



BOSTON PIPINGS

news and notes for members of Boston Chapter AGO

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Greetings from the Dean:

AS ALWAYS - Please check for yourself AND ask your colleagues to see if membership has been renewed!

Last Saturday after I finished playing for a funeral at my church, I obligingly climbed into my car and drove to Harvard Square to find a parking space to attend the last two segments of BAGO WimFest. It was pouring rain, and I was tired, and I wasn't looking forward to trudging through the mud in the "Yard" to attend this event at Memorial Church. Having made good time in my journey, I had the opportunity to sit in the church and await the other attendees to return from lunch. As I sat there, the day brightened, along with my mood, and the memories of some incredible musical events from years passed washed over me. As the discussion of examples of music by women composers proceeded, I was reminded of the need for this discussion to bring to our attention so much neglected but wonderful literature. We were then treated to an exquisite program of beautiful examples of our art, elegantly played by Annie Laver. Up from within me a sense of peacefulness and joy spread like the sunshine outside the airy space so artfully filled with the sounds of the magnificent Fisk and E. M. Skinner organs under her hands. As the program ended I didn't want to leave that space or part with friends, and I realized how important it was that I had attended.

We need the Guild. We need each other. We need to connect personally, socially and professionally around this thing that we do. We need to continue to grow and widen our understanding of our craft and be affirmed, and affirm each other in the process.

June affords us more BAGO Chapter opportunities to be connected and inspired, including the Chapter's Annual Meeting and Member's Recital (Monday, June 6 at 6:00), and the Young Organists Initiative recital (12:15 on June 27 at King's Chapel).

Look at the schedule in the Sub-Dean's article, MAKE DINNER RESERVATIONS, plan your participation and then invite your colleagues! Make a social event out of it by gathering before or after a chapter event. Have you attended more than one chapter event this season? My message is: GET CONNECTED!

I take special interest in the renewal of the organ at First Church in Jamaica Plain. I have known and loved that organ since I first came to Boston, and have played it several times, including most recently for the Columbus Day Organ Crawl last fall. Please note Scot Huntington's article, and venture out to hear it at your first opportunity.

In the last several Pipings I have suggested that we should try to have small, local, social gatherings to connect with our colleagues in the towns where we live or work. I have tried, but not yet managed to do this where I work, but if you have, please send me an email to tell me how it went. I have not yet heard news of any gathering, so what are we waiting for?

Remember to check out our BAGO website to click on the New England regional calendar to see what else is going on in our region, or to list your own event.

Have you renewed your membership yet?

Robert Barney

From the Sub-Dean:

When worlds converge

The past week was a whirlwind. I received my May issue of *The American Organist* and saw a beautiful photograph of a console but no pipes. Interesting. It was a Johannus organ, an electronic instrument. While I know that the cover of the magazine is a paid advertisement, I was surprised to see an electronic instrument on the cover. I often forget that the front cover is a big money maker for the AGO and not an endorsement. Further into the magazine I saw a concert announcement about a duo concert featuring music



composed in two ways. There was music inspired by jazz sources played on a pipe organ by a classically trained organist, and improvised music by a jazz organist playing the Hammond B3. Rhonda Sider Edgington played the new Casavant at Hope College in Michigan and Tony Monaco played jazz standards on the Hammond B3. They went back and forth during the concert and ended with a duo arrangement of "Amazing Grace." Intrigued further I went to Wikipedia to check out the history of the Hammond B3. Starting out as a low-cost alternative to the pipe organ, the Hammond B3 is now a recognized jazz instrument. The Skinner company took the Hammond company to court in a dispute over musical claims made by the Hammond company in the 1930s. Skinner won, but the publicity of the trial helped the Hammond company sell many instruments as a result. The electronic vs. pipe organ dispute has been around for a while.

