

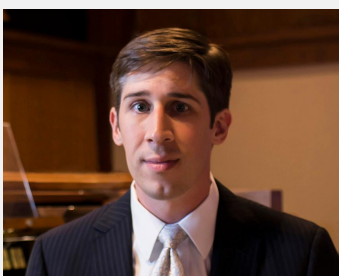


BOSTON PIPINGS

news and notes for members of Boston Chapter AGO

November 2022

The Newsletter of the Boston Chapter American Guild of Organists



A Message from the Dean

Greetings Colleagues,

Ah, the Fall — crisp leaves underfoot, crisp air on the wind, crisp apples for snacking — it's a heady time. I've been especially excited by a few of the "returns" that have accompanied the season, including of *The Crown*, that perennially brilliant and popular Netflix dramatization of the

British royal family during the post-War era. I will admit to being totally in thrall to this series, which is so masterfully produced, compellingly and convincingly acted, and dramatically presented. Nor can I be the only one in that boat, with each anxiously awaited new season generating a torrent of opinion pieces, critical reviews, and media profiles. This year is no different, and in anticipation of the new season's release (just yesterday!), I've seen a marked crescendo of articles whose aim is to contextualize the events that take place this season, of which the devastating fire at Windsor Castle during the annus horribilis was one. Reading about the fire, one detail caught my eye: while much of the castle's irreplaceable artwork and furnishings were preserved, "Items from the Royal Collection lost included the Sir William Beechey equestrian portrait George III and the Prince of Wales Reviewing Troops; an 18-foot long 1820s sideboard by Morel and Seddon; several items of porcelain; several chandeliers; the Willis organ; and the 1851 Great Exhibition Axminster carpet was partially burnt."

I wonder if your eye caught the same detail? I was intrigued by the 19th century Willis organ that graced St. George's Hall up until the fire. It seems the instrument was double-sided, playing into both the Hall and the Private Chapel it adjoins. The Willis (1889) replaced an earlier organ built by Hill & Son (comprising some 29 stops, including such period voices as the "Cone gamba"). Like its predecessor, the Willis organ boasted two ("entirely independent") consoles — one in the Hall and one in the Private Chapel. Its action was tubular pneumatic, with wind supplied to the instrument via hydraulic engine. I've unearthed the instrument's specification, which shows stops deployed across four manual divisions and pedal:

GREAT ORGAN (CC TO A)
16 Double Open Diapason (metal)
8 First Open Diapason (metal)
8 Second Open Diapason (metal)
8 Stopped Diapason (metal)
8 Claribel Flute (wood)
4 Principal (metal)
4 Wald Flute (wood)
2 Harmonic Piccolo (metal)
III Mixture (metal)

8 Trumpet
4 Clarion

SWELL ORGAN (CC TO A)

8 Geigen Principal (metal)
8 Lieblich Gedacht (metal)
8 Keraulophon (metal)
8 Voix Céleste (tenor C; “grooved” into the Keraulophon)
4 Principal (metal)
16 Contra Hautboy (metal)
8 Hautboy (metal)
8 Cornopean (metal)

CHOIR ORGAN (CC TO A)

8 Dulciana (metal)
8 Lieblich Gedacht (metal)
8 Viola da Gamba (metal)
4 Suabe Flöte (wood)
8 Corno di Bassetto (metal)

SOLO ORGAN (CC TO A)

8 Harmonic Flute (metal)
8 Orchestral Oboe (metal)
8 Tromba (metal)

PEDAL ORGAN (CCC to F)

16 Open Diapason (wood)
16 Bourdon (wood)
8 Flute (wood)
16 Trombone (metal)

A rather typical instrument for the period, but larger than I'd expected. In particular, the inclusion of a solo division surprised me, and I'd be curious to see a rendering of the case and its two consoles.

This exercise in “organ excavation” calls to mind this month’s event honoring distinguished member Barbara Owens. Barbara is, of course, a consummate historian, organ aficionado without peer, and a preserver of the organ literature: the traditions in which they are played and built, as well as the composers and repertoires to which they are adjacent. I hope you’ll join us for the event, which takes place this weekend. You’ll find more details in this edition of Pipings.

Happy Thanksgiving!

