

A Letter From the Dean

Dear Members,

This was to be the December newsletter issue, but December just got the best of me, and so my apologies. Then I was going to send it out before the New Year, and you see how that went as well. Perhaps no one had time to read the newsletter before now anyway!

It was great to see many of you in November for our program at Third Reformed with Kola Owolabi from University of Michigan. Julia has kindly written about his presentation, and that follows my letter.

Today I thought I'd share a little story in hope it might offer you something – inspiration, amusement, or just a shared story of music making.

This fall, as I was practicing Calvin Hampton's Five Dances, I read for the umpteenth time in the score's introduction about his infamous Friday Midnight Recitals in Manhattan at the church where he worked in the 80's, and thought how interesting that must have been, to have an organ concert be an exciting nightlife event. This inspired a train of thought in my head that had me wondering if I could do something similar here in Holland. Discussion with various folks at Hope Church (a place where people are always interested in hearing crazy new ideas) proved that there was lots of interest and motivation to explore this idea more. It evolved into a Late Night (11:30 to midnight) Music and Lights event. Planned during finals week at Hope College, it ended with coffee and doughnuts, and was targeted at students who were up late studying.

An artist in our congregation helped me brainstorm ways to make the lighting in the sanctuary look not like a typical Sunday morning. We bought pulsing Christmas lights, and strung them up at the front of the sanctuary, as well as having candles around in the windows, turning the main lights off, and using colored lights around the perimeter of the room.

We also wanted this not to feel like a formal classical concert. We advertised that folks could bring a pillow or sleeping bag, and lie on the floor or a pew, or wander around the space as I played. I partnered with our pastoral intern who works with our 20/30 college group, to think of ways to advertise to the college, and what might appeal to that age range.

As the day approached, my main worries were about how I would play a short recital at an hour when I was usually sleeping, and my fear that no one would actually come, and I would have stayed up late for nothing! However, we were all very happy with the evening. There was a nice supportive group of faculty who are Hope Church members - up late grading - plus students who came to have a break from studying. While the sanctuary was not filled by any means, a friend encouraged me that the yardstick for measuring the success of an event like this one does not need to be the one, discouraging question we often hear in church work - "so, how many people were there?" For me, the fact that I got a lot of people excited about trying something new, we put together a plan that worked and we'd like to try again, and we had a decent group of folks with a great spirit that evening, were enough to make the effort feel worthwhile.

I encourage you as well, even if a midnight organ and doughnut concert isn't quite your cup of tea, to think of ways you can find new energy about your organ playing or job. For me, trying new ideas is one thing that keeps me excited about what I'm doing.

And as you prepare for something new, or afterwards, as you are assessing the success of the event, bear this in mind – whose yardstick are you using to measure? Does more people in the seats necessarily equal a more successful event? Don't let the naysayers (either in your congregation, or in your head!) talk you out of appreciating or seeing what really happened – the excitement in someone's voice as they talk with you about what they heard, new people in your building, the momentum building around you and your colleagues, as we dream together about what could be possible.

For me, I'm dreaming of a white Christmas! (oh wait, never mind...) No, but I'm looking forward to our now-annual January AGO party. As usual, we'll have a potluck – bring something to share. Students are heartily invited, and need not bring anything. I'll have my kids along, at least for a bit (whether that is a deterrent or a motivation to attend is up to personal discretion).

This will be on Monday, January 11 at 6pm at the Pillar Church Community Room located at 200 E. 14th street.

February 9 we are looking forward to the inaugural recital on the Casavant at Hope College – with our own Dr. Huw Lewis playing, as well as Dr. Andrew Le inaugurating the new Steinway in the hall. We'll plan to meet before this concert for dinner together somewhere nearby – details to follow...

Also – mark your calendars! Tuesday, May 24 at 7pm, our chapter (plus other local AGO chapters) will have to chance to have our very own private event on the new Casavant at Hope College. Details of this program are still being worked out, but Huw will be with us, demonstrating and explaining the instrument, and we look forward to more up close and personal time with the newest instrument in town. Make plans to be there!

Best wishes for the new year – hope to see you next week.

Rhonda

Our November Program: by Julia Collingsworth

On Monday, November 9 a number of members gathered around the console at Third Reformed to hear suggestions on Repertoire for Preludes and Postludes: Some Hidden Gems. Our performer/lecturer was Kola Owalabi, Associate Professor of Organ at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

A native of Toronto, Canada, he received his advanced training at Yale and Eastman School of Music, and previously taught at Syracuse University. He is a published composer, and his organ solo, Dance, was among the selections performed by RCCO members for the National Competition for Organists in 2013.

He is an active member of the Guild, having served as dean and sub-dean for the Syracuse Chapter. He won second place in the AGO Young Artists' Competition for Organ Performance in 2002, and performed at the 2014 National Convention.

The categories for his presentation were as follows: Canadian music, which was three pieces by Denis Bedard; American composers Hancock, Utterback and Gerald Near; German baroque which included Pachelbel, Walther, and Krebs; and Romantic literature by Niels Gade and C.H. Parry. These were presented both by performance and recordings. It was helpful that he listed the length of each piece in minutes.

Especially interesting to this member were the Two Spirituals in Jazz Style by Joe Utterback (Steal Away and Little David Play on Your Harp), Opus 22 of Niels Gade (Mendelssohn's successor) which are good postlude material, and Johann L. Krebs Complete Works for Organ and Obligato Instrument which included 20 pieces for organ and oboe (could use flute or violin) and one with trumpet (Wachet Auf).

It was an inspiring program by a person with many credentials. At the same time, he was personable and down to earth.

Chapter Officers for 2015-2016

Dean - Rhonda Edgington

Sub-Dean - Julia Collingsworth

Secretary - Judy Koeman

Treasurer - Gordon Bruns

Board Members - Roberta Kraft, Jim Folkert

Hope College Student Board Member - Jonathan Bading

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Newsletter Editor - Paul Dalman

Website - hollandareaago.org

2015-2016 Calendar		
Mon Jan 11, 6:00 p.m.	Annual Chapter Winter Potluck and Gathering	Pillar Community Room (200 E. 14th St.)
Tue Feb 9	Official Inauguration of the new Casavant and Steinway - Huw Lewis and Andrew Le	Hope College Jack H. Miller Center for Musical Arts
Tue Mar 1	Organ Recital - David Baskeyfield	Hope College Jack H. Miller Center for Musical Arts
Tue Mar 15, 7:30 p.m.	Posture at the Organ - Micah Vanderhill	14th St. CRC
Tue April 5	Organ Recital - Clive Driskill-Smith	Hope College Jack H. Miller Center for Musical Arts
Tue Apr 19	Kingston Harpsichord Recital - Greg Crowell	Hope College Jack H. Miller Center for Musical Arts
Tue May 24, 7:00 p.m.	Music Hall Casavant Demonstration - Huw Lewis	Hope College Jack H. Miller Center for Musical Arts

