

Astonishing In So Many Ways!

Two Commentaries on a Theater Organ Performance

Michael Barone

As part of my overall “it’s all organ music” philosophy, I attended a recent concert at the Phipps Center in nearby Hudson, Wisconsin, that featured a very talented young British organist named Richard Hills. I’ve known about Richard directly and indirectly for several years, as he has become something of a regular at American Theatre Organ Society (ATOS) conventions, and also is an increasing presence on the BBC.

As a posting on the [website](#) of England’s Cinema Organ Society rightly claims, Richard “is one of very few musicians truly to have bridged and mastered the divide between the world of the classical organ and that of the theatre organ.” He was trained at Exeter College-Oxford, holds down a church job in London, and tours the globe as a free-lance concert artist. An example of his playing is available [here](#).



At the Phipps, Richard demonstrated the highest level of accomplishment for which the best theatre organists are known. The entire program, nearly an hour and 45 minutes of music, was played from memory and introduced with verbal aplomb. The repertoire ranged from Vincent Youmans, George Gershwin and Frank Loesser to Burt Bacharach and Rudolf Friml.

All of this was presented in Richard’s own saucy and colorful “arrangements,” tailored to the instrument at hand, and demonstrated a deft (and nearly continuous) manipulation of the Phipps Wurlitzer organ’s manifold resources – virtually a continuous kaleidoscope of tonal color. His playing was thoroughly assured and secure, technically flawless, and with an extraordinary sense of rhythm and phrasing that kept one totally involved at every moment.

The audience, typical for the Phipps, was of only modest size, and mostly of “a certain age” – older. I believe there may have been three TCAGO members present. I would encourage more members to pay attention to events at the Phipps. I agree that it’s not likely that most of the music played there would be useful for Sunday sorties or communion meditations, but the experience of such captivating musicianship, presented at such a high level (with real entertainment value) might inspire you to give a bit more life to your *Orgelbüchlein* preludes.

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American Guild of Organists – Twin Cities Chapter

Pipemotes

Dean's Column

Paul Westermeyer

Notes for our Common Life

1) Stephen Hamilton, who has ably served our Chapter for the last six years as Membership Coordinator, has found that his current responsibilities (for groups like the Minnesota Orchestra) mean he has to resign from this post. We thank him for his work on our behalf. He indicated his continuing interest – strong interest – in the AGO, and I told him that we would not hesitate to call on him.

2) Judy Campen has graciously agreed to serve as Membership Coordinator. As many of you know, she is a past Dean who is regarded highly among us. We thank her for taking on this task and look forward to her work.

3) Judy's work as Membership Coordinator, coupled with the work of the Registrar Jane Nienaber, the Board, and the Website Administrator David Engen with Kirsten Uhlenberg, includes confronting changes in membership categories that the National AGO has instituted. The April issue of TAO will detail these. The Board has discussed these with Jane Nienaber and Judy Campen. There will be an e-mail blast preceding the renewal form, and we trust these and the TAO article will make the categories clear.

4) The Nominations Committee, with Jon Kietzer its Chair, has completed its work. We thank them for it. Their slate of nominations for officers and Board members is published in this issue of *Pipenotes*. Please take some time to consider thoughtfully our work together, and vote.

5) The skills and interests of the members of our Chapter are continually sought both for future officers and for the other posts listed in *Pipenotes* and on the



website. These include chairs of committees, committee members, and volunteers for specific projects. As you vote on the current slate for positions on the Board, be thinking of people who can fill any of these posts in the future. Also be thinking of some other tasks that are less visible. Do not hesitate to volunteer yourself.

6) The less visible tasks that someone or some ones might wish to consider include things that a doctoral student or doctoral students might choose to tackle – either as a project or a set of projects, or perhaps even as a doctoral dissertation. Here are some needs:

a) We could use a good history of the TCAGO from its inception to the present moment. This would require working through archived documents as well as oral histories and every scrap of everything one might assemble, then writing it up as coherently and honestly as possible.

b) A list of all of the members of the TCAGO from the beginning to the present also would be quite helpful. That would require some pretty careful and detailed sleuthing through all of the past directories and perhaps some other documents as well.

c) A set of indexed Minutes would prove very helpful for the Board and for anyone else who might be interested. This would comprise a set of all of the motions the Board has passed (and maybe some it has not passed) from the beginning until now, organized by categories in a system that would make them easily accessible.

d) Items b and c would obviously play into any history. One person could work on this whole set as a project. So could several people either together or separately.