- **Mitchell Crawford**, Dean



COME & JOIN US AS WE HONOR

BARBARA OWEN

AND THE RELEASE OF HER
NEWEST BOOK

*Pioneers in
American
Organ Music*



Saturday, November 12, 10AM-12PM
Boston University's School of Theology
745 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston

With guest speaker Scot Huntington
Tours of the Organ Library
Refreshments will be served

Public transit is recommended: BU Central T-stop
Limited parking only



The Boston chapter of the AGO has been blessed with its share of giants over its long history. They did not start out that way, but after arriving here in relative youth, grew into the role over long and illustrious careers defined by good works. We gather to honor one of the most legendary in her own time, Barbara Owen. Her professional life encompasses church musician, builder of pipe organs, consultant, organ historian, founder of the Organ Historical Society, Chapter Dean, AGO Regional Councilor, member of countless AGO committees, and internationally recognized author.

It is for the last that we gather to celebrate and congratulate Barbara on another seminal publication: *Pioneers in American Organ Music 1860-1920: The New England Classicists*. Barbara rose to international prominence with the 1979 publication of *The Organ in New England* — still the definitive work on the subject.

Beginning with the organ in colonial times and progressing through the 19th -century Boston and New England schools of organbuilding, with the arrival of the E.F. Walcker's 1863 Great Organ as the dividing point between the before times and after times. This book was the culmination to that point, of a lifetime of research by the country's foremost scholar of historic New England organbuilding. For the past 44 years, hardly a week goes by that I don't pull my battered and dismembered copy off the shelf for some point of reference.

In the intervening years, her pen has been prolific with titles covering the organ music of Brahms, a biography of the chapter's beloved E. Power Biggs, the registration of Baroque organ music, Hook organs in Maine, the social perspective of the organ at Methuen through both its lifetimes, the annotated William Johnson opus list, countless organ monographs, definitive articles about the organ, pitch, and temperament in The New Grove, The Harvard Dictionary of Music, Organ Yearbook, The Tracker and The BIOS Journal.

The latest book bookends a lifetime of research into the New England School of organbuilding and playing. While TONE focused on the builders and their instruments, Pioneers puts those instruments into perspective, covering two generations of prominent local organist composers, beginning with Harvard professor and organist John Knowles Paine, and concluding with the distinguished Organ Department Head Henry Morton Dunham. While many books dealing with music subjects can be academic and dry, Barbara's inimitable style is immediately accessible. Each biography is information-filled by concise, with a list of major works noted for each musician. I learned something new on every page and found the book to be an actual page-turner. The instruments these musicians presided over, and in some cases were musically influenced by, are well covered in what we might call "volume one", and now "volume two" puts the instruments in cultural perspective. The Organ in New England and Pioneers in American Organ Music bookend the nearly 50-year writing career of perhaps the most widely published and respected American organ scholar of our time. Taken together, the two books take the reader on a musical journey through three centuries of the most prolific and influential school of organ culture in the nation. Please join me in November at the Organ Library as Bostonians and New Englanders alike take pride in recognizing the lifetime achievements of one of our most beloved life-long members.

BARBARA OWEN – AN APPRECIATION

In addition to historic organs, friends, books and cats, an overarching concern in Barbara Owen's life has been the BAGO Organ Library at BU. A rare result of simple committee planning, nay dreaming, empowered by the BAGO's hosting of the enormously popular 1976 AGO national convention, the Organ Library was dedicated on the Monday before Thanksgiving, 1985. Many of us now "senior" members of the Chapter were there, and we recall an electrifying atmosphere in knowing that this library would be a legacy.

I met Barbara in 1975, a few months after moving to Boston. Already I knew that she worked for C B Fisk and was one of the builders of the Old West organ. We soon talked about the North Shore and cats, and she invited me to have a vacation of cat-sitting for her. (Unfortunately, I couldn't.) Again and again over these 47 years, I have observed Barbara's exuberance in meeting people, especially in the organ world, whether they be newcomers or acclaimed achievers.

Within a year or two after we met, Barbara told me that she was leaving Fisk; and when I asked what she was going to do next she said "Well, [pause], I'm going to try my hand at writing." This surely was a surprising announcement of intention (especially before computers), and I admit to having wondered about her chances for success. However, she did follow her dream, accepting personal interests for topics; and her books and articles now comprise major contributions to musicology in the organ world.

