



BOSTON PIPINGS

news and notes for members of Boston Chapter AGO

April 2020 Pippings - The Newsletter of the Boston Chapter AGO

[Click here to go to the Calendar on our website.](#)

Greetings!

Holy Week 2020: The year that inserted “Moly” into “Holy Moly Week”

Congratulations to us. We made it through to the other side of Easter. I am so proud of our profession right now. We had to make an about face, scrap our carefully crafted plans and adapt to unfamiliar platforms of communication. Some of you were ahead of the game, but many of us were learning to fly while flying. I've seen virtual choirs from BAGO members, heard beautiful past recorded performances from BAGO members, seen YouTube, Zoom and Facebook Live services.



And now we continue, with work that has never been more needed, or more necessary. Our vision, our offer of hope, our music is what we can offer to those around us. Sadly, some churches are facing such financial pressures that they need to do away with music for the online services. This breaks my heart, but it doesn't change the fact that people want to hear from us. Though we as an organization can't change the decisions over music budgets made by churches, we can reach out to our colleagues. The yearbook is online in the members' section of the website. Can you take it upon yourself to reach out to one BAGO member that you know?

In the global *diminuendo* music emerges. Have you heard more birds this spring singing their annual symphony of mating trills?

Louise Munding, Dean

Staying Connected through the AGO HQ Website

As a response to our members who are without work due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the AGO has created a new page on our website

Resources: Responding to Covid-19 <https://www.agohq.org/responding-to-covid-19/>.

AGO Resources provide links that connect you to information regarding unemployment, recovering from job termination, online educational resources, our career hotline and a COVID-19 survey that I encourage you to take.

We have also provided additional Resources for Artists with links to several relief funds, an unemployment benefits eligibility website, instructions for utilizing Flipgrid for classroom teachers and a guide for using Zoom for live-streamed lessons.

Additionally, we have added links to some helpful articles and blogs that address what to do regarding cancellation of gigs and choral concerts.

I want to thank Vincent Carr, Chair, of the AGO Career Development & Support Committee and Doris Dabrowski, Esq., committee member, for compiling these resources, and to Eric Birk for his assistance in uploading this most valuable content to our website. As new information and resources become available, this page will continue to be updated.

Elizabeth George, CMM
Director of Member Engagement & Chapter Development
American Guild of Organists

Chapter Programs Update

Our **April organ recital** by David Enlow will be rescheduled during the 2020-21 season, details TBA.

The **Annual Meeting** has tentatively been rescheduled for **Tuesday, June 23**, still at The Parish of All Saints-Ashmont in Dorchester. Please put this date on your calendars, and we will continue to update you as the situation unfolds.

Trivia Question: How well do you know the Boston Chapter?

The Boston Chapter was officially formed out of the Massachusetts Chapter on July 1, 1952. The Executive Committee considered several possible names before the membership approved our current name. Which names were considered?

- The Greater Boston Chapter
- The Hub Chapter
- The Old Colony Chapter

[Click here to reveal the answer](#)

Proposed change to the Chapter's Operating Procedures: Organ Advisory Committee

In order to clarify what help is available from the Chapter from the Organ Advisory Committee, the Executive Committee proposes an addition to the description (see text underlined below). We ask that if you have comments, please send an email by May 15, 2020 to Claire DeCusati (bostonago@verizon.net). Thank you.

New wording (underlined)

The Organ Advisory Committee shall be responsible for consulting with church and synagogue musicians, clergy, and staff on the acquisition of, disposition of, and/or modifications to an organ in a worship or musical space. The Chair of the committee shall be appointed by the Dean with Executive Committee approval. The Chair shall then convene a committee, versed in the technical knowledge required for the requested consultation. Personal contact with the committee shall be made through the committee chair. The committee shall make recommendations, as appropriate, to the organization

that requested the consultation. In the case of removal of an organ, the committee shall make recommendations regarding appropriate organizations to assist in re-locating the instrument, including listing on the Chapter website. A consulting fee shall be charged for services, appropriate to the scope of services provided. The chair is responsible for ensuring that the consulting fee is sent to the Treasurer for deposit in Chapter accounts.



Nominating Committee Named

2020 is an election year for officers of the Chapter. As you remember, we updated our Operating Procedures two years ago to allow for biennial elections. Patrick Walker has agreed to Chair the Nominating Committee. Positions to be filled include Sub-Dean and Treasurer (who serve for 2 years), and 3 Members-at-Large (who serve a 4 year term).

Would you be interested in serving on the Executive Committee? Contact Patrick if you are interested. Position descriptions can be found [here](#), beginning on page 4.

AGO National Convention – Status Update

Registration dates and pricing, [click here](#). To read about all the concerts, venues, and workshops, [click here](#).

For those wondering about the 2020 AGO National Convention, here is part of an email from James Thomashower that was sent to the current membership

Subject: AGO Response to COVID-19
April 3, 2020



The AGO National Council and Headquarters staff are aware of the harmful impact that the coronavirus pandemic is having on many Guild members. We have been taking a variety of measures to listen to our members and help them through this difficult time....

As I write this on Friday afternoon, the AGO National Convention in Atlanta, July 6-10, is still scheduled to occur as planned. The hotel contract requires payment of a very substantial, six-figure cancellation fee if we cancel now. If it becomes impossible to hold the convention for any number of reasons stipulated in the 'force majeure' clause of the contract, such as continuing government restrictions on the number of people who can congregate together, cancellation will be possible without incurring any penalty.

On a related matter, in light of the stay-at-home orders so many of us must follow, the NCOI and NYACOP have been postponed to a future date to ensure that all competitors will have had adequate time and an equal opportunity to prepare.

Be well. Stay healthy. Wash your hands and practice social distancing. I look forward to seeing you again as soon as it's safe to go outside.