This list should not be seen as exhaustive. Let the Board or me know of your interests and skills – or tell us about anyone whom you know with these or other interests and skills.

From the Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee proposes the following slate of candidates for officers in 2017-2018. The ballots, allowing for write-in candidates, will be sent out in April.

Dean: Paul Westermeyer

Sub-Dean: David Jenkins

Treasurer: David Geslin

Secretary: Dee Ann Crossley

Board Class of 2019 candidates:

Kyle Black

Thomas Ferry

Rob Glover

Diana Lee Lucker

Christopher Stroh

continued from page 1

And, also, if we expect the art of the organ – of any sort – to survive, we need to be a bit more supportive of other’s performances. It goes without saying that our individual lives are “fully booked,” but when you have the opportunity to observe and absorb artistry of such high quality, it’s worth making it a priority.

Mary Joy Rieder

As with many of us, my own organ world is defined by the requirements of regular service playing and the occasional performance wherein one has an opportunity to prepare and present favorite literature with greater focus and depth. Of course, there is such a wealth of concerts to enjoy – organ, orchestra, choir – who could want for anything more? Sure, Michael Barone occasionally features the theater organ genre on *Pipedreams*, but, to take this entertainment music seriously? After Sunday’s Phipps Center concert, I think so!

I attended Richard Hills’ concert because of the earnest invitations and repeated urging of Century Pipe Organs, the firm that services the 1927 Reuter instrument at my church. Although Century services church organs – with a fondness for *vintage* instruments – this team of two is highly regarded throughout the U.S. and in England for their work in restoring and maintaining theater organs. Other than the Fitzgerald Theater instrument, the Phipps Center organ is their local pride and joy. Certainly, with its striking faux-Oriental console (from a theater in Boston), and its tonal lineage originating as a 16-rank installation in 1926 at the Capitol Theatre in Saint Paul, with an intermediate home at the Hubbard Broadcasting studios, and final move to the Phipps Center in 1983, not to forget the characteristic panoply of humorous bells and whistles, this instrument is a beauty to experience.

I had been assured that Richard Hills was a legendary talent in his youth, having the ability to play any hymn in the Anglican canon in any key. That’s impressive in itself, but truly spectacular was his varied and cohesive program delivered with a consistently phenomenal technique, the astounding facility to manage such a variety of split-second registration changes coupled with multiple manual dexterity (with copious thumbing down), and the highest level of musical artistry. If I thought I might have more

than sufficiently heard (and played) the best from the great American song tradition of the 1920s through the 60s, my ears were duly challenged and dazzled by Mr. Hills’s imaginative, colorful and stunning renditions that were in turn breathtakingly energetic and romantically evocative according to text and mood. Most familiar to me was the set from the 1960s, the arrangements of which breathed new life into hackneyed Top-40 selections that one might otherwise seek to avoid during PBS pledge periods. The selection of British compositions added another appropriate dimension to the program, particularly the “English take” on American folk songs from pioneer days of the old West.

In the hands of such a skilled improvisateur and arranger, the theater organ brings a fresh array of orchestral color unique to this instrument. Yes, as in any improvisatory style, there are “tricks of the trade,” but applied judiciously and with the finest of musical taste, the effect is certainly entertaining, but no less artistically engaging and musically satisfying. Elegantly charming, eloquent in speech and gesture, gracious and witty – Mr. Hills’s informative introduction to each set was part and parcel of the entire performance experience.

My 14-year-old niece, who was spending the day with us, really enjoyed the program (quite different from the music she was listening to on the car radio), even though she complained about being by far the youngest one in the audience. My husband and I came away uplifted, with broad smiles. Admittedly, this wasn’t Bach or Mendelssohn or Widor or Messiaen, but it was...music – music played with commitment, intelligence, the highest level of skill and passion, and musical performance informed by same values that adhere to all good music-making. And what’s not to like about that!

Upcoming Phipps Center organ recitals will present Dave Wickerham on Saturday June 10 at 7:30 p.m.

Justin Lavoie will be featured as part of the Organ Historical Society Convention on Saturday, August 5, at 7:00 p.m.



