DENVER DRAWKNOB

Newsletter of the Denver Rocky Mountain Chapter
American Guild of Organists

October 2026

Two Events, One Personality
John Dixon

Saturday, October 3, 9:30-11:30 a.m.

A Composer's Perspective on Commissioning

Augustana Lutheran Church
5000 E. Alameda Ave, Denver

In this workshop, John Dixon will review the commissioning process, providing free copies of several of his compositions and offering tips for fundraising. Join us for coffee and refreshments beginning at 9 a.m. Music swap will be available. Free and open to the public.

Sunday, October 4, 4:00 p.m.

A 250th Anniversary Tribute to America

(cosponsored with Augustana Arts)
Augustana Lutheran Church, Denver

John Dixon, a native of England, was active in music and theater during his undergraduate studies at Oxford and graduate studies at Harvard. After moving permanently to the United States, he became organist-composer in residence at Providence Presbyterian Church in Virginia Beach, Va. John was recently National Treasurer of the AGO, and he received the Edward A. Hansen Award for Outstanding Leadership at the recent National Convention in St. Louis.



His many published choir anthems and organ pieces have been performed all over the world. With this Colorado concert, co-sponsored by Augustana Arts, Dixon will complete a 10-year project to perform recitals in all 50 states. He will be performing his own music, with a special focus on Americana in celebration of the Semiquincentennial. Free and open to the public (suggested donation: $20 per person). Seating is general admission, but advance reservations are requested; to reserve seats, click here. A reception and music swap will follow the recital. This concert will be livestreamed on Augustana Lutheran Church's main YouTube page. To view the program, click here.

Summer Scholarship Wrap-up

Wow, what an afternoon! Our six scholars who studied with faculty members Cindy Lindeen-Martin and Phil Bordeleau presented a lovely program on Sunday afternoon, August 30, 2026.

A few highlights: The excitement at the St. Paul Center was palpable. This **venue** was special for a number of reasons. Most of us have many favorite musical memories from St. Paul Lutheran Church — always filled with excellent music. What a history! Now it will be a lovely arts center with a large pipe organ, in which we will create more musical memories.

How special to have a **former Summer Scholar**, Joel Trekell, return as a guest artist. It was inspiring for our scholars and their families. He will play his first concert as the new Director of Sacred Music at the Basilica on October 18. We can all enjoy hearing him play again.

Remarkable Attendance — A larger attendance than in recent years, with many of our long-time

THE DRAWKNOB
Published by the Denver Rocky Mountain Chapter
American Guild of Organists

All items for publication must be submitted by the 20th of the month preceding publication.

General items to the editor, Thomas Strickland, phone: 720-980-, e-mail: DrawknobEditor@myctl.net

Employment Opportunities and Facebook Coordinator
Isaac Johnson, karl.isaac.johnson@gmail.com

Webmaster: David Vogels, CAGO, dsvogels3@gmail.com

Dean: Brian du Fresne, AAGO, briandufresne1@gmail.com
Sub-Dean: Aaron Hirsch, aaronhirsch152@gmail.com
Secretary: Barbara Hulac, blhulac@hotmail.com
Treasurer: Cathy Bruno
Registrar: Liam Harty, SPC

Members at Large:
Yinying Luo, Kathryn Walsh (2027)
Rhonda Jones, Cindy Lindeen-Martin, Norman Sutphin (2028)
Gwen Blumenschein, Isaac Johnson (2029)

Chapter address, Website address, and Facebook
P.O. Box 101448, Denver, CO 80250-1448
www.agodrmc.org
https://www.facebook.com/agodenver

AGO members in attendance. It was lovely to see them and the fellowship enjoyed long after the concert was complete. But then, who wants to miss seeing old friends and a delicious Linda Mack reception or our music swap?



Students and faculty: Madelyn Ellsworth, Aniva Carpenter, faculty Cindy Lindeen-Martin, Alyss Thurmond, Johnny Watabe, Natalie Voida, faculty Phil Bordeleau, and Natalie Ellsworth. Photo by Aaron Hirsch.

