



BOSTON PIPINGS

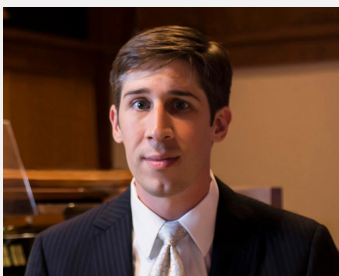
news and notes for members of Boston Chapter AGO

December 2022

The Newsletter of the Boston Chapter American Guild of Organists



Happy Holidays from everyone at the BAGO!



A Message from the Dean

Greetings Colleagues,

On December 10th, 2022, the celebrated French composer and organist César Franck celebrates his 200th birthday.

Frank's *oeuvre* encompasses a vast array of chamber and symphonic music, songs, piano repertoire, and music for the theatre, but the "Pater Seraphicus" has always retained a special

place among organists, owing to the stature of his compositions for the instrument. In fact, it might be said organ and church music represented something of a safe harbor for the composer

Franck, whose secular and concert offerings tended to be received with greater trepidation by the audiences and critics of the day. Frank's glorious *Symphony in D minor* was famously panned after its premier, derided for its prominent use of the English horn — really a rather bizarre objection in hindsight, but a window into the views and attitudes that shaped the earliest period in Franck's reception history.

Had things worked out differently for Franck, both the church and the pipe organ might have factored less significantly in his creative life. The son of an enterprising father who cherished the notion young César might become a virtuoso in the mould of Liszt or Thalberg, Franck initially set out on the path of itinerant performer. The family, native to Liège, sought French citizenship in order to facilitate Franck's entry into the Paris *Conservatoire*. As a student there in the later 1830s, Franck was accomplished in some areas, but less spectacular in others; organ study was a natural outgrowth of his keyboard facility and opened the possibility of a church position with the regular income these entailed. Limited success in the concert arena pushed Franck increasingly from it, and his appointment as *Titulaire* of Sainte-Clotilde in 1858 seems decisive in shaping the course his unfolding life and career would thereafter take.

This may have been just as well for Franck, whose gentle demeanor and modest comportment were likely better suited to the role of teacher and organist than flashy virtuoso. Still, Franck never really relinquished his pursuit of success within the most popular forms of the day, and his lack of achievement with opera in particular must have been a source of disappointment. Nevertheless, it is possible to observe a fairly unbroken upward trajectory to Franck's compositional output, such that the early (mid-century) works — already “good” — yield to the exquisite works of his full maturity during the last decade or so of his life. This is the period of the *Trois Pièces* (1878) and *Trois Chorales* (1890) for organ, the *Prélude, Aria et Final* (1887) and *Prélude, Choral et Fugue* (1884) for piano, the Violin Sonata (1886), Piano Quintet (1879) and String Quartet (1889), the *Variations symphoniques* (1885), and the *Symphony in D minor* (1888), masterpieces which have justly sealed Franck's reputation as among the greats of the Romantic era.

Speaking personally, I can think of few composers whose works for organ I admire more than those of Franck. Particularly as a younger person and student of the organ, I found his music deeply affecting. For this reason, I was surprised to find — especially during my time within the academy — a prevailing attitude of Franck-derision which frowned upon the loosely-constructed early works and tittered at the emotionality of the later ones. I didn't understand that attitude at the time, and find it all the more odious in retrospect. Franck was one of the most significant composers of the 19th century, and we organists are quite fortunate to have the body of repertoire he left. Moreover, as a community, I feel we are at times guilty of subjecting other (demonstrably brilliant) composers to this academic snobbery: Mendelssohn has often been derided among organists, despite leaving a formidable collection of excellent music — and one could go on. It is immensely gratifying to have watched the pendulum move in the direction of greater general appreciation of Franck in the past several years.

Happy birthday César! Here's to the next 200.

- **Mitchell Crawford**, Dean



Annual BAGO Party!

Sunday, January 8, 5 PM

Come join us for loads of fun and good food!

Louise Mundinger's home: 150 Brooks Street, Medford. Close to the West Medford stop on the Lowell line and 94 bus. There is plenty of on-street parking.

Sign Up to Bring An Item to the Potluck

Bring your ideas for the 2023-24 program year.



