

Winter 2021

The American Guild of Organists San Francisco Chapter Quarterly Newsletter

Dean's Message

by Susanne Rommel

With this winter newsletter, I am happy to report that — besides the continuation of our pandemic situation — our 2021–2022 season is in full swing. Thanks to everyone for contributing and making our chapter (now in its third pandemic season) a success, supporting our precious community. While our Covid case numbers here in the US are still low, I had just returned from traveling to Germany a couple of days ago, and the situation there, as in other European countries, is worsening daily. Therefore, I will keep all of you in my prayers during the next three months until the next newsletter. The Covid ride is not over yet, and I hope everyone stays safe and healthy.

I am very glad to share with everyone who did not have the opportunity to join our 2021–2022 opening event, that we had an amazing start to the season. Our Opening Service including the installation of officers, hymn festival and dinner on September 19th at St Stephen's in Belvedere was one of the best highlights this year for me, heart-warming and beautiful to celebrate and meet everyone who was able to join. Because traffic was bad on that Sunday afternoon, we started the service a little later than planned to ensure everyone was able to be there when starting the event.

The service was led beautifully by our Chaplain Fr Robert Rien. Thank you, Fr Robert! Our Subdean – Programming, Christopher Keady prepared the hymn festival based on your feedback running a survey in advance. It was wonderful to see everyone sing strongly, even with masks. Four of our organists played the hymn festival: John Hirten, Chris Keady, Rod Gehrke and James Smith. Thanks so much, John, Chris, Rod and James! Singing together was heart-warming and felt very special, as we had not sung together as a community for a couple of years. Special thanks to Chris Keady for a great program! The dinner was applauded by many as the best dinner we had at SFAGO events. Our Subdean – Social Mangement, James Smith had contracted one of the best caterers for this event. Thank you, James!

Welcome to New Members

from William Vaughan

Let us welcome new members

**Jacob Hord
Eleanor Grace Muhawi**

*And we extend a warm welcome
to two more*

Young Organist Members:

**Eric Lebel
Xiang Xiang Reynolds.**



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

| | |
|--|---|
| Schoenstein Organ to Miami High School | 2 |
| Winter Issue Notice. | 2 |
| Masthead | 2 |
| Labor of Love | 3 |
| Chapter Program 2021–2022 | 5 |
| Chapter Donors — Updated Nov 2021 | 6 |
| Events Calendar | 7 |
| Classifieds - Position Available | 8 |

Schoenstein Organ to Miami High School

from Jack Bethards

A three-manual, 30-voice Schoenstein organ is in production for the new Our Lady of Belen Chapel now under construction on the 33-acre campus of The Belen Jesuit Preparatory School in Miami, Florida.

The school was founded in 1854 in Havana, Cuba, by Queen Isabella II of Spain. In 1961, the communist regime confiscated the school property and exiled the Jesuit faculty. The school was re-established that same year in Miami. It has graduated over 7,500 young men in the tradition of Saint Ignatius of Loyola — academic excellence and spiritual discipline.

Musical education at the Ignatian Center for the Arts includes instrumental instruction in Band and Orchestra and vocal instruction in the Music Ministry Ensemble. The new instrument will be used for school liturgies and organ instruction.

The president is Fr Guillermo M. García-Tuñón, S.J. The director of music ministry is Jonathan A. Sánchez, MM. The organ consultant is Luis J. Cuza. ▼

Ed: Sorry, no drawings are available at this time.



The Winter issue covers December thru February.

The next scheduled newsletter is the Spring issue in March.

See notices throughout for deadline dates — bottom of front page, Calendar heading and Classifieds heading.

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.

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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
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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.

2021-2022
Last updated 11/29/2021

Labor of Love: 95-year-old Angwinite Spearheads Restoration of Massive Church Organ

by Jesse Duarte

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Organist Barbara Tonsberg, 95, plays the newly restored Rieger organ at the Pacific Union College Church. Tonsberg spearheaded the restoration of the 40-year-old organ.

When Barbara Tonsberg offered to help restore the Pacific Union College Church's massive Rieger pipe organ, a church leader told her she couldn't get it done for a reasonable price.

Note to future doubters: Never tell this 95-year-old Angwin woman what she can't do.

