

Chiff Chat

The Newsletter of the Lincoln Chapter of the American Guild of Organists



August 2011

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Mission Statement: The purpose of the Lincoln Chapter of the American Guild of Organists is to promote the organ in its historic and evolving roles, to encourage excellence in the performance of organ and choral music, and to provide a forum for mutual support, inspiration, education, and certification of Guild members in the city of Lincoln and surrounding areas.

—adopted January 12, 2009

Executive Committee:

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Newsletter Editor:

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Dean's Column

Hello, everyone, and "Thank you" to all who are carrying responsibilities and plans forward into 2011/12.

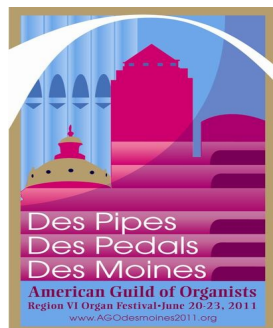
After the Andre Kotylo concert on May 15 at First-Plymouth I felt great gratitude and respect for the music community that is our resource in Lincoln. Our organ community that includes organists, organs, friends, and potential listeners is exceptional. Just finding the number of skilled choristers available to perform the Kodaly "Laues Organi" in the Kotylo concert is surprising in a town our size. Take a look at the plaques representing donors who make our community Lied organ possible next time your are at First – Plymouth. We have exciting possibilities. Think of how many other concert venues are possible for our Showcase concerts. In contrast, in the town where I grew up there was only one very modest pipe organ at the University's auditorium . Even the larger churches had pedestrian electronic, two—or three manual organs. Here we have a wealth of pipe organ choices. Expand your imagination to the hundreds of friends and potential listeners and organists and see the number of potential individuals that might be interested in an invitation to come to AGO meetings, workshops, and concerts. Perhaps they might even start organ lessons and become AGO members. Feeling excited?

What an opportunity awaits! There are so many ways to actively participate in meetings and events. Your ideas give our chapter momentum. You could start by sending an idea for membership building or programs in a note or phone message or e-mail to a Chapter Executive Committee or

LOS Board member, or mention your thought to another member. When you read about our stimulating programs coming up for the year, mark your calendar and invite a friend. Let a piano teacher know about the programs, pass on our newsletter, invite a student to a concert. Organs are the loudest, most colorful, astonishing instruments in music and that includes gamelan orchestras. You gotta love 'em! Get the idea? The romance glows no matter how long your love affair with organs may last. I hope you will share organ fervor with me and all your friends this year. Thank you!



Burns Davis, CAGO
Dean



Chiff Chat

Special Edition

Region IV Organ Festival Coverage!





A Note from the Sub-Dean ~ Stacie Lightner

Greetings! I don't know about you, but I am still on summer time despite the catalogs of sample Christmas anthems that are piling up on my desk! My most important task as your sub-dean is planning and implementing our programs throughout the year. The outline for this year's programs is pretty well set, although there are a few details that still need to be finalized. All dates and locations will be included in next month's Chiff Chat. I would like for our programs to be useful and inspiring, but I need your input on topics, presenters, and how to make things run more smoothly. Please don't hesitate to offer your suggestions—the chapter is here to serve you!



A Word from your Education Chairman

An exciting new membership year is beginning, including a stimulating series of programs that will provide professional growth for all of us. In addition to professional growth opportunities provided through chapter programming, the guild offers professional growth opportunities through the certification program as well. As education chairman for the Lincoln Chapter, allow me to encourage members to consider earning a guild certificate: the SPC (Service Playing Certificate); CAGO (Colleague American Guild of Organists); AAGO (Associate American Guild of Organists); FAGO (Fellow American Guild of Organists); or ChM (Choir Master). Preparation for certification exams expands knowledge and skills in several ways, including organ playing skills, general keyboard skills, technology skills, choral conducting, general musicianship in addition to gaining considerable knowledge of repertoire. Specific guidelines are listed in the July issue of *The American Organist*, and are available on WWW of the American Guild of Organists. Provisions for scheduling exams varies somewhat: the SPC may be taken anytime between October 1 and April 30, 2012; the CAGO may be taken on November 18, 2011; or May 11 or November 16, 2012. The SPC and CAGO exams may be scheduled at the local chapter level. The AAGO, FAGO, and ChM are scheduled at specific sites in early June of 2012. More details are available on the guild's website or in the July issue of *The American Organist*. The National Office provides many relevant and accessible resources for preparation of the exams. In addition to

