

Autumn 2020

The American Guild of Organists San Francisco Chapter Quarterly Newsletter

Dean's Message

by Susanne Rommel

“Beauty in the midst of chaos!” – what an excellent statement chosen for the AGO OrganFest 2020! And a statement fitting to our Summer of '20 in general. The OrganFest 2020 was born out of disappointment at the unfortunate need to cancel the AGO National Convention that was to have taken place in Atlanta in early July. And indeed, it was such a disappointment when my husband and I received the news, that our convention trip to Atlanta was cancelled, and we would not be able to gather in person, to mingle with friends, attend concerts, hear new music, and worship. This cancellation of our convention registration added to the chaos created by so many cancellations this summer, like my sons' summer trip to Germany for them to spend time with grandma and attend school there, our family vacation trip, business trips, many music subscriptions and concerts, especially our SFAGO annual dinner and choral concert to celebrate the ending of the 2019–2020 season together.

However, now that summer has come to an end and schools are starting at least online again, I must say that during this chaos around us this summer with the pandemic expanding, we found so much beauty as a family: We spent much more time with close friends, the members of our social bubble, together appreciating the little beautiful things that are in front of us here in the Bay area like our beautiful parks. Instead of taking flights, we traveled by car with friends to exceptionally beautiful areas and parks, like Bryce Canyon, Trinity Lake, or Desolation Wilderness.



SFAGO 2020-2021 Program

- **Opening Liturgy** (including the installation of officers) Third Baptist Church, SF – September 13, 2020, 5pm, virtual
- **Youth Organists' Halloween Concert** – October 30th, 2020, directed by Angela Kraft-Cross, virtual
- **Chase Olson in Concert** – November 8th, 2020, co-sponsored with Mission Dolores Basilica, San Francisco, virtual
- **Scott Brothers** – December 6th 2020, 5pm, virtual
- **Weicheng Zhao** – January 24th, 2021, 4pm, co-sponsored with Grace Cathedral, San Francisco
- **Organ Crawl in San Francisco** – February 15th, 2021, 1pm, virtual
- **Amanda Mole in Concert** – March 21st, 2021, 4pm, co-sponsored with St John's Episcopal Church, Mission District, San Francisco
- **All Members Recital** – March 7th, 2021, virtual; see NOTE below
- **Olivier Latry in Concert** – April 25th, 2021, co-sponsored with St Mary's Cathedral, San Francisco
- **Annual Dinner and Choral Concert** – May 16th, 2021, 4pm, directed by Simon Berry and Eric Choate, St Dominic's, San Francisco

NOTE: For our first virtual All Members Recital, everyone is invited to register by December 1st, 2020 via email to James Smith (freedomfs93@gmail.com). After registration, please then submit by February 1st, 2021 a short (<10 min) video of your performance, including a short intro of yourself and the organ you are playing. For any questions, please also feel free to reach out to James Smith. ▼

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

2024 AGO Convention	2
For Organ Teachers & Substitutes	2
Masthead	2
Obits: Marian Ott and Allen Harrah	3
“Fall” Issue Notice	3
Obit: Jim Bisbing	4
Steve's Organ Lit Corner	4
Chapter Donors — Updated Aug 2020	6
Events Calendar & Classifieds	7

AGO National Convention in the Bay Area in 2024

from Susanne Rommel

By now you have probably heard that the AGO National Convention will return to the Bay Area in 2024! The San Francisco and Palo Alto/Peninsula chapters are jointly sponsoring and planning for this event, to be held June 30 to July 4, 2024. The last time a national convention was held here was in 1984, so it's been a 40 year wait!