At a recital on Saturday, Nov. 6, the largest organ of its kind on the West Coast made its triumphant return to public performance, repaired of wear and tear and significant damage sustained during the 2014 Napa earthquake.

"Somebody had to fix it," said Tonsberg, one of the church's former organists who last played in 2018. "It couldn't just sit here. That wasn't going to happen as far as I was concerned."

This March marked the 40th anniversary of the organ's arrival from an Austrian factory, which shipped it to Angwin in crates. It took a four-man crew six weeks to assemble the organ's three main components. A fourth division, operated by the top keyboard or "manual," was installed later, completing the 55-foot-tall instrument. The cost of the restoration is still being tallied but will probably be around \$130,000, less than one-fifth of the cost that had been estimated before Tonsberg got involved.

Tonsberg served on the committee that selected the organ in the late '70s.

"We searched all over the United States and couldn't find what we wanted," she recalled.

They visited organ makers in Canada. Then they flew to France. Their search finally ended at the Rieger Orgelbau factory in Austria.

Tonsberg says the organ is "of genuine Austrian heritage with a Germanic accent, but made in the French style." Organs of this scale each have a unique sound. For instance, the one at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco is "wonderful, but totally different," Tonsberg said. Even the manuals of the PUC Church organ are unique. Instead of the familiar modern arrangement of white keys for the natural notes and black keys for the half-tones, the colors are reversed, a throwback to 18th-century harpsichords.



The Rieger organ at the Pacific Union College Church in Angwin is the largest of its kind on the West Coast.

► Tonsberg, page 4

Dean's Message, from page 1



Dinner at St Stephen's in Belvedere.

Dinner table with the four organists who played at the opening event (left: Rod Gehrke, John Hirten, Chris Keady, second from right: James Smith).

Our October event was a cosponsored virtual Youth Halloween Concert, with Angela Kraft-Cross. This event was performed virtually. Angela and her students played all pieces in minor keys for Halloween. Thanks a lot, Angela for such a precious concert and supporting our youth!

Both the Opening Hymn Festival, including Installation of Officers, and the Halloween Youth concert recordings are accessible through our SFAGO.org website on our Members Only Page. <https://www.sfago.org/members>

Unfortunately, our November concert, with Nathaniel Gumbs at, and cosponsored with, St Mark's in Berkeley had to be cancelled due to Nathaniel's Covid exposure. In these times of a pandemic, we will continue to plan well, however last-minute cancellations due to Covid will not be preventable now nor in the future. Evensong, Free Music event and Reception still took place. Thanks George Emblom, for your openness to cosponsor with SFAGO in the future as well!

For our December event, we are very glad to have a Christmas Party in person. We are very grateful that Elizabeth Forsyth will open her house for us on Friday, December 17th, from 7pm to 9pm. A warm and big thank you, Elizabeth for hosting us at your house! A save-the-date email went out to all members already. Please use the link in that email also to provide proof of vaccination to be able to attend this in-person event. Much looking forward to celebrating with you on December 17th!

Tonsberg, from page 3

Years of regular use by organists and students took their toll, and the 2014 earthquake caused some of the heaviest pipes to bounce up and down, smashing the delicate "toes" beneath them, leaving some parts dangling by fishing line and rendering the organ all but unplayable.

"It was worth \$2 million and it was just sitting here," recalled Tonsberg.

The necessary repairs were estimated at \$750,000, which the church considered too expensive. When Tonsberg told a church leader she could fix the organ for a fraction of that cost, she remembers him telling her "you can't do that."

"I could tell he had no faith in me at all," Tonsberg said. "I said, 'Try me.'"

Tonsberg pared down the estimate by eliminating what she deemed unnecessary "frills" and focusing on the essentials: replacing the faulty slider motors that were letting air get into the pipes and causing the organ to play on its own, replacing the toes and other parts that had been damaged by the earthquake, replacing the bamboo balancers that had deteriorated over time, and replacing the felt pads under the four keyboards.

Tonsberg said Pastor Emeritus John Hughson provided valuable help with fundraising — "he was so nice and so much fun to work with" — and the San Leandro-based Hupalo & Repasky did the actual work, but she called the shots, working closely with John Hupalo.

