



Jim's Jottings

by Dean, James J. Lytton, Dean



Although the busy time of year approaches, I seem to find more things to do. I attended the chant conference at the University of Kansas on November 7 and 8. Three other Lincoln chapter members were there: Dan Ahlin, Darrell Fluehr and Michael Emmerich. It was a good conference and we got to experience the wonderful Bales Organ Recital Hall with a great Wolff organ and quite fantastic acoustics. The KU organ department is much bigger than I was expecting. Check out <http://www.ku.edu/~organ> to see pictures and to learn more about the organ. I also did experience a great dinner with friends on Thursday night at a new restaurant in Kansas City.

Last Sunday, Dan Ahlin and I drove to Fremont for an organ crawl. We started with a buffet luncheon served by Jeff Hoffman who organized the tour. Then off to the congregational church where, lo and behold, the choir and organ are behind a screen in the front, almost exactly like the cathedral in Lincoln! We also went to The Presbyterian Church and to Sinai Lutheran Church (which had been redone and was quite nice – the pastor and his wife were also there for us, the only one on the tour). And lastly we went to St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church, which is huge and looks like a country club. The acoustics were not bad but it did have an Allen organ. It was an interesting afternoon. My pictures are available at: <http://picasaweb.google.com/jlytton> and then click on Fremont. Other pictures are also there for your browsing.

So, what do these kind of things do for us? For me, it is quite stimulating, something that I need. If I do not revive myself, I get stale and then I know that I don't do good work. How do you feel about that? We have a great line-up of recitals this year but the attendance has not been quite what we hoped that it would be. The Organ Spectacular was really quite spectacular and most folks enjoyed being able to hear three fine organists in-a-row and make comparisons. Chris Marks, Masako Bacon and Jeff Bleresch are to be commended for making it a

(Turn to JOTTINGS, Page 2)



No "Official" AGO Meeting in December But . . .

John Behnke – Organ, Instruments and Praise
Sunday, November 30 – 7:00 PM
First Lutheran Church
1551 South 70th Street, Lincoln
[Details were in last month's Chiff Chat.]



**First Friday
Concert Series**

**December 5
12:10 PM**

A holiday tradition, organ style, will be presented at Saint Paul United Methodist Church's First Friday Concert Series. John C. Friesen will play the classic *Nutcracker Suite* by Pyotr Ilych Tchaikovsky.

Participants will join in cheer as they are lead in traditional Christmas carols. Concert-goers will have the opportunity to view a display of over 20 nutcrackers by Alice Cherry.

The concert at 1144 M Street, Lincoln, is free and open to the public. This is the seventh year that Saint Paul UMC has hosted the First Friday Concert Series. ♪

Picturing Life in Lincoln
International Year of the Organ
During the month of November
LCC-TV channel 13



Wednesdays 9:00 AM – Thursdays 10:30 PM – Sundays 8:00 PM

■ JOTTINGS

Continued from Page 1

truly spectacular evening.

And so we approach one of an organist's busiest seasons. Are you revived and ready, or are you already stressed out? This is the time of year to try to reflect on why we do what we do. My choir is going to do some great things this year at Christmas and I hope that on Christmas Day, I can relax and put my feet up and feel as though I have made the season better for the parishioners of the Cathedral – and that God is smiling on us, because we made glorious music for him.

And if you have not heard, the students at Cornerstone Chapel have asked that they have the organ and traditional hymns at some of their services. (The praise band is their norm, I believe.)

I hope that you have a great and relaxing Christmas. And I hope to see you at some of our upcoming programs. ♪



December 14
3:00 PM

First Presbyterian Church
840 South 17th Street, Lincoln

ARTS FOR THE SOUL will present a Christmas concert entitled "A Celebration of Christmas." This celebration of the season will combine choirs, brass, percussion and organ for a joyous afternoon of old and new favorites. The featured work will be the "Hodie" of Z. Randall Stroope, choral professor at UNO.

Joining the First Presbyterian Choir and conductor Dr. Brian Pfofner will be the Union College chamber choir, "The Twelve," directed by Dr. Dan Lynn. Dr. Charles W. Ore will be the organist. This concert is sure to put you in the Christmas Spirit!