Although the convention seems like a long time from now at four years away, it's a huge undertaking and the groundwork has begun! A Steering Committee is beginning to take shape. The members are:

Matthew Burt, Convention Coordinator
matthewburt@gmail.com

Tim Getz, Assistant Coordinator/Executive Assistant
tim@gracepa.org

Susanne Rommel, Executive Secretary susanne.
rommel@sbcglobal.net

Bill Vaughan, Treasurer billyv32@gmail.com

Jonathan Dimmock, New Music Committee chair
jonathandimmock@gmail.com

John Karl Hirten, Performances Committee chair
jhirten@comcast.net

Elizabeth Forsyth, Workshops Committee chair e_
forsyth@yahoo.com

James Smith, Worship Committee chair freedomfs93@
gmail.com

In its initial meetings, the Steering Committee brainstormed the question "What makes the Bay Area special?" and out of that conversation identified three themes that may provide some focus to our convention: Environment, Technology, and Diversity. It will be exciting to see how these themes develop as our planning continues!

Leadership for many other committees is still to be named, including chairs for Logistics, Venues, Transportation, Gifts and Grants, Advertising and Communications, Technology, Volunteers, Hospitality, and much more. If you would like more information, to add your name for consideration for a leadership role, or simply to suggest an idea, now would be a great time to begin thinking about how you might contribute! Please feel free to be in contact with any one of us at any time, whether to volunteer, to offer an idea, or simply to ask a question.

With all best wishes,

The 2024 Convention Steering Committee ▼

For Organ Teachers & Substitutes

from Susanne Rommel

We are putting together a database of teachers and substitutes on the website. If you want your name to appear in either list, email me (susanne.rommel@sbcglobal.net) and let me know your: name, email, city and whatever other information you might like to add.

- Teachers: student level you teach (beginner, intermediate, advanced), instrument (e.g., organ, piano, harpsichord)
- Substitutes - Directors & Substitutes: denominational preference; availability (Sunday, Saturday, Weekday, Evening) ; Liturgical/Non-liturgical; pipe organ only; No piano; preferred area. ▼



San Francisco Chapter Newsletter is published monthly, August thru May, with a Summer issue for June/July, by the San Francisco Chapter, American Guild of Organists. Opinions stated herein are those of the individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect official policies of this Chapter.

Dean: Susanne Rommel
Sub Dean: James Smith
Sub Dean Elect: Christopher Keady
Secretary: Daniel Gonzalez
Treasurer: William Vaughan
Registrar: Christoph Tietze, 415.924.1377
Chapter Website: www.sfago.org

Effective May 2020: All members have access to the online directory and can find email addresses there if they wish to contact Board members.

Newsletter Departments: *Send your entries to the appropriate editor; all submissions are subject to editing, e.g., for length; all submissions are due by the 20th of the month preceding publication. No exceptions allowed.*

Events Calendar Listings: Brian Swager, 415.551.7866 — See Calendar page for email contact
Job Placement & For Sale Listings: David Howitt, 510-437-0254 — See Placements page for email contact
Obituary Listings: William Vaughan
Newsletter Articles & Paid Ads: George Morten, 209.565.6660, george.morten744@gmail.com

Advertising rates for a single issue are based on size of ad placed. Full Page: \$120; Half Page: \$60; Quarter Page: \$30; Business Card: \$15; Third Page (by special arrangement only): \$45. Details on request.

2020-2021
Last updated 08/25/2020

MARIAN E. OTT

1929 – 2020

Marian Elizabeth Ott was born to Alma Meyer Feldmann and Siebe Simon Feldmann on Tuesday, December 31, 1929 in Rochester, New York. She moved to the Philippines with



her parents when she was just under 1 year of age. She lived in the Philippines until September 1941, when her family moved back to the United States to the Dakotas. They moved to Toledo, Ohio when she was in high school. She attended

college in Iowa, and then went to the music program at Syracuse University in New York. She then attended Arizona State University and completed her masters.

When she was around 25 she returned home to Toledo, Ohio from teaching at Blue Ridge Mountain in Mississippi. Marian was working as the organist at her father's church and took the civil service test and got a job working for the Federal Government in Social Security. Shortly thereafter she met Leonard Joseph Ott, who was also working at Social Security. He asked her out to the movies on a Friday night. The next Sunday he attended her church. They were married on September 20, 1957.