specific materials relating to specific exam preparation, the guild offers professional development publications and audio-visual resources. These resources are listed in the monthly journal, available at a minimal purchase cost. In addition to resources available through the national office, the Lincoln Chapter membership includes many organists and choral directors who are skilled pedagogues, eager to help any organist and/or choral director who is preparing for any one of the exams in any way we can. Members who need a referral are perfectly welcome to contact me for referrals in Lincoln, Seward, or Omaha at (712) 352-0298; (712) 352-0298 or mrc@chase3000.com. So consider the challenge of earning certification in the American Guild of Organists. It is well worth your time and effort. The accomplishment of earning a certificate is unmatched, filled with excitement, recognition, and the sheer knowledge that your musicianship, skills, and Insights have reached new and fresh levels of reality.

**J. Gordon Christensen, AAGO
Education Chairman
Lincoln Chapter, AGO**



Review of Des Pipes, Des Pedals, Des Moines

By Michael Bennett

I was excited to attend the Region VI Organ Festival in Des Moines, Iowa as this was my first organ festival (regional or national) I had ever attended.

I hit the ground running on Monday with the AGO Quimby Competition. For those who didn't attend the organ festival, the competition was at St. John's Lutheran. As I entered the sanctuary, I was amazed by the warmth and beauty of the space. St. John's Lutheran (ELCA) has two pipe organs, a Schlicker (1997) in the Sanctuary and then a small Nordlie organ in the chapel.

Following the competition, I went on the organ crawl to see four organs in the Des Moines area. This was fun seeing the different organs.

Following the organ crawl, there really wasn't time to get dinner as the busses were loading for Plymouth Congregational Church and the Hymn Festival with Dr. Aaron David Miller. The hymn festival was a blast! There was a bell ensemble, de Klokkenluiders Handbell Ensemble, from Pella, Iowa that played the prelude and various pieces throughout the hymn festival. After the final hymn, Aaron David Miller unleashed an Improvisation on When the Morning Stars Together. I was amazed however that none of the pipes in the organ were exposed, as they were behind a screen.

Tuesday found me starting the morning at Faith Lutheran with morning worship, a workshop on organ improvisation by Aaron David Miller and an organ recital by Dr. Catherine Rodland, Artist in Residence at St. Olaf College. Before the organ recital started, there were refreshments in the commons area of the church. God must have known I'm not a Lutheran as I laid my program book on a marble table which turned out to be a baptismal font. My program book got drenched, I asked for a new one, and the folks of the organ festival were gracious to give me a new one. I had mentioned about throwing my drenched program book away, and everyone said, "Keep it. At least you can show people it's holy now!"

I did not attend Tuesday night's recital at the Cathedral Church of Saint Paul, as I was tired and needed rest.

Wednesday was a trip to Pella. Well, until God intervened and sent rain, which cancelled my walking around to the different shops. I really wanted to indulge myself in a dutch pastry. Pella was awesome, despite the rain! The morning was spent at a workshop entitled Choral Literature with Organ Accompaniment. This was facilitated by Larry Christensen, Director of Music, Worship and the Arts at St. John's Lutheran in Des Moines. I enjoyed the energy that Larry brought to the workshop. I can only imagine singing in the choir at St. John's Lutheran would be a fun treat each week!

Wednesday night found us at Central Presbyterian Church where Christopher Houlihan played an organ recital. The recital was great! There were a few pieces where Houlihan used the trompette en chamanade in the balcony and the first time he used it, I thought my head was in a blender. That was the harshest trompette en chamanade I had ever heard. It was a great concert and a great way to close the evening.

Thursday was the final day in Des Moines. We started out with morning worship at St. John's Lutheran and then Wyatt Smith's organ recital. Wyatt was the winner of the Quimby competition on Monday and did a superb job! Thursday afternoon brought more workshops, an organ recital and then Choral Evensong.

This is where I wish there was a way you could intertwine all of your favorite denominations into one.

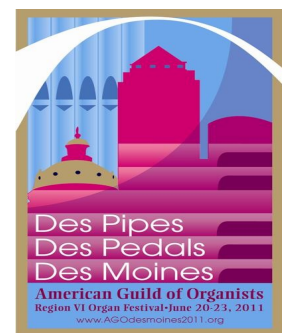
Thursday afternoon there was an organ recital by Dr. David Pickering, a professor at Kansas State University. I enjoyed his recital, but the piece I really enjoyed was the Three Floral Preludes by Daniel Gawthrop. The final prelude was based on *The Yellow Rose of Texas*. In the program notes for the recital, Pickering said anyone could play this final prelude for a postlude, but before you do, you might want to consider telling them first, or you could play this postlude after you've put in your two-weeks notice. If you get a chance, you

can head to YouTube and search for this exciting set of music. It's a barn-burner!!