On Saturday I went to the Fisk open house for two organs: Opus 148 and Opus 150. The shop on Kondelin Road was packed when I arrived. I recognized many organists but praise-be! there were lots of people I didn't recognize. New fans? Fisk has been increasing its local visibility in Gloucester for a number of years and the efforts are paying off. Both instruments are remarkable for different reasons. Opus 148 is for a side chapel and influenced by the Italian Antegnati instruments while Opus 150 is inspired by previous organs at Christ Church, Philadelphia where Opus 150 will soon

reside. Both instruments are stunning in their own ways. Hearing them one after another in alternation was a quick trip into pipe organ history. What a great experience for pipe organ enthusiasts and novices alike. The last open house I attended at Noack was packed as well. The instruments sell themselves at these occasions.

Louise Munding,
May 2017

*******Annual Meeting*******

on Monday, June 5th!

Come hear the newly renovated Hook and Hastings organ at
St. John's Seminary
Join us for dinner and then a concert featuring Janet Hunt, Leo
Abbott and Robert Barney, followed by the meeting.

Saint John's Seminary, 127 Lake Street, Brighton, MA 02135

See website for directions www.sjs.edu

Accessible from T-stop "Boston College" on the Green B Line.

Building is handicapped accessible. Free parking.

6:00 pm Dinner is \$24. Tickets can be purchased online at
www.bagodinner.eventbrite.com

Buffet style. Chicken or vegetarian entrees, with a variety of salad fixings and vegetables. Desserts, tea and coffee. Bring your own wine, if you wish. We need an accurate headcount by May 30th.

7:00 pm Program in the chapel. 1901 Hook & Hastings organ renovated and expanded by Andover in 2015.

Janet Hunt - Bruhns E minor, Bach 3 of the Schubler Chorales

Robert Barney - All Brahms: Three Chorale Preludes, and Prelude & Fugue in G Minor

Leo Abbott -- Widor: Allegro Vivace from Symphony V; Langlais -- Ave Maria, Ave Maris Stella

8:00 pm Annual Meeting

From YOI: Two more of our scholarship winners



James Delaney, age 12, is a 7th grade student at St. Paul's Choir School, Harvard Square, Cambridge. He lives in Milton with brother, Jack, age 16, sister Kate age 15, and his parents, Amy and Jim. He has been studying piano and music theory for the past

3 years under the instruction of Ms. Winnie Ip, both at St. Paul's Choir School and at the Ip Piano School in Boston. He has enjoyed the past year of organ studies, and currently plays under the guidance and lessons of Mr. Jeremy Bruns, MMus, Assistant Director of Music, St. Paul's Church and St. Paul's Choir School. He has proudly been a chorister for the past 3 years, singing with the Choir of St. Paul's directed by John Robinson, MA (Cantab), FRCO, Music Director, Master of the Choristers at St. Paul's Church and St. Paul's Choir School. James also enjoys debate team at school, swimming, and skiing.

Jo Ellen Lindeman became interested in studying organ while attending First Lutheran Church in Boston listening to the masterpieces of Johann Sebastian Bach performed on the fabulous Richards and Fowkes tracker organ. She has been studying organ with Cathy Meyer at Plymouth Congregational Church in Belmont for the past six months, and has performed pieces for worship services at both First Lutheran and Plymouth Church. Jo has been playing piano for eight years, and performed in the 2016 Concord Area Music School Association honors recital. Her favorite composers are Bach, Beethoven, and Chopin. Jo was born in Guangzhou China where she studied with a Chinese pianist before moving with her family to Massachusetts in 2012. She is now a 7th grader at Chenery middle school in Belmont, and is considering majoring in music and art when she goes to college. Search YouTube for "Jo Lindeman" to see her latest organ and piano performances, or go to:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCvb7ETQOq5FDowaCp6oosYg>

Hear Here! An occasional column of articles by BAGO members.

