

November 2009

# Mixtures

Binghamton American Guild of



Organists

## Yesterday .....

The organ crawl to Norwich on Saturday, Oct. 17, was both fun and informative. Many thanks to Susan Ticknor, who coordinated the event and demonstrated the organs at St. Bartholomew's and St. Paul's R.C. Churches.

Thanks also to Carolyn McMaster and Bob Oehme, who demonstrated the organs at their respective parishes, Emmanuel Episcopal and U.C.C., First Congregational. Carolyn also put together a wonderful slide show of the organ chamber so we didn't need to "crawl" around inside!

Lunch at Coffee Connection gave us an opportunity to become better acquainted with members of the Oneonta Chapter. Sadly, past dean, Roberta Rowland-Raybold, had to leave at noon, but she plans to be with us for Bruce Neswick's workshop on Nov. 7.

## Today .....

Call Carolyn Blake to volunteer to bring refreshments for the Bruce Neswick reception on Nov. 8 (724-4836 or [rblake1@stny.rr.com](mailto:rblake1@stny.rr.com))

Invite your Pastor now to the clergy/musicians dinner on Feb. 1 so she (he) can circle the date on her (his) busy calendars. (See *Upcoming Events* for more details.)

## and Tomorrow!!

Hope to see you at the next chapter event on Nov. 7 – an improv workshop with Bruce Neswick at First Presbyterian, Binghamton, **10-12 noon**. Jonathan Biggers writes, "I've asked him to do a practical workshop on hymn 'dressing-up' techniques that would be practical for all of us. He's quite good at this, and he should be able to share many practical suggestions . . ."

Organist/choirmaster at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, NYC, Neswick has previously served in the major Episcopal cathedrals in Buffalo, Washington D.C., and Atlanta. You will hear him perform on Sunday, Nov. 8 at 4 pm at First Presbyterian, Binghamton. The program will include:

*Toccata*, Sowerby

*Siciliano for High Ceremony*, Howells

*Choral in E Major*, Franck

A 4-movement improvised symphony on 4 hymns of the church year



## SMILE!

A Baptist preacher had really roused his congregation one Sunday only to end his sermon with this admonition. "It has come to my attention that someone in this congregation has maligned the organist by calling him an inept fool and I would like to know right here and now who in this assembly would do a thing like that, calling our organist an inept fool." You could hear a pin drop except for a few nervous coughs, when, at the back of the church, a small man jumped to his feet, and pointing in the direction of the choir loft, said, "Preacher, I'd like to know who called that inept fool an organist!"

(Submitted by an anonymous colleague)



**Training Your Replacement**

One thing I did not mention in my personal *vita* in the October Dean's Column was my interest in family history and cemeteries. I have written several family history booklets relating the stories of various branches of my family tree. (I had been fortunate that my grandmother kept a scrapbook of newspaper clippings and obituaries.) If I haven't visited at least five cemeteries each Memorial Day, I feel I've neglected my duty! (My parents and I have our stone in the same cemetery as our past 4 generations [with one exception] and the 5<sup>th</sup> generation is buried only a couple of miles down the road in a family cemetery.)

While perusing a recent TAO issue, I came across the Obituaries section, and was thinking about the two outstanding teachers/organists being eulogized on that page. I wondered about their replacements in their respective teaching positions. The March 2009 issue of my denominational magazine "The Lutheran Witness" featured articles about Bach (as one would expect in his birth month) and Mendelssohn (the 'Other' Lutheran composer, born in February 200 years ago). But the cover story and picture was entitled "Nurturing Tomorrow's Church Musicians". Fifteen year old Whitney Sabrowsky, from Freeport, MN (the real life inspiration for Garrison Keillor's fictional Lake Wobegon!) was one of 150 students attending the 26<sup>th</sup> session of Lutheran Summer Music, held on the campus of Gustavus Adolphus College in St Peter, MN. The article detailed how she, though having no lessons, started playing organ at her small rural church by virtue of her many years of piano lessons. By her own admission, she now plays with more confidence and skill, thanks to last summer's intense four week program. Her Pastor says that "we've heard things come out of that organ that we've never heard before. It's wonderful. Whitney is a real blessing." And she wants to go to camp again next summer.