"I knew what needed to be done and he knew how to do it," Tonsberg said. "We got along very well."

When asked how she feels now that the organ is finally restored, Tonsberg heaved a big sigh of relief. "That's how it feels," she said. ▼

Please also check out the full program with additional events in 2022 on our website's calendar, Program 2021/2022. <https://www.sfago.org/20212022-calendar>

I hope you had a wonderful Thanksgiving break, and I wish you continued health and well-being for you and your families and friends. And I am much hoping that we will be able to continue to meet in person in 2022. Until then, Happy Holidays! ▼

SFAGO 2021–2022 Program

September 19, 2021, 4pm, St Stephen's, Belvedere

Opening Service (including the installation of officers, a hymn festival, and dinner)

October 29, 2021, 8pm

Youth Organists' Halloween Concert, co-sponsored with Congregational Church of San Mateo

November 14th, 2021, 4pm

Nathaniel Gumbs in Recital, co-sponsored with St Mark's Episcopal Church, Berkeley

December 2021, TBD

SFAGO Christmas Party

January 23, 2022, 4pm

Weicheng Zhao in Recital (including SFAGO Reception), co-sponsored with Grace Cathedral, San Francisco

February 2022 (date TBD)

Black History Month Event, Third Baptist Church, San Francisco or virtual

February 21, 2022

Organ Crawl in San Francisco (lunch included), St Mark's, First Unitarian, Old First Presbyterian, and Grace Cathedral, San Francisco

March 2022, TBD

Choral Reading Session

April 24, 2022, 4pm

Amanda Mole in Recital, co-sponsored with St John's Episcopal Church, Mission District, San Francisco

May 2022 (date TBD)

Annual Dinner and Choral Concert, Choirs of St Dominic's and St Mary the Virgin, directed by Simon Berry and Eric Choate, St Dominic's, San Francisco

Due to the pandemic and in accordance with the requirements of the City of San Francisco, in-person attendance of SFAGO events will require proof of vaccination and wearing a face mask indoors, until further notice. Also, all events are subject to change during the pandemic. We will update our website and follow-up with email communication as we get closer to the specific events. Thank you for your understanding!

San Francisco AGO Chapter Donors

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

| | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
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San Francisco AGO Chapter Recital Series Donors

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

Bombarde (\$1000+)

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Martin Lilley
Naoko Maeda
Eric Stevens
Vlada Volkova-Moran
James Ward

Vox Humana (\$1-\$24)

Merrill Collins
Patricia Harre
Christopher Keady

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, September 2020 thru August 2021

Bay Area Concert Calendar

Collected by Brian Swager

Winter ²⁰²¹

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 Spring issue is February 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"

Recurring Venues

Churches and institutions offering programs on a regular basis have been assigned abbreviations which are listed below with the full name of the venue. When no city is stated, San Francisco is assumed.

CSMA: Cath. of St Mary of the Assumption

GC: Grace Cathedral

MDB: Mission Dolores Basilica

SPE-BU: St Paul's Episcopal Ch, Burlingame

TSPE: Trinity & St Peter's Episcopal Ch

DECEMBER

5 Sunday

3pm. Advent Procession of Lessons & Carols. GC

4pm. Jin Kyung Lim, Organ. Don Knuth's Fantasia Apocalyptica, Part I. Freewill offering. Free parking. CSMA

4pm. Advent Lessons and Carols. Choir of St Paul's. SPE-BU

5:40pm. Angela Kraft-Cross, Organ. Preceded by Evensong at 5pm. TSPE

11 Saturday

3pm. A Cathedral Christmas. Tickets: \$15-\$70. GC

12 Sunday

3pm. A Cathedral Christmas. Tickets: \$15-\$70. GC

4pm. Angela Kraft-Cross, Organ. Free admission; suggested donation \$10. MDB

4pm. Jin Kyung Lim, Organ. Don Knuth's Fantasia Apocalyptica, Part II. Freewill offering. Free parking. CSMA

7pm. Pacific Edge Voices. Ash Walker, Director. Seasonal program of choral music. Freewill offering. Free parking. CSMA

