



Reverberations

The Newsletter of the Northern NJ Chapter American Guild of Organists February 2021

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Facebook: Northern New Jersey Chapter of the American Guild of Organists **Instagram:** [northernnjago](https://www.instagram.com/northernnjago)

Dear Chapter Members:

I hope this finds you persevering and doing well. The last two winters have been so mild, I had forgotten about the evils of snow shoveling, but right now my shoulders and back have sent me a dynamic reminder!

In 2021 our chapter is looking forward to some new and exciting events. On Feb. 15, we will be hearing Rodland Scholarship winner Michael Caraher in a virtual recital and on March 15 we will look forward to a presentation by organist Jason Roberts.

And let's all keep watch for Shannon Murphy's new interview series at the new chapter YouTube channel she recently launched. Each week Shannon will be interviewing one of our members about their personal experiences regarding their church/organ job history.

This season Shannon has been working very hard for us on Programming, the OrgelKit Project, and now this new interview series which will help bring our members in closer proximity to one another. We are very lucky and grateful to have such an eager and talented musician in our midst putting so much effort in to making the NNJ Chapter more vital than it already is.

In addition to attending our upcoming events, I urge you to especially support Shannon's efforts by tuning into her interview series and becoming more acquainted with our current members. You won't be disappointed. Enjoy!

*Thank you.
June Marano-Murray, Dean*

Editor's Notes

CHECK OUT THE AGO VIDEOS! When I was hiking in the mountains behind my condo, I listened to an "[AGO MASTER SERIES VIDEO](https://www.agohq.org/education/educational-resources/)" highlighting the legacy of Gerre Hancock at St. Thomas Church. This touching tribute to Gerre's life (in 3 separate videos) brought tears to my eyes! This video is worth your time! My next hike = Fred Swann! Access to the videos: <https://www.agohq.org/education/educational-resources/>

MEET OUR MEMBERS! See interviews with our chapter's members on our social media platforms!

Introducing a new INTERVIEW SERIES on our [FaceBook / Instagram / Youtube pages](#). Members of our chapter share their musical experiences, how they came to play the organ, highlights from their work in the field, and much more! Installments are posted every Monday. This is one way we can continue connecting during this time of virtual living. Please view, comment, and share! Thank you to Shannon Murphy, the host and producer of these postings.

NNJ CHAPTER MEETINGS

Our FEBRUARY Meeting

MONDAY Feb 15, 2021 7:30

MICHAEL TERRY CARAHER **RECEPIENT OF THE RODLAND SCHOLARSHIP** **ST. OLAF COLLEGE, NORTHFIELD MN**

Michael Terry Caraher is a senior at St. Olaf College in Northfield, MN. He is an organ student of Dr. Catherine Rodland and is pursuing his B.M. in Church Music (organ emphasis) and B.A. in American Studies.

In summer 2019, Michael was named a 2020 AGO Rising Star after winning the North-Central Regional Quimby/RCYO competition and was to have performed at the AGO National Convention in Atlanta, Ga. which was cancelled because of Covid-19.

TIME LINE:

7:00 P.M. – Meeting opens so people can get online. Remain muted and enter your questions in the chat box.

7:30 P.M. – Welcome by the Chapter leadership, programming news and conversation with Michael.

8:00 P.M. – Michael's video begins. Callers have audio only.

9:00 P.M. – Return to Zoom for our Q & A with Michael.

ZOOM Access

Join Zoom Meeting: Click <https://bit.ly/3pWIA8q> (Snail_mail folks - copy this link into your browser)

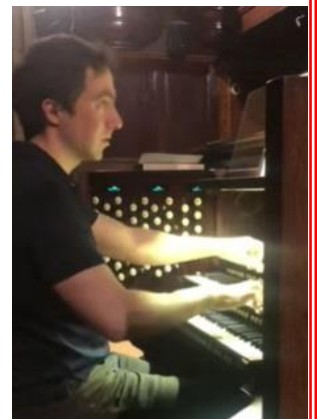
Meeting ID: **828 5869 5352** Passcode: **644239** Dial-in: +1 929 436 2866

Our MARCH Meeting

MONDAY MARCH 15, 2021 7:30

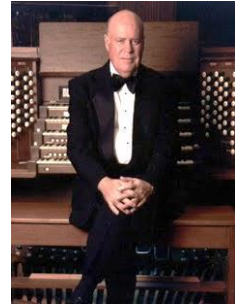
SECRETS OF IMPROVISATION **JASON ROBERTS** **ORGANIST AT BLESSED SACRAMENT, NYC**

Prior to his appointment at Blessed Sacrement, Jason Roberts was Associate Music Director at St. Bartholomew's Church in New York City. He began his musical career as a chorister at St. George's Cathedral in Perth, Western Australia. He is a graduate of Rice University, the Yale Institute of Sacred Music, and the Manhattan School of Music. He is winner of the 2008 American Guild of Organists National Competition in Organ Improvisation and the 2007, and the Albert Schweitzer Organ Competition USA, and he has been a finalist at competitions in St. Albans, England and Haarlem. Join us on ZOOM for this exciting meeting!