Scot Huntington completes a partial renovation of
Hook Bros. No. 171, 1854: First Church in Jamaica Plain

Boston is without a doubt the American city with the greatest wealth and diversity of outstanding instruments. So great is this blessing of musical riches, anyone familiar with this landscape for any period of time begins to take this for granted. We are all familiar with the notable instruments downtown that we experience with regularity- both historic and modern. So numerous is the treasure trove, that we tend to forget about the many instruments of singularity in the surrounding environs which we need to make an effort to experience. Jamaica Plain is one such locale. The presence of two monumental three-manual organs from the pre-Civil War era, and even more remarkably from the same year (1854) within a block of one another, is a phenomenon unmatched anywhere else in the nation.

These organs were long known to intrepid organ historians, but for many of us, myself included as a high-school organ nerd, the remarkable organ in the Unitarian Church hit our collective consciousness with the two landmark recordings made by Thomas Murray in 1971- the six Mendelssohn Sonatas played on two pristinely original period instruments: Most Holy Redeemer in East Boston (W.B.D. Simmons, 1857, brought into barely playable condition by days of volunteer labor by the Lahaise family, and E. & G.G. Hook No. 171, 1854). So original were these instruments, not mention their musical proximity to the instruments the composer played upon to introduce these works to such acclaim in Britain, that we witnessed a period authenticity largely unavailable at the time in England where similar instruments were obscured under layers of repeated alteration to keep abreast of constantly changing tastes in musical fashion.

The elegant playing of these works on such musically appropriate organs unknown to us, made these the definitive performances of these works for a generation and against which all other performances were judged. Able to turn the sound up to 9 o'clock on a

good stereo or through headphones gave the impression these organs could thunder. Hearing the Jamaica Plain organ, as well as Immaculate Conception for the first time was a bit of a disappointment for one unprepared for the silvery yet noble gentility sound one experienced in person. The JP organ sounded to everyone who had known it their whole lives as though it had a blanket over it- a phenomenon we chalked up to the seemingly dead acoustics of this large but typical American church space created for clarity of speech and padded comfort.

For generations, this organ has been in completely original and unrestored fragility- the action unable to be regulated without fear of breaking scores of trackers just to fix one note. The interior of the organ and the pipes themselves were covered in 150 years of accumulated historic dust- itself an acoustically absorbent blanket. The organ had been maintained in surprisingly playable condition- but just barely- by three generations of the Lahaise family, largely as a labor of love. That an unrestored organ of such antiquity was playable at all, was a testament to their dedication and care.

There is a doctoral thesis waiting to be written about organs provided by organbuilders to churches they attended and to which they listened weekly for most of their lives. The Schlicker voicers told me that Trinity Lutheran Church in North Tonawanda was tinkered with for years to reach a state of perfection that finally met with Hermann's satisfaction, and it remains to this day as one of the finest instruments the company every produced. The brothers Hook lived nearby, and were members of here until their deaths in 1884. Was this simply another standard product of a company with an already established reputation for excellent, or did co-principal George Greenleaf, as the one responsible for the company's tonal excellence, take especial care and pride to produce an instrument of singular perfection for the church he attended every week? Did he perhaps do some of the voicing personally? We'll never know, but the result is a world-class bit of organbuilding. While the organ is still in pristinely original, albeit unrestored condition, the sound we hear today can hardly be considered "original". Languids have sagged, windways widened and upper lips gone crooked, and through a century of gravity and cone tuning, pipe toes have sunken into their toeboard borings distorting their toe holes and wind supply. A restoration to overcome these age-related deficiencies is an invasive alteration, no matter how sensitively and conservatively done. The result, no matter how accurate, is still another step away from originality as left by the original voicer. We are in a unique situation, being able to hear an organ where the original voicing has only been altered by the hand of time.

I took over the maintenance following the untimely death of Dick Lahaise. The keydip was irregular and in some places so shallow that valves barely opened. The action parts were so fragile that simply brushing against something the wrong way could result in a broken tracker in an inaccessible place. I lived in mortal fear that one day there would be a dropped key that simply could not be fixed and that without some large intervention, the organ would soon begin an inexorable decline into unplayability. Contributions had been made to an organ fund over the years, and it had grown to a workable amount- a drop in the bucket compared to the cost of a full restoration the organ so desperately needs- but enough to undertake a project that would have a significant impact on the organ's longevity and playability. I proposed that for this amount, we could replace all the trackers in the three manual departments, fix any broken action components, remove the pipework for general cleaning and restore the organ's six ranks of reeds. With this work, the dirty acoustic blanket happening inside the organ would be lifted, and the organ made fully and reliably functional. As a result of this work, the organ could be through-tuned for the first time in one if not two generations.