NOTE

At **St Mary's Cathedral**, all concerts are now open to the public and are also live streamed at <https://www.youtube.com/c/CathedralofStMaryoftheAssumption>

At **Grace Cathedral**, recitals are open to the public. The Cathedral suggests registering in advance. The performances are live streamed as well. gracecathedral.org

13 Monday

7:30pm. A Brass and Organ Christmas. Tickets: \$15-\$70. GC

18 Saturday

3pm. A Cathedral Christmas. Tickets: \$15-\$70. GC

19 Sunday

3pm. A Cathedral Christmas. Tickets: \$15-\$70. GC

4pm. Christmas Concert "And on earth peace." Choir of St Paul's and chamber orchestra. \$35; students \$20. SPE-BU

7pm. "Cookies & Carols" St Brigid School Honor Choir and St Mary's Cathedral Choir. Adults \$25; students & seniors \$15; under 5 free. Cookie reception. Free parking. CSMA

20 Monday

7:30pm. Soulful Joy. Tickets: \$15-\$70. GC

21 Tuesday

7:30pm. A Cathedral Christmas. Tickets: \$15-\$70. GC

24 Friday

4pm. Christmas Lessons & Carols. GC

10:30pm. Choral Prelude and Festal Christmas Eve Mass. GC

26 Sunday

4pm. "A Tietze Family Christmas" Christoph Tietze, Organ and Baritone; Jeanette Wilkin Tietze, Piano and Soprano; Helena Tietze, Cello and Alto; Karl Tietze, Percussion and Bass; Teddy Tietze, Trumpet and Alto. Christmas music for voice and instruments. Freewill offering. Free parking. CSMA

JANUARY

2 Sunday

4pm. Epiphany Lessons and Carols. St Brigid School Honor Choir and Golden Gate Boys Choir and Bellingers. Freewill offering. Free parking. CSMA

9 Sunday

4pm. Ruth Kamas, Organ. Music of Bach, Diemer, Chaminade, Dixon, and Langlais. Freewill offering. Free parking. CSMA

16 Sunday

4pm. Justan Foster, Organ. Freewill offering. Free parking. CSMA

23 Sunday

4pm. David Troiano, Organ. Freewill offering. Free parking. CSMA

4pm. Marcia McCowin Concert. Highlighting women composers and poets. SPE-BU

4pm. Weicheng Zhao, Organ. Suggested donation. GC

► **Calendar, next page**

Bay Area Concert Calendar

Continued from prior page

FEBRUARY

6 Sunday

4pm. Domenico Severin, Organ. Freewill offering. Free parking. CSMA

4pm. Jung-A Lee, Organ. Suggested donation. GC

5pm. Robert Gurney, Organ. Freewill donation. TSPE

13 Sunday

4pm. James Parrish Smith, Organ. Free admission; suggested donation \$10. MDB

4pm. Grant Smith, Organ. Freewill offering. Free parking. CSMA

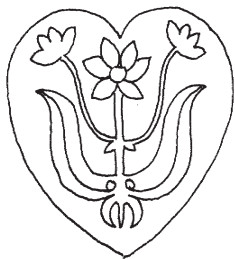
4pm. Choral Evensong. Choir of St Paul's. SPE-BU

20 Sunday

4pm. Jennifer Pascual, Organ. Freewill offering. Free parking. CSMA

27 Sunday

4pm. Hans-Uwe Hielscher, Organ. Freewill offering. Free parking. CSMA



MARCH

6 Sunday

4pm. St Paul's Choir School Concert. SPE-BU

4pm. Carolyn Craig, Organ. Suggested donation. GC

5pm. Jin Kyung Lim and son, Edward Lee, Organ. Freewill donation. TSPE

13 Sunday

4pm. Joy-Leilani Garbutt, Organ. Free admission; suggested donation \$10. MDB

31 Thursday

7:30pm. Cameron Carpenter, Organ. Bach Goldberg Variations. \$65; 18 & younger \$33. Stanford Memorial Church



Classified Ads

Collected by David Howitt

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David_Howitt. Submission deadline for the Spring issue is February 20th.

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

Burlingame Presbyterian Church:

Part-time position of Director of Classic Music and Choir. Please look at our website or contact snawrocki@burlpres.org for more information.