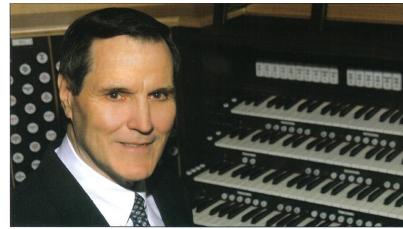
They took a trip across the United States for their honeymoon and decided that they wanted to move west. They both were able to transfer to Southern California to Huntington Beach, California in 1959. They were then transferred to the Bay Area at the end of 1959. They lived in two different rental locations until 1965 when they bought their first house, where they lived for the rest of their lives.

She was a devoted mother and stayed at home with her four children until her oldest daughter started college in 1978. Throughout this time she would work as a substitute organist at various churches in the Bay Area. In 1978 she took a full-time position as the organist of St Stephen's United Methodist Church, which later merged with Lake Merritt United Methodist Church where she worked for 18 years. After retiring from Lake Merritt United Methodist Church she and her husband took many trips with the American Guild of Organists to Europe for Organ tours. She also traveled

ALLEN HARRAH

1935 – 2020

Designer of the "Castro Symphonic Theatre Organ"



Allen Harrah at the organ console

We are saddened to announce the death of our great friend Allen Harrah—June 1, 2020—at the age of 85.

Allen had a long history as a designer and builder of fine pipe organs, and he built the first commercially successful combination pipe/electronic organ (Ruffatti/Rodgers) in 1972. In the late 1970s he founded the Harrah / Van Zoeren Pipe Organ Company and later served as president of the Rodgers Organ Company in the mid-1980s. In the early 1990s he headed the manufacturing team that resurrected the classic Mason & Hamlin pianos, built to their original specifications. He has also served as consultant on a number of major organ installations in the United States, Europe, and Asia. In 2005 he designed and built the celebrated 389-rank hybrid organ for Forrest-Burdette church in his hometown of Hurricane, WV. This is the instrument that we feature in our CODA videos as the smaller prototype of our new organ. Al's last project was designing and overseeing the building of our soon-to-be-installed Castro Symphonic Theatre Organ—countless hours, all pro bono. His friendship, forward thinking, and encyclopedic knowledge of the organ industry has been a major inspiration to us. We only regret that he didn't live long enough to experience his Magnum Opus at the Castro. ▼

extensively with her children and grandchildren. In 2002 she took a job as organist at her home church, Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church. She continued working there through 2011. After she retired, she would take yearly trips with her children and grandchildren. She is and will be greatly missed by her children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, nieces, nephews, extended family, church family and friends. ▼

**This Autumn issue covers September, October and November.
The next scheduled newsletter is the Winter issue in December.
See notices throughout for deadline dates – bottom of front page, Calendar heading
and Classifieds heading.**

JIM BISBING
1942 – 2020
from Craig Wiesner

On Friday [July 31] Derrick and I learned that our beloved friend, Jim Bisbing, had passed away. For the last year Jim has been suffering with a lot of health problems and had fallen several times. Severe neuropathy made it hard for him to walk. He fell in the shower and was taken by ambulance to Kaiser Hospital. Due to Covid restrictions, his husband Alan Quan could not be with him. Jim passed away that night.

Jim was our church choir director and organist for many years, leaving 1st. Pres. when his hearing began to fail. He'd been doing church music for over 40 years, serving in Detroit, San Francisco, Palo Alto, and finally in Marin. He was married to Alan Quan for decades, and Derrick and I were close with him and Alan through these many years. Jim had a wry sense of humor, an incredible talent for getting amazing singing out of just about anyone, a self-deprecating style that was disarming and jovial, a passion for church music, liturgy, and a powerful command of the organ. When we once asked Jim if all church organists were gay, he responded "Only the good ones." Jim, however, made an exception to that rule when he heard about our current music Director Andy.

Jim came to First Presbyterian Church Palo Alto after Phil Hahn, another former choir director and organist had left, and Jim's last church job came when he filled in for an ailing Phil Hahn at St John's Episcopal Church, Ross, in Marin county. On the first day Jim filled in for Phil in Marin, after service was over Jim heard a loud slow pounding noise coming up the stairs to the choir loft. Soon an elderly man with a cane made it to the top of the stairs, looked at Jim, and said "Young man! You play the organ way too loud." Jim responded "I'm sorry sir, we don't accept complaints up here." "Harumph" was then followed by a slow loud pounding noise as the complainant made his way back down the stairs. Phil passed away a few months later and Jim remained at the Ross church for two years before really truly retiring. "Not being able to hear people's complaints made the job so much easier than any job I'd ever had." Jim told us.