The Choral Evensong was held at the Cathedral Church of Saint Paul. As a publications editor, I raced through the bulletin to see what the music was going to be. I don't know if I thought the bulletin was either a hot fudge brownie sundae, layered with chocolate and waiting to be tasted or if I had just suddenly won the lottery. In either case, the music was a home run! One of the anthems was *Let all the people, praise Thee* by William Mathias. Mathias wrote this in 1981 for The Royal Wedding of Charles and Diana. I am a fanatic for good, British music! Then, I noticed that the postlude was Prelude and Trumpetings by Myron J. Roberts. It was like the organist had known that all of us that came from the Lincoln chapter wanted something local. Choral Evensong was fantastic and a great way to end the week!

Before I had thought about attending, I had debated whether to spend the money. I'm not an organist, I play occasionally, I don't read music, but I'm glad I went. Attending this convention opened my eyes to the world of organ music. As I was sitting in my hotel room on Thursday night, I thought about this quote from Max Lucado, and I share it with you as a reminder of why we do what we do, to bring inspiration into the lives of those we encounter through the week, on Sunday mornings and throughout our lives.

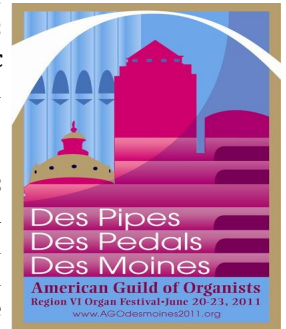
"God has given you a voice and an instrument to use in the great orchestra we call life, and it's your obligation to make sure you use it."



From the District Convenor, Charles Cohen...

As most of you have heard by now, our recent Region VI convention in Des Moines was a huge success. What a surprise to see venues for organ concerts overflowing night after night! The press and TV media of Des Moines “bought into” our convention and gave us great coverage – the public was intrigued, decided to show up for performances and was delighted with what they saw and heard.

If the title “District Convenor” sounds puzzling, this just refers to how each region of the AGO is divided into smaller regions. Our Region VI has 45 chapters in ten states and each state is considered to be a “district”. We only have the Lincoln and Omaha chapters in the Nebraska district and I am responsible for communication between our chapters and our Regional Councillor, Jan Kraybill, and national AGO leadership. Burns Davis, our new dean here in Lincoln, has asked me to write an article for each Chiff Chaff – this is a great idea. I am a dual member of both Lincoln and Omaha chapters and try to attend most meetings, so feel free to introduce yourself if I haven’t already met you.



One thing a District Convenor does is meet with the other convenors and deans from our Region during conventions. We had a productive lunch meeting in Des Moines. As leaders shared their successes and challenges, I was struck by how blessed our Lincoln and Omaha chapters are. Many of our sister chapters struggle with declining and aging membership and have very low cash balances. We are so fortunate to have two thriving chapters in Nebraska with consistently good programming, healthy membership levels, and solid bank reserves. Your ex-Dean and executive board have done a superlative job, to be sure!

Now you will have new leadership in Dean Burns Davis and Sub-Dean Stacie Lightner, who have many good ideas and are interested in hearing your ideas. Give them all the support they deserve – first of all, by putting chapter events on your calendar, and maybe asking them how you can help. I’ll see you all in September... Charles
P.S. Did you know that Lincoln and Omaha are not the only Nebraska chapters to have hosted Regional Convention? In 1963, the chapter which existed in central Nebraska (Grand Island, Kearney, Hastings) hosted a regional! For more details, ask Dr. Christensen.



Burns Davis, CAGO, LMT
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Region IV Organ Festival Coverage!



The more than 200 registrants for the Region VI convention in Des Moines experienced stellar workshops, concerts, recitals, and net-working that definitely "raised the bar" on several fronts during the three day convention, headquartered in the elegant Renaissance Savery Hotel in downtown Des Moines June 20-23. Of course the most important highlight for members of the Lincoln Chapter of the AGO was the fact that our candidate for the Regional Competition for Young Organists, Wyatt Smith, was the winner! Wyatt played his winning recital during the convention with maturity, musical insight, always honoring the intention of the composer and the aesthetic of the music. This remarkable young artist compared well with other young organists who appeared on the convention recital series. Without a doubt, we will continue to hear Wyatt Smith well into the future, including a performance at the National AGO convention in Tennessee next summer. The convention was exceedingly well organized. Packed into the three day agenda was a wide variety of workshops, recitals, concerts, parties, opportunities for net-working, and a full day trip to Pella. Central Iowa is home to several successful organ installations, some of which were demonstrated as part of the convention. I was especially impressed with the organ recitals played by the Region VI Councillor, Dr. Jan Kraybill, and a young American organist, Christopher Houlihan. The convention opened with a Hymn