James E. Thomashower, CAE
Executive Director

Now home from college, Freshman organ major Savannah Curro “sat down” with Louise Munding to reflect on her first year at Mercer College studying with Dr. Jack Michener



LM: Welcome home, Savannah. So glad you returned home safely. I wanted to ask you to reflect on your journey to decide on music as a major in college. Who helped you get started? Which churches welcomed you?

SC: As a child, I grew-up in St. Eulalia's Parish in Winchester. This was where I first heard the organ and became interested in it. Upon learning of my interest in the organ, Tim Hughes, the organist at St. Eulalia's, helped connect me with Boston's Young Organist Initiative. Christine Hogan, the Initiative's chairperson, then connected me with my first teacher, Cathy Meyer. I began my first organ lessons with Cathy during the spring

of my freshman year of high school and continued study with her until the summer before I left for college. My first lesson took place at Calvary Church in Arlington. Calvary Church became my primary practice space throughout high school as it is within walking distance from my high school. That said, the majority of my lessons throughout high school occurred at Plymouth Congregational Church in Belmont. When I was a senior in high school, I interned under the direction of Craig Benner at Parish of the Epiphany in Winchester. At Parish of the Epiphany, I sang in the choir, assisted the children's choir, and played the organ for portions of services a few times a month. I completed my high school senior recital just down the road at First Congregational Church. As a high schooler, in addition to playing a recital at First Congregational, I played in recitals at King's Chapel and Dover Church through the YOI, South Church in Andover, St. Mary's Church in Dedham, and Plymouth Congregational Church in Belmont. The first service I ever played during my first year of organ study was at Memorial Congregational Church in Sudbury. Now that I have been sent home from school due to the pandemic, I am currently providing recordings for some of their livestream services. This past academic year, before having to leave the campus of Mercer University where I am studying organ performance with Dr. Jack Mitchener, I was an assisting organist and alto section leader at Christ Church in Macon, GA.

LM: Did you attend POE(s)?

SC: I attended the Hartford Pipe Organ Encounter at Trinity College in 2017. It was by far the most influential experience in convincing me to study organ performance in college. For the first time, at the POE, I learned about the possibility of not only studying organ in college, but also of making it into a career. The experiences I had at the POE playing various organs in and around Hartford, visiting the Austin Organ Company, meeting other organists around my age, touring the churches and places associated with Yale's Institute of Sacred Music, listening to lectures from some of the top organists in the country, and hearing several incredible faculty recitals played on Trinity Chapel's organ, introduced me to the organ world in an inspiring, exciting manner. At the end of the week, I was convinced that I wanted to study the organ beyond high school and began practicing even more than ever.

LM: Here's a loaded question: how did BAGO help you?

SC: I was a scholarship recipient of the Young Organist Initiative Scholarship which helped fund my first lessons, pay for sheet music, gave me the opportunity to play in a recital at King's Chapel and Dover Church, and meet other young organists. The Initiative was ultimately responsible for connecting me with my high school organ teacher, Cathy Meyer, who gave me a wonderful foundation in organ technique, connected me with recital and service playing opportunities in the area, prepared me for my college auditions, and helped me to cultivate my joy for playing the organ. The BAGO has also made me aware of recitals and concerts in the Boston area that

I might otherwise have not known about. In addition, it has provided me with contacts that I know that I can rely on if I get stuck with something, whether that is not being able to find an appropriate practice space, finding substitute work, or some other need.

LM: How can we (BAGO) better assist young organists?

SC: As a young organist, one of the most important aspects of support we need is having a regular practice space that is safe, easy to access, and with an organ that is maintained sufficiently. It can be difficult to find a place to do so, especially as minor, because of Safe Church guidelines. Thus, it can be difficult as someone under 18 to find a place to regularly practice without needing a parent at all times to accompany you or having multiple people in the building at all times when practicing. That said, I believe that it is crucial that Safe Church policies are put in place and remain in place so that children are protected. With this in mind, it would be helpful if local AGO chapters might provide young organists with resources on specific churches where a regular practice schedule could be established within a level of constraints that will not significantly hamper that person's ability to practice. Furthermore, it should be noted that not every young organist has the ability to drive. As a result, they may rely on others in their family to bring them to the church to practice which is not always possible when relying on the schedule of other people in addition to one's own. Therefore, some young organists need to walk to where they practice. Because of this, it is important to make sure that young organists without the ability to drive are connected with practice spaces close to their homes that are in safe walking distance. Finally, young organists need to be able to access lessons that they can afford. As a young organist now studying organ in college, when asking my young organist colleagues how they first started taking lessons, I have heard several times that their parents did not want them to take lessons. As a result, some of my colleagues have reported that their families made their taking of organ lessons conditional on them being able to come up with the money to pay for lessons themselves. Therefore, the more financial investment in lessons for young organists that can be made, the better. Furthermore, greater education initiatives about career opportunities for organists could help young organists be more inclined to continue organ study in addition to helping convince skeptical parents that a career as an organist can be viable.

Originally from Arlington, Massachusetts, Savannah Curro began her organ studies in 2016 as a Boston Young Organists Initiative Scholar. As a Y.O.I. Scholar, she was selected to play a recital with area young organists at the historic King's Chapel in Boston. In 2017, Savannah studied with Dr. Faythe Freese during Trinity College's Pipe Organ Encounter. Savannah is currently a freshman at Mercer University where she studies organ with Dr. Jack Mitchener and voice with Dr. Martha Malone. Savannah is a member of the Mercer Singers, and a section leader/ assisting organist at Christ Church in Macon. Before coming to Mercer, Savannah was a music intern at Parish of the Epiphany in Winchester, Massachusetts.



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Boston Chapter, American Guild of Organists | bostonago@verizon.net

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