Jim's greatest joy in retirement was walking miles and miles through San Francisco's neighborhoods, good food, conversation and storytelling.

Jim's fall and death happened in May but we didn't learn about it until this week. Alan has moved to Oakland to be with his mother and siblings and is slowly working on settling affairs like banking and selling the condo he and Jim loved

Steve's Organ Lit Corner

by Steve Repasky

How would you like to handle the handle that Handel had handled? Handel, of course, was in his day a very popular composer and performer who was also proficient on the oboe, harpsichord, and organ. Here are some of my favorite Handel organ transcriptions:

Largo [from *Xerxes*] / G. F. Handel, arr. by trans for the organ by Edwin H. Lemare
G. Schirmer, 1909 or online as a free pdf from UR Research - Eastman School of Music

"Most clerics consider this piece religious music." -- Guy Bovet

Aria from *Concerto Grosso no. 12* / G.F. Handel, arr. by C.H. Trevor

In *The Oxford Book of Wedding Music with pedals*, Oxford University Press, 1991.

A very noble piece.

Arrival of The Queen of Sheba / G.F. Handel, arr. by W.E. Maynard

In *The Oxford Book of Wedding Music with pedals*. Popular for weddings.

Allegro from *Concerto a Due Cori*, HWV 333, no. 5 / G.F. Handel, arr. by Steve Repasky on IMSLP. Google -- IMSLP Handel 333. The Allegro is under Arrangements and Transcriptions.

Suite from *Water Music* / G.F. Handel, freely arranged for the modern organ by Carl McKinley

J. Fischer & Bro., 1954, also on IMSLP.

Everyone should have this suite in their quiver.

Thanks Be To Thee (Arioso) G. F. Handel, arr. by Channing Lefebvre

Galaxy Music Corp., 1941, available through Sheetmusicplus.

Over the years, I've gotten a lot of mileage from this piece. ▼

in San Francisco. At the moment, no memorial service is planned. Cards would be welcome!

Alan Quan
2741 Park Blvd.,
Oakland, CA 94606 ▼

Dean's Message, from front page

And we spent much more time experiencing beauty from our home for free, appreciating, for example, the gift of the OrganFest with the performance of five newly-composed organ works, commissioned for the National Convention, preceded by a conversation with the composer. We enjoyed the appearances by two outstanding choirs, as well as by competition winners in interpretation and improvisation in recent American and Canadian organ competitions, supplement the conferral of awards and prizes and brief appearances by National Officers and Councilors. If you have not had the chance yet to join the OrganFest 2020, it is not too late as it is fully accessible online (<https://agoorganfest2020.org/>). I encourage you to join the five evenings of about an hour each of music, traversing a wide range of musical styles and instruments. Together with the organizers, I very much hope that in the chaos of the pandemic and unrest these moments of beauty bring you respite and joy!

We are glad to present more beauty in the midst of chaos during the next months through our 2020–2021 program for all our wonderful SFAGO members. Like the OrganFest, the events for the beginning of the season will be held virtually and we will send out email notifications, when they will be posted on the members-only area of our website. We hope that for the second part of the season, we will all be able to resume live events with appropriate safety measures in place. All venues, dates and times are subject to changes as we might need to adjust to the situation at that time of the pandemic. Please refer to the right column of this page for details regarding our SFAGO 2020-2021 Program.

I am very grateful for all the many contributions from you, which enable us to provide such a strong program during a season where we are in the midst of a pandemic. Through your generosity we are again able to include world-class organists in this season's program, while being able to support our young organists at the same time. Thanks for everyone's support, which makes us such a valued community of wonderful musicians helping each other find beauty especially during this time of chaos – Thank you!

