

A Letter From the Dean

Dear Members,

It's now October, and a fall chill fills the air. Not just the weather, and the dip in temperatures, but I think there is a collective weight we all bear this fall that's something different from previous years. Entering winter with no end in sight to the chill of political division, racial disparity, death and economic hardship due to COVID, and simply the knowledge that soon, we won't be able to sit outside with our friends and family anymore – at restaurants, to visit with those outside our families, or in small church groups. It feels like a harder fall than any in my memory.

In spite of all that, it does bring some joy to my life to continue to make music, and I hope the same is true for you as well, whether that is at your church (live or livestream), with friends and family, or simply by yourself, learning new pieces or playing ones you've known for years.

I found this short story in a NPR piece about the pianist Andras Schiff that connects to this last point.

“When he was a boy, Andras Schiff labored over the tedious, repetitive finger studies that are universally loathed by aspiring pianists. He thought they were like spinach: yucky, but good for you if you want to grow up to be big and strong ... on the piano keyboard. But Schiff needed to improve his dexterity and thought this was the only way. He soon realized, though, that he didn't need what he called 'those silly exercises' after he found J.S. Bach. 'Bach gives me that and much more.' Schiff told me while seated at a piano at the 92nd Street Y in New York. 'It gives me emotional, intellectual and physical pleasure and satisfaction.'

“Schiff threw away his dreary workbooks and began playing Bach's preludes and fugues from the *Well-Tempered Clavier* instead. More than 50 years later, he still does: 'Every day of my life, I start with playing Bach, usually for about an hour, sometimes even before breakfast! It's like taking care of your inner hygiene. There is something very pure about it.' ”

What do you keep coming back to, that feeds your soul? Why don't you get that music out today and play – maybe not for an hour (we're not all Andras Schiff...) but ten minutes? I have a hunch it will bring your soul something much better and more satisfying than reading the news.

Rhonda

The Last Weekend in September, 2020 – by Karen Howells

After remaining masked and social distanced for over 6 months, Holland AGO celebrated the season in a wonderful way. Two special events happened this weekend. I hope you had a chance to catch them. They were a treat for many of us who have had little chance to hear live music.

Saturday evening, September 26, 2020 Rhonda Edgington played the 2018 Martin Pasi organ at Grace Episcopal Church. She was joined by Jordan VanHemert on saxophone on several pieces. If you

missed this concert, perhaps you can find it on the Facebook page of Hope Church, Holland. Rhonda selected pieces from many old and new sources and gave a brief description of them before playing.

And on what was a lovely fall Sunday afternoon we sat on the lawn of First Reformed Church in our lawn chairs, some of us sporting our favorite face masks and listened to Larry and Carla Sue ring handbells. What a treat! The weather cooperated and it was a relaxing, enjoyable experience. And a few people walking by stopped to listen to the performance. Larry and Carla Sue also answered questions about technique involved in properly ringing bells and also how to ring as many as four bells per person. One can read more about the performers at their website: <https://larryandcarla.com/events/>. Thus begins the Holland AGO year. More wonderful experiences will be coming. Stay tuned as we together create ways to gather safely to enjoy good music with good friends.

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