The project began in January and was finished in early May. During the course of the work, the partially dismantled organ began to reveal some surprising clues about its construction and enlargement history. First was the quality of the voicing on the surprisingly low pressure of just 2.5 inches. Reeds in particular get increasingly happy as the pressure increases. Low-pressure reed voicing is an exercise in skill and unbelievable patience (some would say futility). One by one, as the reeds were disassembled for repair and cleaning and placed on the voicing machine for review, I was left in abject awe at the masterful skill that produced what are the finest low-pressure reeds I have ever heard in my life. The famed Hook sound is there, but because of the low pressure, these reeds have an unexpected transparency, clarity and brilliance we don't hear in their later reeds on 3-inch pressure. The organ as originally built, was a two manual of some size, but surprisingly, out of its 19 manual stops, only five were ancillary registers. The remaining 3/4 of the organ's tonal complement were all of the diapason family, and everything above eight-foot was a plenum register.

This was corrected in the spring of 1860 with the addition of the Choir. I had long presupposed this was an expansion intended from the beginning, which would explain the organ's preponderance of chorus registers. My recent intimate experience with the organ's construction revealed the addition of the Choir was nothing short of a major upheaval of the organ's original fabric requiring a labor-intensive (and surely exasperating) on-site rebuilding of the complete key action. The new Choir added the missing quiet registers, and each is uniquely comely. The refreshed Clarabella in particular, reveals a stop of dark yet singularly haunting beauty.

With the action renewed, this Jamaica Plain Hook is again fully and reliably functional, albeit unrestored. The age-worn keys clatter still, revealing the old girl's antiquity, but the touch is again crisp and surprisingly responsive. The biggest surprise, nay shock, is the unexpected brightness of the chorus. The blanket over the sound was not an acoustically unsupportive room as we had assumed, but the mountain of grit choking the thing all to pieces. While the organ may seem only marginally brighter after cleaning, there is again an intensity and presence to the sound that drives the room in ways no one alive has ever experienced here before. The organ's beguilingly silvery and elegant nobility is reassuringly familiar, but there is a surprising fire and brilliance to the sound, especially from the five ranks of Great tierce-mixture work sounding through the three fulsome Trumpet registers, with the crowning Clarion 4' being nothing short of shocking. Undergirded by the 1860 Pedal Possaune (sic), the effect is simply thrilling. When I played the first tutti chord following the final tuning, my entire body literally erupted in goosebumps.

This is still the organ we all know and love, yet it's the organ none of us really knew. For many reasons- world-class excellence, extreme antiquity, purity of form, and the deep personal connection to the Hook brothers- this truly spectacular organ has emerged from behind the curtain of age like a butterfly set free from the confines of a chrysalis. One of America's most historically significant organs has been in our midst all our lives, and revered through time as a Stradivarius among an orchestra of Boston's great organs, but now revealed as something even more special than anyone knew.

Get thee to Jamaica Plain to experience true musical genius.

-Scot Huntington

Organ Clearing House

From time to time, your editor receives emails from churches hoping to relocate their organ. For example, I recently received word from the pastor of a Lutheran church in Portsmouth, NH, about their organ, which is being replaced and is languishing at the Organ Clearing House. It was built in 1880 by Edward Lye & Sons (Toronto; Op. 42). One manual, seven stops, tracker, could be a good practice organ with some releathering. The pastor says it can be had for a song, so to speak. No doubt the OCH has other instruments available, so you might want to check it out.
<http://organclearinghouse.net>

And now a word from our sponsor...

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