

A Letter From the Dean

Dear Members,

Here it is, mid-July already, and despite the lack of usual concerts and events, there are a couple organ-events next week I wanted to draw your attention to in this newsletter.

The major one is the AGO OrganFest 2020, organized to take the place of the national convention that was to happen this month in Atlanta. Five evenings worth of fascinating programs by stellar artists, taking place Monday, July 20 through Friday, July 24 on the AGO website.

Worth noting – numerous nights include performances by Aaron Tan, who we heard in an AGO presentation at Hope College a few years back, and who is now a STAR! Also, Tuesday evening's commission is written by Brenda Portman, who played a fabulous program on the Casavant in the concert hall at Hope recently as well. Each evening will contain shorter selections by other organists on various organs, as well as a choral work, interview with the commissioned composers, and a newly commissioned work from the convention program. Looks like an exciting and innovative event.

Coincidentally, I have also planned a livestream organ concert at Hope Church for Wednesday, July 22 at 7pm on the Hope Church Facebook page. (I planned the date around various life conflicts, before knowing about the Organ Fest – alas!) I'll be joined by friend and colleague Jordan VanHemert on saxophone for a few contemporary selections for organ and sax, as well as playing pieces by Bach, Mendelssohn, Diemessieux, and A. Hailstork.

A few members have shared with me about their church's recent worship developments - Jim Eisenhauer at Peace Lutheran said since June they have had a few services outdoors, and he plays an electronic keyboard, but there is no singing.

Gordon Bruns at Second Reformed in Zeeland said they have also had some outdoor services recently, in the green area beside the church. He decided to simply roll their acoustic piano out the door and use that for music. The congregation sat socially distanced from one another, and they did sing, though were lead by worship leaders. Gordon reports that you can't hear much from fellow congregants when they are sitting far from each other while singing outside!

He also reports they will have their first service with congregation present indoors on August 2.

Jane Bosko at Harderwyck says they will have their first livestream service with congregation this coming week – with masks and no singing, but she'll be playing hymns.

I'm sure others would love to hear from some of your stories – feel free to share with members.

Here is a note from the Winchester, Virginia chapter of the AGO about a “virtual organ concert” they recently organized.

Greetings from Winchester! At the suggestion of Elizabeth George at National I am sharing with you information about an online virtual concert we are posting on our website. I anticipate the concert will be up over the summer, so there is no hurry to visit, but it will be available beginning this **Sunday, June 21**. No particular theme, just a little joy to celebrate summer and creatively promote the organ whilst under a concert ban (we are joined by a few pianists and guest trumpeters). Our website where

you can "attend" the concert is www.winchesterago.com We would be grateful if you would share our invitation with your membership and any other organ enthusiasts you know. FREE and open to anyone on the web!

I hope you are finding ways to stay busy and active, despite restrictions and safety measures.
Happy Summer!

Best wishes, Rhonda

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