For the ones of you who do not know much about our Program, I am including a brief synopsis of inner workings. The **Scholarship Program**, in existence for over 30 years takes an enormous amount of work and volunteer hours. There are SO many ways to get involved and help out. The program begins with getting the word out to area piano teachers who refer their students for the scholarship program. The student applications need to be reviewed and applicants scheduled for their auditions. Members become audition judges. Applicants are then informed whether or not they receive a scholarship and that is when the work begins! Faculty are selected and teaching and practice sites are selected. Administrative work for faculty and students must be completed in order for our program to begin. Teachers are assigned students and the hard work of scheduling lessons begins. After a summer of six lessons, the students are presented in concert.

Thanks to our volunteers: (hopefully I have not missed anyone) Cathy Bruno, Zach Gonzales, Linda and Ed Mack, Aaron Hirsch, Denise Lansing, Tom Strickland, and Deans Andy Peters and Brian du Fresne. The Church of the Ascension, Denver, Colorado served as the teaching site for the entire program this year. A huge thanks to Cindy Lindeen-Martin who coordinated this opportunity for our students and to the Rev Dr. Cheryl McFadden, Rector and the staff of the Church of the Ascension, who provided their church and instrument

Thanks to all of those in our chapter who, over the years have provided support to this very special effort. I hope that many of you will want to become involved in this important program.

Lastly, I applaud our young organists, their families and prep piano teachers. Here's to a spectacular AGO year!

Billie Busby Smith
DRMC AGO Scholarship Coordinator



The Sub-Dean's Stop

It is my pleasure to serve as the Denver Rocky Mountain Chapter's Sub-Dean, and look forward to getting to know more of my peers, the instruments in the region, and working on our program offerings each season. The next Chapter Members Recital will be held on Friday, March 5 at 7:30pm, at First Plymouth UCC (3501 S Colorado Blvd., Cherry Hills Village), and you are all cordially encouraged to attend this wonderful offering.

This year's theme is "After Bach," and is an exploration of works by composers inspired by Johann Sebastian Bach. Some organists are presenting works utilizing a musical theme derived from Bach's name (B.A.C.H., aka B-flat, A, C, B natural), while others might present works by students or children of Bach. Still, others have found some exciting deconstructions of famous Bach works, offering a fresh color palette while giving homage to J.S.'s creativity. Marcel Dupré wrote his *Seventy-Nine Chorales* using the same organization of Bach's *Orgelbüchlein*. Perhaps some of the most famous of Bach's perhaps-not-by-Bach works is the *Eight Little Preludes and Fugues* collection, generally believed to have been written by one of his students.

We are still looking for some musical acts for this performance. Please feel free to drop me a message by emailing me at ahirsch@stjohnsboulder.org. Do you have a student who has learned a work that was inspired by the great Johann Sebastian Bach? We would love to include them. Considering the great success of the Organ Scholarship Concert in August, we indeed have a robust chapter with a strong indication that the future of organ music in our region is secured. I hope you can join in this excitement by attending and/or performing at our member's recital. Of course, I do hope to see you at all the other chapter events this season as well.

Aaron Hirsch, Sub-Dean

Reflections on Our Wonderful Trip to Three Choirs Festival.

Barbara and Peter Hulac

We have had the extraordinary privilege of attending about ten Three Choirs Festivals in recent years. Lest anyone worry that we think that is a big record, we must add that the festival is thought to have begun in about 1715, when Bach and Handel were just 30 years old. The festival rotates among the three cathedral cities of Worcester, Hereford, and Gloucester. The link just below gives a more full history:

Our History | Three Choirs Festival

As always, the local members of the Festival were warmhearted hosts. In addition, Rich Arenschieldt, the chair of the "American Friends of the Three Choirs Festival," worked tirelessly to help us Americans enjoy the week.



Photo by David Hulac

During the 2026 festival, held in Gloucester during the last week of July, we were honored to have our three grown children with us. Each of them is a fine musician, and they were all deeply moved by the music, including evening performances of major works like William Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast,* Rachmaninov*'s Vespers,* and Beethoven's *Mass in C*. Many of these major works were accompanied by the Philharmonia Orchestra, which moved into Gloucester for the week.