For the Organ Library, Barbara has been an indefatigable scout, always encouraging donations of music, letters, etc. She surely wants to invite you to discover the library and its vast treasures, whether in person or online.

- **Joyce Painter Rice**, OL Committee member (since 2006)



2022 Fall Performances

A Kaleidoscope of Musical Colors

Sunday matinees at 3:00 p.m.

October 23: Randall Hodgkinson, pianist

November 6: Shriners Swing Band

November 20: Folk Music at Methuen

Tickets \$15 (adult) \$5 (child) at door or online <https://MMMh.brownpapertickets.com>

A MERRY MUSIC HALL CHRISTMAS – 2022

Ray Cornils, organ Robinson Pyle and Greg Gettel, trumpets

Saturday, December 3 at 7:00 p.m. & Sunday, December 4 at 3:00 p.m.

Reserved seating sales begin online November 1: Adults \$25 Children \$5

www.mmmh.org



METHUENMEMORIALMUSICHALL

BARBARA OWEN – AN APPRECIATION

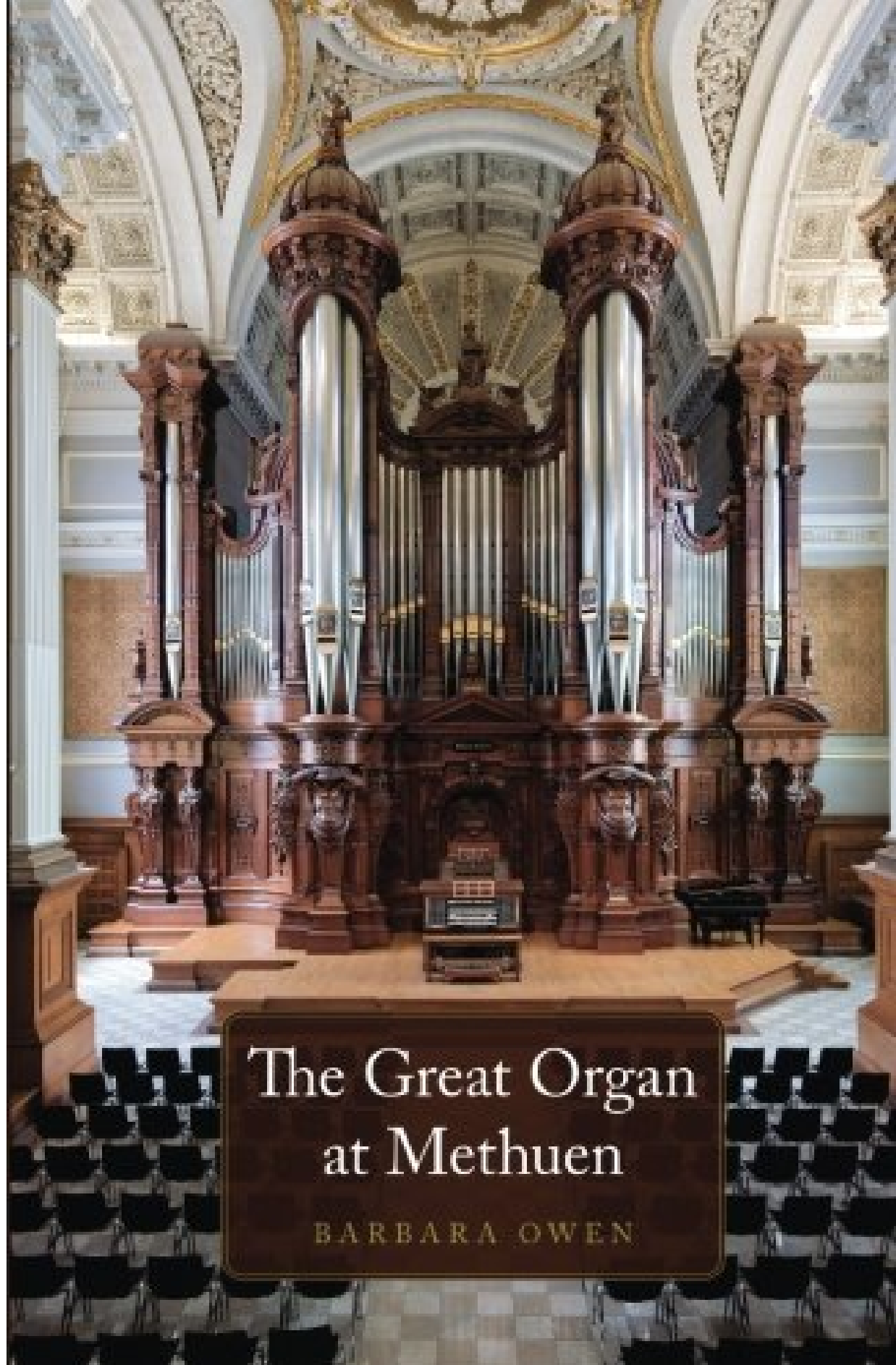
Upon moving to the Boston area, I began hearing organ music of composers I never studied while getting my degrees. Soon I was interested in this music, hunting up scores in libraries, and starting to perform it. It soon became apparent that some of this was possible because of Barbara Owen and her published collections of this music. I was excited to purchase "American Organ Music", Volumes 1, 2, 3, and 4, as well as "The Victorian Collection". All of these received much use in subsequent years, and I grew to love the music. This also inspired me to research more of this music, which has become a regular part of my repertoire.