[The Phipps Center for the Arts](#)
109 Locust Street, Hudson, Wisconsin

New members

Rev. David Kohner

7520 Cahill Road #101, Edina, MN 55439
H 952-944-6941; W 651-257-2474 x31;
C 612-840-8378
frkohner@comcast.net

Christian Stromley

910 Elliot Ave., Minneapolis, MN 55404
C 715-459-2874
c.stromley17@gmail.com

W. Zachary Taylor

7045 Nicollet Ave., Richfield, MN 55423
612-356-2191
zachary@zacharytaylor.com

Transfer member

Emily Rudquist

(from Sioux Trails Chapter)
892 Como Ave., Saint Paul, MN 55103
C 218-398-1623
emilyrudquist@gmail.com

Address change

Randall Egan

randalleganmusic@gmail.com



Call for Performers for Members Recital

On Friday, May 5, at 7:30 p.m., our Chapter will present its 2017 Members Recital. Resident Musician Christopher Wallace has invited us to Our Lady of Grace Catholic Church in Edina to share the sounds of the splendid 69-rank Austin pipe organ.

We are looking for varied repertoire that both enlightens and inspires, thoughtful and thrilling music from all genres and periods. We request an eight-minute-per-person limit and suggest that you submit several options so that we can shape an interesting and varied program. Organ-plus items are OK, and not everyone needs to play a flashy toccata.

For the adventuresome, keep in mind that 2017 represents the bicentennial of the births of Danish composer Niels Gade (b. 2/22/1817) and Frenchman Louis Alfred James Lefébure-Wély (b. 11/13/1817), and the 150th birthdays of Enrique Granados (b. 7/27/1867), Amy Cheney Beach (b. 9/5/1867) and Charles Koechlin (b. 11/27/1867). Yes, there is organ music (or, in the case of Granados, transcriptions) from all of these.

Please send your submissions by April 7 to the TCAGO Program Committee, attention [David Jenkins](#). Submissions for each piece should include: Title, Composer, Duration of piece, and a brief description of why you have chosen this piece. We also require a high-quality digital photo of yourself, and biography to be used for publicity materials.

And mark your calendars now for the May 5 TCAGO Members Recital.

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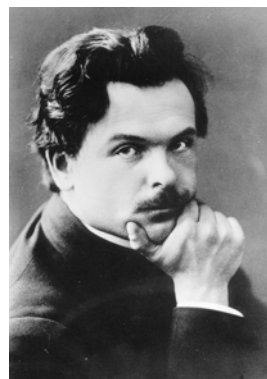
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Evensong *Mater Dolorosa*

Sunday, April 9, 4:00 p.m.
Central Lutheran Church, Minneapolis

A special Holy Week evensong will highlight works of two important Finnish composers. This is a part of *Finland 100*, the national event marking the centenary of Finnish independence.

Toivo Kuula's *Stabat Mater* (1915), in its American premier, will serve as the centerpiece. This astonishingly beautiful 25-minute work, scored for choir and full orchestra, has been described as "impressionism and exoticism meet Mendelssohn." The Central Choir and members of the Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra will be under the direction of Central's Cantor Mark Sedio.



ingly beautiful 25-minute work, scored for choir and full orchestra, has been described as "impressionism and exoticism meet Mendelssohn." The Central Choir and members of the Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra will be under the direction of Central's Cantor Mark Sedio.

Oskar Merikanto's rarely heard *Passacaglia in F# Minor* will be performed by organist Stephen Hamilton.



In addition, the Augsburg Choir will perform works related to themes found in the *Stabat Mater*.

This will include *To the Mothers of Brazil*, Gunnar Ericksson's arrangement of the Lars Jansson piece.

The event and parking in Central's lot are free (although a free-will offering will be gathered). For more information contact Central Lutheran Church at 612-767-9230.

[Central Lutheran Church](#)

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Doubt and Rebirth in *Miracle Mass*

Saturday, April 22, 8:00 p.m.
Basilica of Saint Mary, Minneapolis

Experience the profound journey of a soul's doubt turning to joy with *Miracle Mass*, a special performance by VocalEssence and pianist and composer Stephen Hough.

Two deeply personal masses composed by Hough will be presented. *Miracle Mass*, a new composition,



receives its title from a close brush with death the practicing Catholic composer endured while working on the piece. *Mass of Innocence and Experience* was written as a choral setting for the poetry of William Blake. Between the masses,

Hough will play solo piano works by Claude Debussy, including *Clair de lune*.