Tickets are available by contacting the church at 402.477.6037, or by going to the church Web site at www.firstpresbyterianlincoln.org. Tickets may be purchased at the door. ♪

Deck the Halls

December 5 – 7:30 PM
Lincoln's Symphony Orchestra
Lied Center for Performing Arts

AGO members get a \$15 discount per single ticket.
402.476.2211 – www.lincolnsymphony.com ♪

Start your holiday season by joining us for a musical celebration:

Joyful & Triumphant

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The Abendmusik Chorus
The Plymouth Brass



Saturday, December 6 – 7PM

First-Plymouth Church
20th and D Streets

Ticket Information:

Adult \$20 ♦ Senior \$15 ♦ Student \$10

Group rates also available

Call 402-476-9933 to reserve your tickets

www.abendmusik.org



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Dual

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Telephone the LSO office at 402.476.2211, or visit their Web site

www.lincolnsymphony.com ♪

Christmas Handbell Concert



The handbell choirs of First Christian and Grace Lutheran churches will present a holiday handbell concert on December 14 at 7:00 PM at Grace Lutheran Church, 2225 Washington Street, Lincoln. Pianist

Sandie Anderson, the Grace Foundation Brass, and other instrumentalists will also perform. Musical selections include sacred and secular pieces that are guaranteed to put you in the holiday mood!

A free-will offering will be taken to benefit the choirs. A reception will follow. ♪

University of North Texas Inaugural Organ Conference

by Jim Hejduk

Driving all night to Texas immediately after our Organ Spectacular (which was pretty spectacular, by golly) reminded me I'm not as young as I used to be. But I didn't regret the effort at all. Imagine attending an AGO convention with 100-some delegates augmented by 26 "star" performers in your midst. That was the heady atmosphere afforded us through the splendid organizational efforts of Dr. Jesse Eschbach, as we celebrated the inauguration of UNT's new 60-stop organ by Hellmuth Wolff. This magnificent new instrument, centered in front in a high placement, is the crowning glory of the fairly new Murchison Performing Arts Center – a building somewhat resembling a giant armadillo about to attack UNT's football stadium or cause a traffic snarl on adjacent I-35 depending on what direction it's heading.

Mornings began with masterclasses by the three featured guest artists: James David Christie+, Dame Gillian Weir, and (Maitre) Jean Guillou. Each offered cogent, down-to-earth, and practical suggestions to the talented students who played repertoire from each artist's specialty. James David Christie was notable for his "air violin" technique. Dame Gillian's comments were charming and to-the-point. Guillou's charges all played music by Guillou himself which had to be inspirational but nerve-wracking. He immediately put each of them at ease with his soft-spoken, gracious suggestions on phrasing and registration and well-deserved compliments. Imagine, as one student did, having to play Guillou's fiendishly difficult *Sinfonietta* in front of fellow students and seasoned organists. By memory. In front of the composer. Even Guillou was left speechless!

The remainder of the mornings and the afternoons were spent in lectures followed by prepared responses by noteworthy colleagues. For example, our own George Ritchie+ gave "Thoughts of Performance Practices in J. S. Bach's Organ Music" replete with a copious hand-out of musical examples plus excerpts from his own masterful recordings. Ritchie reminded us of the difference between "metronomic" playing and "metrical" playing and also showed the value of matching phrasing of chorale prelude *canti firmi* with the original chorale texts among a host of other finely honed observations. Mind you, all the responders (in this case, Robert Bates, Tim Olsen+, and Chris Young+) had received a copy of the respective lecture prior to the conference, so came fully-armed with interesting comments.

Matthew Dirst spoke about "Bach's Organ Music as Cultural Signifier from the Schubler Chorales to Fantasia." Dirst skillfully wove in references to Disney's "Fantasia" and other more modern media forms. Craig Cramer presented interesting parallel information about Boely and his cultural outreach and promotion while Robert Clark reflected on a long career in teaching Bach and changing tastes. Our own Quentin Faulkner, just back from Europe and a conference at Eastman, delineated examples between Bach's time and ours in which the arts and culture were often sacrificed for spurious reasons and pointed to the dangers of history repeating itself.