At the start of this brand-new season, I am also glad to present our new board to you:

Susanne Rommel, Dean
James Smith, Subdean – new board role
Christopher Keady, Subdean Elect – new board member
Daniel Gonzalez, Secretary – new board member
William Vaughan, Treasurer – new board role
Patricia During – Membership
Christoph Tietze – Registrar
Jason Jia – Special Projects Committee

I want to send a very special thank you to both Elizabeth Forsyth and Michael Page for their wonderful support during the last three years serving on our board and contributing to the success of our chapter. Liz and Mike, your contributions during so many Monday evening meetings were excellent and I enjoyed every meeting with you. Best wishes for your future endeavors!

And we are grateful for both of you, Christopher and Daniel, stepping up and taking on key new roles in our SFAGO board, and for William Vaughan for taking on the role as Treasurer, serving our broad member community. The board election, where approximately 60% of our 214 members voted, showed outstanding support for you in your new roles: 100% of the voting members voted for each of you – congratulations! And again, thanks to all our SFAGO members, who participated in this election, either through the election runner software, or through sending me their votes via postal services – much appreciated, thank you!

At the same time, we are very sad that in early August Steve Repasky moved to Ohio, back into the neighborhood where he grew up. Steve is a terrific member of our community and served in so many roles and with so many members over many years. During our virtual good-bye zoom session (see picture below), I was amazed how many of the participants stated that Steve was the first who reached out and got them integrated and connected, after they moved into the Bay Area where they did not know (m)any people. Steve served in his last role as the chairperson of the Special Projects Committee. Welcome, Jason Jia – thank you for leading our Special Projects Committee moving forward! And to Steve, you will be missed and we much hope that especially with the online opportunities we will be able to stay connected with you through our zoom gatherings and virtual events. Thank you, Steve, for all your great support to our chapter throughout the years!



I wish you and your families continued health and well-being until this pandemic hopefully will end soon with an approved vaccination for all. Until then – stay safe! ▼

San Francisco AGO Chapter Donors

The SFAGO wishes to thank the following people for their financial support to the Chapter Donation category.

John M. Agraz	Steven R. Rausch
Alan C. Black	Father Robert K. Rien
Nadia Blank-Koliha	W. Wayne Ritchie
Merrill Collins	Father Vince J. Scott
Charles Corum	Gerald R. Skeels
Jud Hammon	Emily Stewart
Joe E. McClain	Jon Townsend
Chris C. Nichols	William A. Visscher
Helen Pereira	Vlada Volkova-Moran
Jean Perry	

SFAGO International Mailing Donors

The SFAGO thanks the following person for his financial support to the International Mailing category.

Father Thomas J. Carroll

SFAGO Special Projects Donors

The SFAGO wishes to thank the following people for their financial support to the Special Projects category.

John M. Agraz	Helen Pereira
Josephine Bennington	Gary C. Toops
Francis M. Cummings	Vlada Volkova-Moran
Linda Gavenda	

San Francisco AGO Chapter Recital Series Donors

The SFAGO wishes to thank the following people for their support of the Recital Series.

Bombarde (\$1000+)

Tuba Mirabilis (\$500-\$999)

Robert Tall & Associates, Inc.

Trompette en Chamade (\$250-\$499)

John M. Agraz
Father Robert K. Rien
Jason M. Surles
Timothy Zerlang

Clarion (\$100-\$249)

Charles Corum
Jud Hammon
Larry H. Marietta
James Martin
Chris C. Nichols
William L. Vaughan
William A. Visscher

Hautbois (\$50-\$99)

Josephine Bennington
Alan C. Black
Gail M. Burnett
Francis M. Cummings
Karen C. Haslag
Stephen Luzmoor
Helen Pereira
W. Wayne Ritchie
Gary C. Toops

Krummhorn (\$25-\$49)

Robert H. Douglass
Robert C. Gurney
Naoko Maeda
Vlada Volkova-Moran

Vox Humana (\$1-\$24)

Merrill Collins

Thank you very much for your donations! There is still plenty of time to send in a tax-deductible gift.