Hough will perform with the VocalEssence Chorus & Ensemble Singers and organist Aaron David

Miller. Philip Brunelle will conduct. The evening will include a pre-concert conversation with Stephen Hough, hosted by Randall Davidson, at 7:00 p.m.

For more information about this concert and to purchase tickets, please call 612-371-5656 or visit [VocalEssence](#).

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Vincent Dubois in Concert

Sunday, April 23, 3:00 p.m.
University of St. Thomas Chapel, Saint Paul

Newly appointed in 2016 as one of the three titular organists at Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris, France, Vincent Dubois is one of the finest concert organists to appear on the world stage in many years. He is a graduate of the *Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique* in Paris where he was a student of Olivier Latry, and earned First Prizes in Organ, Harmony, Counterpoint, Fugue and 20th-century composition.



Mr. Dubois will perform on the 56-rank Gabriel Kney tracker organ, which has been featured numerous times on American Public Media's *Pipedreams*. The historic Chapel of St. Thomas Aquinas was designed by the French-born architect Emmanuel-Louis Masqueray, who also designed the Cathedral of Saint Paul and The Basilica of Saint Mary in Minneapolis. The concert is co-sponsored by the UST *Sacred Arts Festival*, this year celebrating the 100th anniversary of the death of Masqueray.

The concert is free, a reception will follow. Parking is available in Lot G (enter from Cleveland Avenue near Ashland), or the parking ramp at Grand and Cretin. Further information at 651-962-5793.

[University of St. Thomas Chapel](#)

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Vocalescence ¡Cantaré! Community Concert

**Tuesday, May 2, 7:00 p.m.
Ordway Concert Hall, Saint Paul**

Twin Cities choral students have composed a path to Mexico with a year-long program with Mexican composers-in-residence to bring musical traditions north of the border.

It's a bilingual celebration of song and cultural exchange for the climactic performance of the acclaimed *¡Cantaré!* program from VocalEssence. After a year of preparation and learning, more than 500 elementary, middle, high school, and college-aged singers will be ready to share their sound with the community.



This year, participating students have been meeting with Mexican composers Rodrigo Michelet Cadet Díaz and Dr. Samuel Pascoe over the course of three visits between October and May, together penning several new compositions, which will be premiered at the Ordway. Members of the VocalEssence Chorus will share the stage with students from Adams Spanish Immersion School, Saint Paul; Highland Park High School, Saint Paul; Irondale High School, New

Brighton; Meadow Lake Elementary School, New Hope; Richard R. Green Central Park School, Minneapolis; Washburn High School, Minneapolis; and the University of Minnesota Women's Chorus, Minneapolis.

Tickets for the concert are free. For more information about ticketing, please visit [VocalEssence](http://VocalEssence.com).

STEPHEN HAMILTON
Concert Organist

Marcel Dupré's epic Passion panorama, "The Stations of the Cross," is given an exceptionally fresh interpretation at the hands of the skilled and talented organist Stephen Hamilton.
—*American Record Guide*

www.stephenjonhamilton.com
952-934-0331

Summer Academy for High School Organists

**July 24-28
Eastman School of Music**

Come and experience the thriving pipe organ culture at Eastman in this five-day intensive workshop for high school students. Each day will include private and group instruction from world-renowned performers and pedagogues, as well as daily access to a wide variety of instruments.

Participants will have the opportunity to perform in master classes focusing on repertoire, sacred music skills, improvisation, and technique. Use this time to meet friends and colleagues that share in your passion, and see just how much there is to discover and learn within the organ community in downtown Rochester, NY. The program includes social activities and excursions and a final student performance open to the public.

With the guidance of Eastman's renowned organ faculty, students will improve and expand their technique and musicality, and they will develop lasting relationships with like-minded young people.

The application deadline is May 1, and space is limited. For more information, including how to register, please click [here](#).



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Reformations and the Organ, 1517-2017

September 10 - 13
University of Notre Dame

The University of Notre Dame and the Westfield Center for Historical Keyboard Studies will co-sponsor a conference to celebrate the new Fritts organ on the University of Notre Dame campus.

You can register for the conference [here](#). You can also learn more at the Sacred Music [website](#).



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In Memoriam

Robert Anderson, age 88, died on March 5. He is survived by his spouse and life-companion of 44 years, Randall Egan. Although Robert was not a musician, he supported all of us and was the Placement Director for our Chapter for many years. His service was held on March 12 at Central Lutheran Church.

