

A Letter From the Dean

Dear Friends and Members,

Our Epiphany Potluck is behind us and it was as usual a very enjoyable gathering, with time for chatting together and enjoying tasty treats! We are looking ahead to some fascinating programming this winter and spring, (as well as likely some lousy weather...)

Keep in mind our meeting this coming Tuesday night at 7pm with Rick Van Oss and his pastor/s at First Reformed in Holland, in the next session of our Clergy-Musician Forum. And our March meeting with bring Larry Visser all the way from Grand Rapids and his post at the mighty organ of LaGrave CRC. Invite an organ fan to attend this session that will feature his music on the recently renovated organ at Second Reformed in Zeeland, as well as commentary and descriptions by Dr. Visser himself.

I have become I suppose the unofficial organist of the Holland group called Christians United in Song and Prayer (CUSP), which holds two services yearly, full of congregational song and choral music, supporting ecumenical connections in our community. If, like most organists, you don't have many chances to sit out in the congregation and sing, you might enjoy putting this on your calendar. Their services are held the Sunday before Thanksgiving and the third Sunday of January. Bob Batastini (former head of GIA publications in Chicago, and now during retirement very involved in the music ministry at St Francis here in Holland) directs the choir and music, and does a lovely job. Organists and pianists often have ample opportunity to observe (/judge) choir directors' skills, both musical and people, and I have loved playing under Bob! So let that be an endorsement. Also, he picks wonderful music, and thanks to GIA, there is always something new to discover. So come on Sunday afternoon to enjoy the service, or come Saturday morning to the choir rehearsal, to let someone else do the rehearsing, and enjoy singing choral music in a choir made up of folks from all over Holland, and even some from further away. There was a choir of about 50 this January, and I know Bob will be happy to welcome more next year. (See their website cuspholland.org for information on participating. Ed.)

Thanks for the response to my call last month for pianists to play at the Freedom Village Inn for residents. I have a plan in mind for how to coordinate our efforts, and just need to take the time to implement it (with the help of my engineer husband...), and then I will be in touch. I'm also planning on having Mike's piano tuned in the next weeks as well, because it's always more fun to play on a tuned piano!

Because your local Holland AGO helped to sponsor the Music of Japan concert that happened at Dimnent last October, and I know not all of you could be there, I wanted to spread the word that the event was well-attended and well-received. Thank you so much for your support of an unusual program. Gordon has written a summary of the evening, if you couldn't attend. In case this whets your appetite, we are repeating the concert on Sunday, February 16 at First United Methodist church in Grand Rapids at 3pm.

Fujin Raijin – God of Wind, God of Thunder: Music of Japan

Dimnent Chapel was the scene for this extraordinary event on Friday, October 18, 2019, co-sponsored by the Holland Area AGO and Hope College departments. The brainchild of Dean Rhonda Edgington,

the concert brought together an ensemble never before heard by this writer: pipe organ(s), marimba, voice, and Taiko drums of several sizes. These were ably played by Ken Koshio, Carolyn Koebel, and the Michigan Hiryu Daiko (with Sensei Esther Vandercar and Wyatt Harris) on Taiko; Mark Lopez on marimba; JungWoo Kim as vocalist; and Rhonda Edgington on organ.

Listeners were encouraged to set aside their usual expectations of musical form and tonality, and to simply take in the experience of music that is less familiar to most of us; to step into the Japanese culture that would honor the “God of Wind, God of Thunder” (the wind of pipes and voices, the thunder of percussion).

The opening daiko solo on the large drum gave us a glimpse of the sounds prepared for the evening. Koshio’s vocalising gave way to the drumming which demonstrated a full range of timbres, volumes, tempi, simple and complex rhythms—not to mention the physical fitness and aerobics needed to perform such a piece!—while telling a story. Similarly, the selections by Michigan Hiryu Daiko presented a dialogue between sets of drums which by their expression told stories of conquest and resistance.

Two highlights of the evening included ensembles of organ and other instruments. “Fujin Raijin” for organ and taiko was the inspiration for this event, when Rhonda heard it in Europe and wished to bring it home. It consisted of three movements, using both the chancel and gallery organs and an array of taiko next to the console. Using both organs allowed for nuanced sonorities between the movements. A world premiere closed the evening’s program, involving all of the featured instruments and performers. “Gridwork” by Carson Cooman was commissioned for the event, and was financially supported by the San Francisco Chapter of the AGO.

The evening also had several more melodic selections. The organ fantasy on “Sakura sakura” sounded every bit as complex and challenging as anything on master class exams. “Land” on marimba sparkled. Baritone JungWoo Kim sang three songs representative of the Japanese canon. Koshio provided a more casual time with selections on the shinobue and sanshin. (Think of a Japanese traverse flute and Okinawan three-string banjo respectively.)

I think it’s fair to say that the music of the evening was a challenge, both to performers and listeners, but a challenge worth undertaking. We heard unfamiliar patterns and motifs. We did not always know when songs were complete or when to begin the applause. We heard overtones from drums that created their own music. We heard and saw Japanese legends told without words. It was a rare opportunity to hear instruments and compositions that were surprising, mysterious, and thrilling.

- Submitted by Gordon Bruns

Thank you for supporting the efforts of your Holland AGO, and we look forward to seeing you in the upcoming months at one of our programs.

Rhonda

2019-2020 Holland AGO Program Schedule

Tue, Feb 4, 7 pm – Clergy-Musician Forum at First Reformed with Rick VanOss and Dan Gillett

Mon, March 23, 7 pm – Local Composer Forum with Larry Visser at Second Reformed in Zeeland

Mon, April 20, 7 pm – The Aging Voice with Linda Dykstra at Hope College choral rehearsal room

Mon, May 18, 7 pm – Handbells with Larry and Carla Sue at Third Reformed

June, TBA – End of year Potluck

Chapter Officers for 2019-2020

Dean - Rhonda Edgington

Sub-Dean – Linda Fulton

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2019-2020 Calendar		
Tue Feb 4, 7:00 p.m.	Musician-Clergy Relations: Rick Van Oss and Dan Gillett	First Reformed Church, Holland
Mon Mar 23, 7:00 p.m.	Local Composer Forum with Larry Visser	Second Reformed Church, Zeeland
Mon Apr 20, 7:00 p.m.	The Aging Voice with Linda Dykstra	Hope College, Jack Miller Center choral rehearsal room
Mon May 18, 7:00 p.m.	Handbells: Larry and Carla Sue	Third Reformed Church, Holland
Jun TBA	Annual Picnic	TBA