I have performed major works of Thayer, Dunham, Paine, Foote, Parker, Whiting and Buck. Their music works well on instruments large and small, and is so appropriate on the early organs of New England. So it was with great interest that I purchased Barbara's most recent publication, "Pioneers in American Organ Music, 1860-1920. It is great to have complete lists of works and biographies of composers who should now be mainstream in the

repertoire.

I encourage you to greet and thank our local author, Barbara Owen, at the Boston A.G.O. Library on November 12.

- **Rosalind Mohnsen**



The Great Organ at Methuen

BARBARA OWEN

BARBARA OWEN – AN APPRECIATION

When I look over my life since arriving in Boston in 1997, I see that, as we all do, I

stand on the shoulders of giants. One of those giants is Barbara Owen. I have followed in her rather large footsteps in three areas.

I've heard that the AGO Organ Library was the brainchild of Max Miller, but certainly Barbara had both hands in it from the start. Her association with E. Power Biggs – the tours with recording equipment, the book about him – it all led to his bequests which have allowed the Organ Library to exist and function. Barbara's work as the Librarian there covered many years, I don't even know how many, and every system, and every part of the collection at the Library, owes something to her work and influence. She continues to donate items to the Library as she attempts to tidy up her house. Anyone who did scholarly research in the past knows how much material can accumulate over the years. I've worked as the Library Administrator since 2014, but there is still much that Barbara knows that I am learning.

At the Fisk Shop, Barbara was a voicer, working on many organs with Charles Fisk in the early years of the shop. Everyone who works at Fisk uses initials to identify themselves on various things, and her initials BJO, are still seen once in a while. As a voicer at Fisk, I carry on the work in which she participated; I even have a few of her tools, including one of my favorite cut-up knives, which I reconditioned when she gave it back to the shop a couple years ago. Here again, I follow in her wake.

She was also, like me, a working church organist. Her playing informed and was informed by her scholarship. She edited many works for the organ, got them published in collections, and made her own collections.

And then there's the area in which I cannot claim to follow her path: Her research and publications are perhaps her most important contribution to the organ world. Articles and Lectures and Books just seem to flow continuously, even though she's nearly 90. Recently she offered to send me a list of all her publications, "if she can find it" – she's not one to rest on her laurels, nor to boast about accomplishments, but is still doing whatever she can to promote the instrument.

Barbara has, to put it simply, devoted her entire life to the organ. She's been on so many AGO and OHS and MMMH and OWOS boards and committees that a listing of them would be tedious.

So, do come to the BAGO event to honor one of the greatest of our own, and to launch her latest book (Pioneers in American Organ Music 1860-1920: The New England Classicists) on Saturday, November 12 at 10 AM at the BU School of Theology.

