.



Springfield Chapter Leadership

Dean	Grant Moss
Sub Dean	Martha Sienkiewicz
Secretary	Mary Jeanne Tash
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Directors	Karen Banta, Don Hooton, John Karalekas, Rev. Jerry True, Larry Picard, Michael-Thomas Gilman
Chaplain	Fr. William Wallis
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Membership	Charles Page
Chiff Chat Editor	Larry Picard
Yearbook Editor	Peter Beardsley
Investments	Charles Page, E Lary Grossman, William Czelusniak, James Barnes, Michael Thomas Gilman

Banquet!!!

Have you sent in a reservation form for our final event of the season, the year-end banquet? It will happen Monday, June 8, 6:30 p.m. at Trinity Methodist Church, 361 Sumner Avenue, Springfield. Entertainment will be provided by Steve Hays, Executive Director and founder of Drama Studio, who was also Producing Director of Stage West from its inception in 1967 until 1984. In addition to directing many shows he is also a playwright and musician, with three of his plays, The Snow Queen, The Little Match Girl, and Me and Ruth, premiering at the Drama Studio.

The evening will begin at 6:30 PM with a social hour in the Parlor, followed by dinner at 7:00 PM in Asbury Hall. The menu will include Asparagus Soup, Strawberry Salad with Poppy Seed Dressing, Chicken Marsala, Rice Pilaf, Fresh Vegetables & a Dessert. At 8:00 PM we will all be treated to a delightful program of original songs/skits by Steve Hays.

If you have any questions or want to make a reservation, call Martha Sienkiewicz at 413-568-8033.

News from the Program Committee

The Program Committee has been hard at work planning events for the 2009-2010 season. The Sept. 26 opening event will feature our own Chris Houlihan in concert at St. Michael's Cathedral, with a reception and installation of officers. October 18 will bring another excellent concert at Mt. Holyoke College, featuring Almut Rossler, a renowned interpreter of Messiaen. An anthem reading and music swap is scheduled for November, a mini convention for February and a members' recital in March. UCC Holyoke will once again bring us a silent movie (comedy) and the end-of-the-year banquet will be hosted by St. James Episcopal Church in Greenfield.

Outreach is a theme for next year. The committee is exploring ideas of coordinating mini field trips for middle school students within walking distance of a major organ. Interested students would be introduced to the organ by an AGO member in a kind of Pipe Organ Encounter style. This experimental program will hopefully be launched in May 2010. Another endeavor is to reach out to Catholic musicians with a special section at the mini-convention for Catholic liturgy. Outreach to our members in the northern reaches of the region will be facilitated by St. James Church's offer to host the annual banquet in Greenfield. Suggestions and ideas are always welcome from members. If you have an idea for a program, please contact martha@sienkiewicz.org. The members of the Program Committee are Karen Banta, Don Hooton, John Karalekas and Martha Sienkiewicz, Sub-Dean/Chair.

Upcoming Events

June 2009

Saturday, June 6, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. Schola Nova, directed by Terry Larsen, sings at First Church of Christ in Longmeadow, 763 Longmeadow Street, Longmeadow. The featured work will be Rejoice in the Lamb by Benjamin Britten. Free-will offering.

Sunday, June 7, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. Schola Nova, directed by Terry Larsen, sings at the Unitarian Society of Northampton, 220 Main Street, Northampton. The featured work will be Rejoice in the Lamb by Benjamin Britten. Free-will offering. 413-584-1390.

Monday, June 8, 2009 at 6:30 p.m. (Chapter event - please note that this is a change in day, time and venue!) Springfield AGO year-end banquet at Trinity Methodist Church, Sumner Avenue, Springfield. Entertainment will be provided by Steve Hays, Executive Director and founder of Drama Studio. See Chapter Events above for more details.

Friday, June 26, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. David Enlow will give an organ recital at United Congregational Church, 395 High Street, Holyoke. Mr. Enlow is Organist and Choir Master at the Resurrection Church in New York. He was recently appointed to the organ faculty of the Julliard School to teach a year-long intensive course in service playing. He received his Bachelor of Music and Master of Music degree from The Julliard School, having studied with Paul Jacobs and Dr. John Weaver at The Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia and Julliard, and with John Tuttle. David will start his recital on the Skinner Organ in Skinner Chapel ending the recital on the Skinner organ in the main sanctuary. A reception will follow the recital.

AND, SOME IDEAS FOR SUMMER CONCERTGOING...

Friends of the Kotschmar Organ: The 102-rank Austin Organ at the Portland (ME) City Auditorium will be played in a series of concerts by artists such as Peter Richard Conte, Jonas Nordwall, Carol Williams, Felix Hell, Thomas Heywood, Ray Cornils and Barbara Dennerlein. www.foko.org.

Methuen Hall Organ Series: An even longer list of performers will be featured on the summer series at the Methuen Memorial Music Hall. Concerts happen every Wednesday night at 8 p.m. www.mmmh.org

Welcoming in the Church

by Mary Jeanne Tash

After a conversation with 2 fellow AGO members about substituting in RC churches, I was saddened to hear that they no longer subbed there because the RC churches they played in seemed "unwelcoming". Though it may be unintentional I think it is well worth thinking about. Since I play, worship and have my heart in the Roman Catholic Church this takes on special importance to me.

As a public school teacher, if I am absent I must leave a schedule, attendance lists, classroom numbers (as I am a traveling teacher) and detailed lessons plans with all supplies required. I also tell one of my colleagues with whom I share an office when I am going to be out to keep an eye out for the sub to help make them comfortable. I treat the sub the way I would like to be treated if I were in their shoes. It would seem organists should do the same.

Catholic liturgy is inherently musical. Service music takes precedence over hymns, anthems etc. All the music for the liturgy should be left for the sub unless the sub and the organist have decided otherwise. The presider should be notified that the sub is coming; keys readily available if needed; order of worship written out etc. It is just common courtesy let alone professional courtesy.

The Diocese of Springfield is going through a difficult period in its history. Yet, that should have little to do with welcoming a "guest into the house".

For those who would like to comment on their experiences subbing, please email me: mjtash@verizon.net and I will have a follow up article in a future newsletter.

Note from the editor: it seems to me that the Catholics aren't the only ones who can be unwelcoming. Have you played or subbed in a Protestant church or synagogue where you didn't feel comfortable? I have experienced this sometimes when subbing at weddings. Let us know!

So how many organists does it take to change a lightbulb?

Two. One to change it and one to grouse that it would change faster with a solid-state combination action.

CHIFF CHAT

American Guild of Organists

Springfield, MA Chapter

Larry Picard, Newsletter Editor

45 Mattoon Street

Springfield, MA 01105

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@agospringfield.org. Submissions for the July/August 2009 issue are due June 20, 2009.

Also, visit our website at www.springfieldago.org!

Have you sent in your reservation form for the year-end banquet? See in side for details!