These lists were compiled from AGO National remit forms. January 1 thru August 30, 2020

Bay Area Concert Calendar

Collected by Brian Swager

Autumn 2020

Events, dates, times, and locations are subject to change without notice. Compiled from flyers, press releases, and listings submitted by members and organizations. SFAGO is not responsible for errors, although every effort is made to be accurate. **Submission deadline for the December issue is November 20.** Send event listings to sfagocal@gmail.com. **Please include admission charge, as events are free of charge unless otherwise indicated.** For the most up-to-date calendar, visit www.sfago.org, click on "Resources" and select "Calendar"

As of late August, St Mary's Cathedral and Mission Dolores appear to be the only venues that are holding livestreamed recitals. We recommend that readers consult the church websites for upcoming performances

St Mary's Cathedral, "Musical Meditations"
<http://smcsf.org/>

Mission Dolores Basilica, "Second Sunday Organ Concert Series" <https://www.missiondolores.org/90>

Classified Ads

Collected by David Howitt

This information is provided as a service to SFAGO members and the employing institutions. SFAGO is not responsible for errors, although every effort is made to be accurate. Inclusion of information in this column does not imply endorsement by the SFAGO. Send Job Referrals items, Substitutes Available notices, and For Sale items to: **David Howitt. Submission deadline for the December issue is November 20th.** Online listings available at: www.sfago.org/job-board

Free Choral and Organ Music by Dale Wood

from Jim Welch, Palo Alto

I have received a large collection of choral and organ music by Dale Wood which I am happy to share with anyone who can use it. There are multiple copies of nearly everything on this list, enough for a choir, and in some cases, enough for 3 or 4 choirs. Below is a partial list of what is available. It is first come, first served at my house.

You are welcome to come and browse the collection and take what you can use. Let me know when you would like to come by.

Thanks,

Jim Welch

3330 Saint Michael Drive,
Palo Alto

james@welch.net

650 400-3278

ORGAN

Let Us Break Bread Together
Wood Works for Organ, Book 4
Wood Works on International
Folk Hymns, Volume 2

PIANO

Softly and Tenderly:
Meditations on
Contemplative Hymns for
Piano

CHORAL

Advent Carol
Affirmations for Worship
Arise, My Soul, Arise
Austrian Shepherd's Carol
Beneath the Cross of Jesus
Built on a Rock
Carol for the Home
Carol from an Irish Cabin
Carol of the manger
Celebration of light
Choral sentences for Worship
Christ is made the Sure
Foundation
Christ is risen from the dead
Christmas day
Christmas is here
Come gracious spirit
Come ye disconsolate
Creator of the stars of night
Daniel
David and Goliath

Dear Lord and father of
mankind
Elijah
He had not where to lay his
head
Jesus walked this Lonesome
Valley
Join Hands brothers
Jonah
Jubilate Deo
Jesus walked this lonesome
Valley
Jonah
The Lamb
Laudation
Let all the world in every corner
sing
Let our voices fill the sky
let songs of Christmas fill the
air
Let the whole creation cry
Let there be singing
Lift high majestic song in praise
Love came down at Christmas
A manger carol
May love be yours at Christmas
My song is love unknown
New songs of joy and
Now sing noels of Christmas
O master let me walk with thee
Oh praise ye the Lord
O that I had 1000 voices
Outburst of joy
Pass me not o gentle Savior
Prayer for peace
Rejoice and sing a hymn of
praise

Rejoice and be glad to give
praise
Resonet in laudibus
Rise up singing praise
Rise shine
Rejoice give thanks and sing
Savior like a shepherd lead us
Serve the coming days
Shepherds tell us of the night
Sing a joyful song in praise
Sing for joy
Sing joyfully
Sing out a joyful song and
praise
Slow me down
Slumber oh holy Jesu
A song of peace
Song of the storm
Surely he has borne our griefs
Sussex Carol thanks we give
That Easter day with joy was
bright
This is my song
Three carols for young voices
Three little carols to Christ the
newborn king
Together in one song
To God be the glory
Wake awake for Night is flying
Wake with the dawn
Watchmen tell us of the night
We are all one in Mission
We praise the Lord with a song
Were you there?
We sing of Thanksgiving
What a friend we have in Jesus
Who passes yonder through
the throng