Thomas Ospital performed the celebrity organ recital on the cathedral's magnificent, newly-installed Nicholson & Co. organ. He performed Dupré's "Symphonie-Passion" and continued with his own transcription of Ravel's "Le Tombeau de Couperin." He ended with an improvisation on two themes, one of which was the tune for the American National Anthem. (Loyal residents of Gloucester are proud to note that the music was originally composed by John Stafford Smith, a Gloucester-born musician.) The link below gives more information about the new organ.

Discover our new Cathedral organ | Gloucester Cathedral

There were also many other events during the week, like organ recitals, solo concerts, lectures, and musical and drama events for children.

Next year's festival will be in Worcester. The dates are July 24 through 31. Major works, performed in the evenings, will include Britten's *War Requiem,* Vaughan Williams' *Serenade to Music,* Handel Coronation Anthems, Cecilia McDowall's *Songs of Exile,* Haydn's *Lord Nelson Mass,* Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas,* Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis,* and world premieres of new music. The daytime hours will also be full of opportunities to be awed, to learn, and to experience some of the planet's finest music.

For anyone who would like any information about attending a future festival, and for anyone else who would like to chat about it, please reach out to us:

BLHulac@hotmail.com
Hulac.Peter@aol.com
Rich Arenschieldt can be reached at
Rarenschieldt@aol.com

The Dean's Mixture

Last month I wrote about belonging and my hope that the Denver Rocky Mountain Chapter will continue to be a place where organists at every stage of their lives and careers feel welcome, supported, and encouraged to participate.

Our new Board met for the first time in September, and I came away from that evening genuinely energized. I began the meeting by saying that one of my most important jobs right now is to listen and learn. So before we got down to business, I asked everyone around the table one question: What is one thing you hope this Board—or this chapter—can accomplish?

The answers were wonderfully varied, but I was struck by how often they connected. We talked about better communication, bringing more people to chapter events, welcoming organists serving in all kinds of positions, introducing young musicians to the organ, strengthening membership, and finding more ways for people to know and support one another.

In other words, we have plenty to do! But even more encouraging to me was the sense that we want many of the same things.

Some of that good work is already happening. I am enormously grateful to Aaron Hirsch, our Sub-Dean, and the Program Committee for the thought and energy going into this year's programs. And I want to offer particular thanks to Billie and everyone involved with the Scholarship Program and the wonderful Scholarship Student Recital in August. One statistic shared at the Board meeting made me especially happy: all six of this year's scholarship students have become members of the AGO. That seems worth celebrating.

As the year continues, I hope we'll keep asking not only what programs we can offer, but what kind of chapter we want to be. When someone comes to a chapter event—particularly someone who doesn't already know everyone—what lets them know that they belong there?

I'm looking forward to finding more answers to that question together.

Brian du Fresne, AAGO
Dean

Chriss at St. John's Cathedral

In honor of the 10th anniversary of the installation of the antiphonal organ, Saint John's Cathedral welcomes Alcee Chriss III for what is sure to be an amazing evening, Friday, October 9 at 7:00 pm. This is a free concert with a reception to follow — all are welcome. The Cathedral is located at 1350 Washington St. in downtown Denver



First-prize and Bach prize winner at the 2017 Canadian International Organ Competition, Alcee Chriss III is widely regarded as one of the leading young organists of our time. Previous competition awards include the Firmin Swinnen Silver Medal at the 2016 Longwood Gardens International Organ Competition, First Prize and Audience Prize at the 2016 Fort Wayne National Organ Competition, and First Prize and Audience Prize at the 2014 Miami International Organ Competition. Mr. Chriss serves as University Organist and Artist-in-Residence at Wesleyan University.