Most gratefully, and with admiration for all that she has done,

Carl Klein



In keeping with good security practices, the password to the Members' Area of the website will change again this month. The Executive Committee has approved this yearly update. Since the Members' Area is a benefit of BAGO membership, a separate announcement will be sent out containing the new password only to members of the Boston Chapter. More information will be forthcoming later in November.



St. Cecilia Organ Concert

Amelie Held, a virtuoso organist hailing from Munich, currently pursuing her post-graduate studies at the Juilliard school, will give a solo organ recital on the mighty 1999 Smith and Gilbert pipe organ at St. Cecilia Parish, Boston, MA

Time:

Sunday, November 13th at 1pm

Location:

18 Belvidere St.
Boston MA 02115

BARBARA OWEN – AN APPRECIATION

In the late 1970's, after finally completing the coursework, recitals, written and oral exams for the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in organ performance at Boston University, I was confronted with finding a dissertation topic that would further knowledge in the field. I was thinking of a couple of different possibilities when my sister Georgia asked, "What about music by a female composer?" I was shocked to realize that in all of my music history classes, no female composer had ever even been mentioned. I assumed that this meant that there were none.

Realizing that the Music History faculty at Boston University had no interest in this field, I turned to Barbara Owen, an organist and organ technician who was also the consummate historian of unknown and underappreciated organ composers. Quickly she went through her own research and gave me the names of three composers that she thought might warrant a dissertation. I went to the library to find their music and play it. I didn't want to spend my time researching someone whose music did not move me.

Barbara knew that Fanny Mendelssohn, Felix's older sister, had written one organ composition. She did not know if she had composed more than that. The only music of Fanny's that I could find at the time were six choral Gartenlieder located in the Boston Public Library. The library would not let me Xerox them because the edition was so old, so I brought manuscript paper and started copying them out by hand. Every night I would bring home what I had copied and play it on the piano, surprised by the stunning vocal lines and compositional skill. When I first played her music, my composer husband Bob immediately called out, "Who wrote that? It's beautiful!"

A Woodrow Wilson Foundation Grant in Women's Studies and Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst supported my research in the summer of 1980 at the Bodleian Library in Oxford, as well as in the Mendelssohn Archiv in the Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz in Berlin. My pioneering dissertation on "The Life and Work of Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel" was completed in 1981. As it turns out, I had access to only one organ prelude in F major that Fanny had composed for her own wedding (years later a G major organ piece she composed as the postlude was published), but because there was no information about Fanny Mendelssohn's music at the time, let alone scores or recordings, my original research helped lead to her rediscovery as a composer. Thanks to Barbara Owen, I had helped to lift into the public eye a superb unsung composer who had written a huge body of work--over 500 pieces that I had access to, including extensive piano and vocal music, as well as an oratorio, cantatas, and chamber music. Up until then, history had relegated Fanny Mendelssohn to the role of a reliable letter writer who helped support information about her brother's more famous career.

Do not underestimate the importance of the original research of Barbara Owen. Countless musicians, historians, conductors, organ builders and aficionados are grateful and will be grateful for years to come for the tenacious and insistent voice of one of New England's most unique treasures!

- The Rev. Dr. Victoria R. Sirota



Pipe Organ Sound at a Fraction of the Cost

The leader in digital and hybrid organs as well as low-cost residence practice organs has expanded its presence in MA! Marshall & Ogletree Organ Builders in Needham has added Mr. Bill Thompson as a sales representative.

Contact Bill with any questions you may have at 678-521-7200 or billinatlanta@gmail.com
Offering organs by Marshall & Ogletree, Rodgers and Johannus.

Learn More About Our Upcoming Programs!

View The Chapter Calendar





American Guild of
ORGANISTS



*Sponsored Content: The Boston Chapter of the American Guild of Organists accepts a limited amount of advertising in order to provide financial support for the chapter. Acceptance and publishing of the advertising does not constitute an endorsement or recommendation of the advertiser by the chapter. Contact the webmaster for information on placing advertising, which is subject to approval of the Executive Committee of the Chapter, in its sole discretion.

Boston Chapter American Guild of Organists | David Baker, 236 Huntington Avenue, Boston,
MA 02115

[Unsubscribe bostonago@gmail.com](mailto:unsubscribe.bostonago@gmail.com)

[Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)

Sent by bostonago@gmail.com in collaboration
with



Try email marketing for free today!