John G. Dunn, FAGO, ChM

John G. Dunn, FAGO, ChM, died peacefully at his home in Watertown on Saturday, December 17, at the age of 79. A graduate of Harvard College and Boston University, John Dunn studied organ with Theodore Marier, George Faxon, and Max Miller. For many, John's name is synonymous with St. Paul's Church in Cambridge, where he worked in one capacity or

another from 1960 until 2010. In 1963, upon the founding of St. Paul's Choir School, John joined the faculty where he taught math, music theory, piano, recorder, and organ. He also served as Assistant Music Director and Organist under the school's founder, Dr. Theodore Marier. In 1974, John became Principal of the Boston Archdiocesan Choir School and in 1986, upon the retirement of Dr. Marier, John became the Choir School's second Music Director, a position he held concurrent with his duties as Principal. In 1998, he became Headmaster-Music Director. He retired from St. Paul's after fifty years of dedicated service in 2010 and was named Headmaster-Music Director Emeritus.

An active member of the Boston AGO for many years, John earned the Fellowship and Choir Master diplomas of the Guild and served the Boston Chapter in numerous capacities. He was an ardent supporter of the Boston AGO's Young Organists Initiative and always encouraged his young organ students to apply for scholarships, attend Pipe Organ Encounters, and to take AGO certification exams. In retirement, John served on the Executive Committee of the Boston AGO and substituted as organist in churches throughout the Boston area.

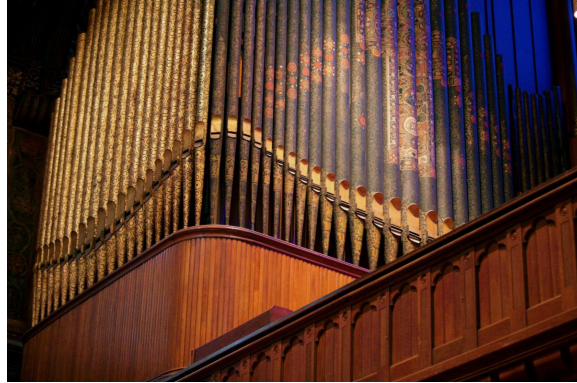
John was also a skilled hymn writer. Most of his hymn texts were written specifically for Theodore Marier's hymnal, *Hymns, Psalms, and Spiritual Canticles* (1974, 1983). Many of these hymns have found their way into various Christian hymnals throughout the English-speaking world. Immediately prior to his death, John, in collaboration with Choir School alumnus Paul Murray, completed a revision of Marier's signature psalmody to conform to the new liturgical texts that have been implemented in the Catholic Church since the psalms were published in Dr. Marier's hymnal.

As an organist, John was a gifted service player and accompanist. He was an active recitalist and performed throughout New England, including performances at Methuen Memorial Music Hall, Trinity Church, Boston, Mechanics Hall, Harvard's Memorial Church and the Busch-Reisinger Museum.

During John's years as Music Director, the Choir School, under the title "Boston Boy Choir", toured in Chicago, Montreal, Rome, and Washington, produced several recordings, collaborated with the Boston Symphony Orchestra at Tanglewood, the Boston Pops at Symphony Hall, and sang at countless concerts, weddings, and funerals throughout the Archdiocese of Boston, including the nationally televised funerals of the late Speaker of the House, Tip O'Neill and Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, matriarch of the Kennedy Family. Under John's direction, the choir also sang regularly for the AGO, including during the 1990 National Convention for a Sung Mass at St. Paul's.

While self-described as working "full-time, overtime, and all-the-time," John enjoyed traveling, cooking, and swimming in his spare time. He will be greatly missed by his family, friends, and his many students.

Brother Paul Murray, Cong. Orat.



Fridays At Trinity:

Jan 6: Andrew Scanlon

Jan 13: Alexander Pattavina

Jan 20: Manuel Piazza

Jan 27: Kevin Neel



JOIN US AT THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE PLAZA FOR

FIRST NIGHT 2023

NEW YEAR'S EVE

Featuring
**FIRST NIGHT
ORGAN CONCERT**

AT THE MOTHER CHURCH EXTENSION

Three celebrated Boston-area organists perform
on one of the world's largest pipe organs.

3:00 - 4:00 p.m.
More details on the back.

FREE ADMISSION

How Do You See the World?
experience + **Mapparium™** globe

10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

TOURS OF

**The Mother Church Original
and Extension**

11:00 a.m. & 2:00 p.m.

VISIT

Christian Science Reading Room

New pop-up location:
184 Massachusetts Ave

10:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.



Visit christianscience.com/plaza

Learn More About Our Upcoming Programs!

View The Chapter Calendar



American Guild of
ORGANISTS



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