Wayne Leupold's lecture which referenced Franck was hampered by a poor visual presentation (hard-to-see pages of music on distant screens with no reference points whatsoever) but his responders David Heller (who will play here at Holy Trinity Episcopal on January 11th), Roberta Gary, and Susan Ferré saved the day with their comments. Crista Miller explored "Exoticism Evolved: Eastern Influences in the French Organ Music of Naji Hakim" and elicited the most spirited responses from her panel. Larry Palmer admitted he didn't particularly like Hakim's music, period. So there! Like Palmer, Michael Corzine cited several other composers who incorporated exotic sources and influences. Faythe Freese played (hawked, actually) her recording of a Hakim piece she'd recently commissioned and performed at the Trinité in Paris. Miller's lecture was interesting as she showed musical influences of Hakim's Lebanese heritage and his more recent immersion in Danish folk and chorale tunes. Denmark? Exotic? You be the judge of that.

James Frasier's session on "Maurice Duruflé: The Unanswered Questions" held the noticeably smaller but rapt crowd's attention. He told of his research in writing what has become the seminal Duruflé biography and the cloak-and-dagger circumstances surrounding the archived but uncatalogued private papers of Duruflé currently being held hostage by family members in the Duruflé's old apartment at 6 Place Panthéon opposite St. Etienne du Mont in Paris. The shocking revelation that the Duruflé *Requiem* might, in fact, have been commissioned by the Vichy government generated some hate mail from French organists when Frasier printed this in an article in *The American Organist*. Dr. Norma Stevlingson gave us a harrowing history of the Vichy government (essentially Nazi puppets) as her response while Cherry Rhodes's heartfelt reminiscences of studying in Paris in the late 60's were a welcome antidote. Jesse Eschbach spoke about Mme. Duruflé's unmatched ability to produce an articulated legato. Her secret? "La deuxième mouvement" – the second movement – that is, the release of the note. No attack, she claimed, was any better than the previous release.

The three evening concerts began with James David Christie's stunning renditions of music by Böhm, Buxtehude, Handel, and Bach. Included were a Handel organ concerto and *Salve Regina* ably partnered by the UNT Baroque Orchestra strings and soprano Lynn Eustis. Christie ended the recital with one of his signature closers – the Bach *Praeludium in G Major* (BWV 550), the *other*, less often played G Major – at a breakneck but assured clip. Dame Gillian Weir was assigned the 19th century German and French repertoire. Opening with the Flor Peeters *Toccata, Fugue, and Hymn on "Ave maris stella,"* she closed with the Marcel Lanquar *Toccata*. Both aren't really top-drawer works let alone written in the 19th century. Dame Gillian, of course, played them with her customary élan. Her major 19th century offering was the Reubke *Sonata* which suffered from perhaps a too abundant technique causing undue speed to obscure much of the harmonic rhythm and the "big line." It almost ran off the rails, truth be told. The same was true of the first movement of the Widor *Symphony No. 5*. Having heard Todd Wilson+ play both these works on a much more modest instrument here in Lincoln in September, but with a greater sense of style and musicality, I found Dame Gillian's performances sadly lacking. She was perfectly matched, however, to *Rosace* from Mulet's *Esquisses Byzantines* and Vierne's *Feux follets* which were both stunning.

[Turn to ORGAN CONFERENCE, Page 4]

– CALENDAR OF EVENTS –

NOVEMBER

- 27 **HAPPY THANKSGIVING**
 30 7:00 PM **LINCOLN ORGAN SHOWCASE** – John Behnke, Organ – First Lutheran Church – 1551 South 70th Street, Lincoln – Details were in the November issue of *Chiff Chat*