All of this makes me wonder....are we doing enough to nurture tomorrow's Church Musician? Do we excite our youth and help them get acquainted up front with our instrument? Are we training our replacements? What can our chapter be doing towards this end?

of the vineyard!

God's best to you as you work in your part

Lee and Polly  
Co-Deans





## The Electronic Organ: 75 years And Counting

This year marks the 75th anniversary of a very significant event in the history of the organ. In 1934, Laurens Hammond patented the first electronic organ, the Hammond organ. Hammond, who was originally from Evanston, Illinois, was a Cornell graduate who specialized in engineering. His new version of the organ soon had a tremendous impact on the field of organ building. Shortly thereafter, other firms began to enter the electronic organ field. In 1939, Jerome Markowitz, founder of the Allen Organ Company, introduced the first electronic organs meant specifically for church use. Years later, in the 1950's, the Rodgers Organ Company built the first solid state organs. Then, in the early 1970's, the Allen Organ Company introduced the first digital electronic organs.

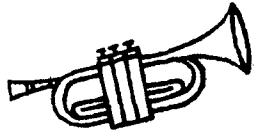
Without question, the electronic organ has been very influential in the church music scene. Such instruments have provided serious competition to the pipe organ industry over the years. For example, the Walker organ recently installed in Grace Lutheran Church in Vestal is quite remarkable in its output ( I was almost blown away when I first heard it played). However, both pipe and digital organs continue to be manufactured in quantity, and some organs are even a combination of both. The major manufacturers of digital organs today include Allen, Walker, Wicks, and Rodgers.

If Laurens Hammond could see how prosperous the electronic organ industry is nowadays, I'm sure he would be very impressed.

Submitted by Michael Roseboom



"Jonathan Biggers is available to serve as a substitute for any of our churches in the area, both for organ and choral work. Please contact him if you need someone to step in, either at the last minute or otherwise, at 607-765-7182."



## UPCOMING EVENTS

- Friday, **Nov. 6** – 7 pm David MacFarlane organ concert at Grace Episcopal, Elmira; Call Polly (754-0378) if you'd like to join a carpool.
- Saturday, **Nov. 7** -10 to noon Bruce Neswick workshop on "dressing up your hymn playing" at First Presbyterian, Binghamton
- Sunday, **Nov. 8** -- 4 pm Bruce Neswick organ concert at First Presbyterian, Binghamton; reception to follow; co-sponsored by B.U. and Binghamton AGO (AGO members ½ price)
- Sunday, **Nov. 15** – 3 pm The Binghamton Philharmonic performs Beethoven's Ninth Symphony
- Saturday, **Nov. 28** -7:30 pm *Lessons and Carols for Christmas* by The Madrigal Choir at Holy Trinity, 346 Prospect St., Binghamton
- Sunday, **Nov. 29** -- 4 pm Repeat performance of *Lessons and Carols*
- Sunday, **Dec. 6** -- 4 pm Jonathan Biggers concert, *Bach Celebration Series*, at B.U. Fine Arts 21
- Saturday, **Dec. 5** -- BTOS presents Third Annual Christmas Show at the Forum
- Sunday, **Dec. 27** -- 5 pm Post-Holiday Gathering at the Spot Restaurant, Upper Front St.
- Saturday, **Jan. 9** -- 9:30 am Chapter Board Meeting (elected officers and standing committee chairpersons)
- Saturday, **Jan. 9** (7:30 pm) and Sunday, **Jan. 10** (4 pm) *Ceremony and Celebration for Twelfth Night* by the Madrigal Choir at Church of the Holy Trinity, Prospect St., Binghamton
- Saturday, **Jan 23** 9:30 am Wayne Leupold Organ Demonstrators for Young People at Grace Lutheran Church, 709 Main St., Vestal; Jean Henssler, coordinator
- Monday, **Feb. 1** – 6 pm Clergy/Musicians Dinner at First Presbyterian Church, Owego, NY; \$10 for AGO members and friends; AGO chapter to underwrite the cost of clergy and their spouses; Program will include the singing of some new congregational favorites and Evening Vespers; Joan Kellam, coordinator.