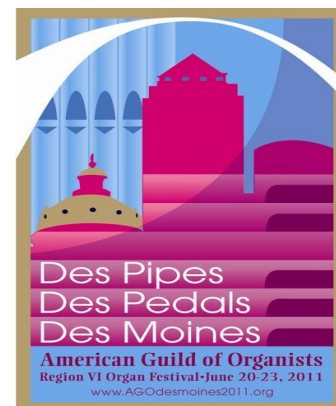
Festival titled "Songs of Passion, Love and Hope." Organized by organist Aaron David Miller, director of music at House of Hope Presbyterian Church in St. Paul, the festival included a well-trained adult chorus, de Klokkenluiders Handbell Ensemble, and the Heartland Youth Choir as well as a brass ensemble. No detail in the planning and preparation of the festival had been overlooked: the beauty of the music was matched only by the superb logistics of the festival. The five workshops I attended were of high professional caliber, offering many new ideas and resources for those attending. The resources offered in three choral workshops (Larry Christensen, Dr. Rebecca Gruber, and Barbara Sletto) are especially valuable for present and future use. The convention emphasized the importance of education, recognizing the guild's certification program through workshop presentations, and honoring those members in attendance at the convention who hold earned certification with a formal breakfast one morning during the convention. All convention registrants were heartily challenged in several venues to earn certification in the AGO. The promotion of this convention in the Des Moines and Central Iowa significantly increased the attendance at most public events. Local and area media interviewed artists, participants, and organizers for public broadcasting. The public responded with enthusiasm, packing six recitals and concerts to capacity. The public was invited to attend the events free of

charge, with a free-will donation opportunity available. This is an idea that was implemented by the chairman of the convention committee with remarkable success. It is an idea that increased the visibility of the organ in the Des Moines community. It is an idea that, if implemented with energy and focus by any AGO chapter, would increase the visibility of the organ in any community. The next regional convention will be held in Springfield, Missouri in the summer of 2013. The young organist who is the chairman of this convention was highly visible in Des Moines, eagerly promoting attendance in Springfield two years from now. With his enthusiasm and leadership, the 2013 regional is certain to experience the success the 2011 regional in Des Moines enjoyed.

Peace and good will. Psalm 98.

Sincerely yours,

Dr. C.



REVIEWS!!!

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The Des Moines folks should be proud. Overall a great convention. Especially noted: the high quality of most performances and the overflow crowds for the evening performances. Also of note: daily worship services, with organists drawn from the Iowa graduate students. That was really very neat. And, of course, Wyatt smith won the Region VI playing competition! Yea!

Jim Lytton

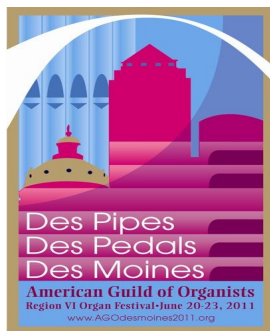
AND

Wyatt Smith will be playing a recital at First-Plymouth church on Sunday, August 7, at 3:00 pm. Wyatt was the winner of our chapter competition and went on to win the district VI competition in Des Moines in June.

Region IV Organ Festival Coverage!



Here is Wyatt Smith after playing his recital for winning the regional competition. He received a standing ovation, and many many people said quite wonderful things



Christopher Houlihan played an amazing recital tonight at Central Pres in Des Moines. The church was jam-packed because the Des Moines AGO chapter opened the programs for free and they had wonderful publicity. The programs on Monday and Tuesday were the same way.



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AGO POE STUDENT NEWS!

To: AGO Lincoln Chapter
c/o Jim Lytton;

Thank you so much for the full scholarship to attend the Colorado Springs POE! It was absolutely fantastic! I had a phenomenal time! I learned so much about registration, performance, and church music!

I can't thank you enough!
Sincerely,
David von Behren



Our POE student David von Behren (courtesy of an anonymous donor) who just finished the POE in Colorado Springs. He is pictured with his teacher at the POE, Joe Galema. He is very enthusiastic about the POE experience. He did play the Toccata from the Widor Fifth Symphony on the final recital on Friday. Hopefully we will hear from him about the POE experience in the fall.