DECEMBER

- 5 12:10 PM **FIRST FRIDAY CONCERT SERIES** – John Friesen, Organ – Saint Paul United Methodist Church – 1144 M Street, Lincoln
 7:30 PM **DECK THE HALLS** – Lincoln's Symphony Orchestra – Lied Center for Performing Arts – 12th at R Street, Lincoln
 6 7:00 PM **ABENDMUSIK:LINCOLN** – Joyful and Triumphant – First-Plymouth Congregational Church U.C.C. – 2000 D Street, Lincoln
 12 3:00 PM **UNL SENIOR ORGAN RECITAL** – Laura Trotta Ross, Organ – Saint Paul United Methodist Church – 1144 M Street, Lincoln
 14 2:30 PM **ABENDMUSIK AT ZION** – *Messiah* – Area Choir with Professional Soloists – Joel Grosbach, Director; J. Gordon Christensen, Accompanist – With "Music Before the Hour" Christmas Music – Jean Farrer, Organist – Reception following – Zion Church – 1305 Broadway, Imperial
 3:00 PM **ARTS FOR THE SOUL** – "A Celebration of Christmas" – First Presbyterian Church – 840 South 17th Street, Lincoln
 7:00 PM **CHRISTMAS HANDBELL CONCERT** – Handbell Choirs of Grace Lutheran and First Christian Churches – Grace Lutheran Church, 2225 Washington Street, Lincoln
 20 **DEADLINE for January issue of *Chiff Chat*** – Mike Veak; 536 Pier 2; Lincoln, NE 68528-1461; Phone: 402.817.0830; E-mail: mveak@neb.rr.com
 4:00 PM **EVENSONG ADVENT WORSHIP FESTIVAL WITH JOHN LEAVITT** – Southwood Lutheran Church – 9300 South 40th Street, Lincoln
 21 8:30, 9:45, & 11:00 AM – **ADVENT WORSHIP FESTIVAL WITH JOHN LEAVITT** – Southwood Lutheran Church – 9300 South 40th Street, Lincoln
 25 **MERRY CHRISTMAS**
 31 8:00 PM **LAST BLAST 2008** – The Plymouth Brass – For tickets call 402.421.2452 – First-Plymouth Congregational Church U.C.C. – 2000 D Street, Lincoln
PIPEDREAMS – *A program of music for the king of instruments* – Sundays at 8:30 p.m. – KZUM 89.3 FM

■ ORGAN CONFERENCE – Continued from Page 3

Jean Guillou, at age 78, is still in frightening possession of a daunting technique, facility, and memory. It's when one hears Guillou's interpretations of others' works that you can begin to appreciate his iconoclastic style and approach to the organ. His transcription of Liszt's *Prometheus* makes the *B.A.C.H* and the *Ad nos...* seem like child's play. His interpretations of the Schumann *Four Sketches* can evoke an amused chuckle. The rest of the program consisted of his own works. He opened with *Säya ou l'Oiseau Bleu*. He was partnered with the equally virtuosic UNT marimbist Yi-Jan Liu in his *Colloque No. 8*. The second half of Guillou's program was given over to his *Concerto No. 1* which featured the brilliant UNT Symphony Orchestra under the direction of their new conductor David Itkin – a man to whom is owed a huge debt of thanks! An encore? No problem! Guillou was given two themes on which to improvise. I didn't recognize the first, but the second was the opening theme of the *Agnus Dei* from Penderecki's *Passion According to St. Luke*. Again, one could only stare and listen in amazement.

Each of these remarkable concerts was crowned by magnificent receptions for the conference delegates. One can only hope UNT will be installing another organ sometime. They really know how to put on a great conference!

[+ Artists who have performed in Lincoln recently, many as part of the Pipe Organ Encounter Advanced.] †

Advent Worship Festival with John Leavitt

December 20 – 4:00 PM – Evensong – December 21 – 8:30, 9:45 & 11:00 AM

Southwood Lutheran Church – 9300 South 40th Street, Lincoln

Prepare your heart for Christmas with music from Southwood's vocal choirs and John Leavitt, guest musician and composer from Wichita, Kansas. Enjoy special music from Southwood's vocal choirs and lots of opportunities to sing along with both familiar and fresh Christmas music. Invite a friend! For more information, contact Denise Makinson, Director of Worship & Music Ministries at 402.423.5511 or e-mail Denise at dmakinson@southwoodlutheran.org. †

Lincoln Chapter AGO
 536 Pier 2
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