Trekell at Basilica

On Sunday, October 18, 3:00 p.m., Joel Trekell performs his inaugural organ recital as Director of Sacred Music at the Cathedral Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, 1530 Logan St, Denver. He is a native of Aurora, Colorado and studied organ and sacred music at Westminster Choir College in Princeton, New Jersey and the University of Houston. He served previously at Trinity Church, Princeton; Hereford Cathedral, UK; St. Paul's, Houston; and Grace and St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Colorado Springs. He is married to Rufina Trekell, a professional soprano and Catholic school teacher. At the Cathedral Basilica, Joel plays the organ for all liturgical celebrations, programs the "Concerts at the Cathedral Basilica," and directs the Cathedral Choir. The concert is free; an offering will be taken.



Halloween in Boulder

On Sunday, October 25, 4:00 pm, the St. John's Music Society presents the Fifth Annual Halloween Organ Concert. Held at St. John's Episcopal Church, 1419 Pine St., Boulder, this free concert features organists Aaron Hirsch, David Vogels, Lydia Morrongiello, Andrew Todd, and Mark Sallee. This is a family-friendly concert, and you are encouraged to dress in costume! There will be a free-will offering and a light reception with costume contest. Hope to see you there!



Looking Ahead . . .

Sunday, November 15, 4:00 p.m.
Grace Lutheran Church, Parker
Recital by **Kevin Hildebrand,** Kantor at Concordia Theological Seminary Fort Wayne

Annual Historic Organ Tour

Saturday, December 5, 9 a.m.-noon
Park Hill UCC, St. Thomas Episcopal Church, Park Hill UMC

This popular holiday event, cosponsored with Historic Denver, returns to Park Hill in 2026, visiting three churches with diverse and historically interesting architecture and pipe organs. At each venue, the building's history will be described, and the organ will be demonstrated with holiday fare.

Organist Still Sought for Meantone Performance

Michael McNeil has built an organ in Baroque style in meantone temperament. This instrument is featured in the October 2026 issue of *The Diapason* with sound clips. He wishes to hire someone to do a demonstration of the organ playing the any toccata, prelude, or fugue by Buxtehude or Bruhns. He is not expecting perfect perfect performances, but a demonstration of the sound and temperament. Contact him about a charge per hour and travel expenses to Mead (about a half-hour north of Denver). Michael McNeil, 321 Seventh Street, Mead, CO 80542, cell: 720-308-5740

Positions Available

Listings should be sent to Isaac Johnson; contact information on page 2.

St. Joan Of Arc Catholic Church in Arvada seeks a Director of Sacred Music. A very detailed job description and application information are available here.
To Apply:
Send resume and cover letter within the job board application process.
NON-EXEMPT WAGE RANGE
$25.00 - $33.00 per hour (*Exempt Salary Range $52,000.00 - $70,000.00)
ANTICIPATED START DATE September 2026

Piano and Organ Accompanist, part time, **Good Shepherd Catholic Church,** Denver, Colorado
Primary Responsibilities
Accompany the Adult Choir during rehearsals on Thursday evenings from 6:30–8:30 PM and at the 8:30 AM and 10:30 AM Sunday Mass each week. Accompany the 8:15 AM School Mass on Wednesday mornings and Children's Choir Wednesday rehearsal from 6:00-6:50 PM (2-3 times during the choir season). Optional opportunities to substitute for other weekend Masses, based on availability, qualifications, and interest.
Qualifications
Proficiency in piano and organ performance, especially in a liturgical/church setting. Familiarity with Catholic liturgy and sacred music (preferred). Ability to collaborate with choir directors and singers of varying skill levels and ages.
Compensation
This is a paid position, compensated at $175 per unit - e.g., accompanying a rehearsal = 1 unit, one Mass = 1 unit. Average of 3-4 units per week.

To apply, please send your resume and a brief statement of interest to natalie.thompson@goodshepherddenver.org or apply directly through Paylocity - https://recruiting.paylocity.com/recruiting/jobs/Apply/4344327.

The mission of the American Guild of Organists is to foster a thriving community of musicians who share their knowledge and inspire passion for the organ.
To do this, we encourage excellence in the performance of organ and choral music; inspire, educate, and offer certification for organists and choral conductors; provide networking, fellowship, and mutual support; nurture future generations of organists; promote the organ in its historic and evolving roles; and engage wider audiences with organ and choral music.