Calendar of Events

April

Sunday, April 2, 8:30 and 11:00 a.m.

Bach *Cantata 150*

Chancel Choir

Paul Stever, organist and conductor

Pilgrim Lutheran Church

1935 St. Clair Avenue, Saint Paul

Sunday, April 9, 4:00 p.m.

Evensong *Mater Dolorosa*

Central Lutheran and Augsburg College choirs

Members of Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra

Mark Sedio, director

Central Lutheran Church

333 South Twelfth Street, Minneapolis

Saturday, April 22, 8:00 p.m.

Doubt and Rebirth in *Miracle Mass*

Stephen Hough, pianist and composer

Aaron David Miller, organist

VocalEssence Chorus & Ensemble

Philip Brunelle, director

Basilica of Saint Mary

88 North 17th Street, Minneapolis

Sunday, April 23, 3:00 p.m.

Organ Concert Series

Vincent Dubois, organist

University of St. Thomas Chapel

Cleveland and Laurel Aves., Saint Paul

May

Tuesday, May 2, 7:00 p.m.

VocalEssence ;*Cantaré!* Community Concert

Ordway Concert Hall, Saint Paul

TCAGO Event

Friday, May 5, 7:30 p.m.

Members Recital and Festive Reception

Our Lady of Grace Catholic Church

5071 Eden Avenue, Edina



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RENAISSANCE
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June

Saturday, June 10, 7:30 p.m.

Dave Wickerham, organist

The Phipps Center for the Arts

109 Locust Street, Hudson, Wisconsin

Wednesday, June 14, 12:00 noon

Summer Recital Series

Diana Lee Lucker, organist

Wayzata Community Church

125 Wayzata Blvd. East, Wayzata

Wednesday, June 21, 12:00 noon

Summer Recital Series

Kyle Black, organist

Wayzata Community Church

125 Wayzata Blvd. East, Wayzata

June 25 - July 23

Lutheran Summer Music Academy and Festival
Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, Indiana

Wednesday, June 28, 12:00 noon

Summer Recital Series

Cynthia Betz, organist

Wayzata Community Church

125 Wayzata Blvd. East, Wayzata

July

Wednesday, July 5, 12:00 noon

Summer Recital Series

Matt Haider, organist

Wayzata Community Church

125 Wayzata Blvd. East, Wayzata

Wednesday, July 12, 12:00 noon

Summer Recital Series

Sharon Kleckner, organist

Wayzata Community Church

125 Wayzata Blvd. East, Wayzata



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Pipenotes

is the official publication of the Twin Cities Chapter, American Guild of Organists, and is published nine times a year, September through June. December and January are combined.

Deadline date

Information for Pipenotes should be received no later than the fifteenth of the month preceding publication.

Materials may be sent to [Merritt Nequette](#), editor.

Letters to the Editor

Signed Letters to the Editor are always welcome.

Mail letters to [Merritt Nequette](#).

Pipedreams

For a listing of organ events statewide, access the [Pipedreams Organ Calendar](#). For both on-air and website listings of organ-related activities, please send information to [Michael Barone](#), or to [Pipedreams Calendar](#), 480 Cedar St., St. Paul, MN 55101.

MPR

Classical Minnesota Public Radio encourages you to enter your classical music performance events in the MPR online calendar.

On the top bar of the general MPR web page, click on "Events," then "Events Calendar," then "Classical Music." However, if you find yourself on the Classical MPR main page, click on "More," then "Events," then "Classical Music."

In either case, once on the page that lists Classical Music Events, if you wish to add your own upcoming activity, under the headline for "Calendar Events Home" at the top of the page you should find an additional prompt for "Submit Event." Fill in all appropriate boxes (and check to see if your venue is already logged into the system, which might save you some time).

Note that this MPR Calendar information will reach a different audience than that submitted to Barone for posting on the TCAGO/[Pipedreams](#) calendar pages. Both are free, the one a self-service feature and a separate vehicle by which you can let people (including the Classical MPR program hosts) know about your classical music concerts.

By all means, continue to send information directly to Michael Barone too!!

We also encourage you to regularly request organ selections on the "Friday Favorites" show with Steven Staruch. Encourage and promote the inclusion of more organ music in MPR's programming!