In memoriam

John Weaver, one of our finest colleagues entered the Church Triumphant recently. I use the words "finest colleagues" because he was all that those words encompass; a nice man in many ways, a wonderful, yet demanding teacher, and of course a superb church musician. I remember so well playing his "Toccatà" at a NNJAGO master class which he led. One of my favorite colleagues, who shall remain anonymous, in our chapter said to me, "Are you nuts? Playing that piece for him?" (soli Deo GLORIA!)



NNJ AGO MEMBERS' NEWS

This is a new monthly (I hope!) column in our newsletter. We want to hear about of our members. For this month, the following people submitted news. Send your news (with photos!) for next month to: northernnjago@yahoo.com. LET'S KEEP IN TOUCH WITH EACH OTHER!

Alan Neuman: We have both online and in-person services at Old North Reformed Church, in Dumont. We take precautions – hand sanitizers at every door, no taking an offering since we have a plate at the front door, no choirs and singing all the hymns behind masks. I am alone at the organ and the pastor is alone at the pulpit. We wear masks but remove them once we are "on duty." We do the complete liturgy with the exception of the Offertory. We average around 20 souls in the pews – in a church that holds a few hundred. These are strange days and we look forward to some normalcy! God bless us all!

Cathie Rupp: After 9 months of variations of online worship, we at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Harrington Park came into the sanctuary for Advent for online streaming. Candlelight at Christmas Eve, silent singing of Silent Night, etc. Our worship team of 8 or less, includes clergy, readers, tech assistants and organist/pianist.

Louise Olshan: Since I drive an hour to the church where I work, I have been totally spoiled by playing the piano from home using Zoom for the services. The church alternates between Rite I and II, so I am only playing alternating Sundays which provides me with the luxury of attending a virtual church service with one of my sons when I am not playing.

The Episcopal Diocese of New Jersey did a phenomenal job of providing guidelines and information related to reopening. The church needed to submit a length report (approximately 23 pages) before reopening. Hopefully this satisfies both health and legal issues.

My own church was open from the Sunday after Labor Day until just before Thanksgiving. During this time, the Rite II services held in the church did not have any singing, so I recorded a prelude, music for use during communion and a postlude. I recorded these in the church on the organ using my laptop during the week when no one else was there and then sent the recording to several people. One person played it back on Sunday during the service so I did not need to be present. For the Zoom services where I am playing, I am responsible for muting and unmuting myself. The priest and I feel this helps the service move smoothly, though not flawlessly when I forget. The diocese also held weekly meetings focusing on worship issues as we all faced adapting to the technology. Meetings are now held biweekly. It is a great forum to learn, find out what others are doing and be supportive to each other.

Tom Charsky: With the complete shutdown of all churches in March, I like other members of the chapter, missed both playing and singing as a substitute. When churches were permitted to re-open at 25% of capacity, I was again asked to help meet the needs of music directors and organists. Regular Saturday and Sunday services resumed, as did funerals and some very small weddings. For the first time in 39 years, I actually played, sang and conducted for 4 masses on Christmas Eve and Day in two different churches. The "Midnight Mass" in one church featured a socially distant, masked "Schola" of 5 cantors---and a 30 minute carol service with selections in 4 parts!! I was on a Yamaha keyboard for two of the services that took place in a school gym (to help with limited capacity and social distancing in church) and a fine pipe organ for the other service on Christmas Day. I greatly missed being with my family in upstate New York for our annual Christmas Eve gathering---but 27 people from 4 different states could not gather and be safe under the circumstances.

I am blessed to have a 3 manual Johannus digital instrument as well as a Steinway M here at home. I set goals to review organ selections I have not played in many years, as well as learning 3 new Prelude and Fugues and 5 new chorale preludes by J.S. Bach. Online I found two great 20 Minute Piano workout books for warm-ups, and tackled a few pieces from the Well Tempered Clavier (Book1) by Bach and one Beethoven Piano Sonata to celebrate his 250th Anniversary.

Stewart Holmes:

I look out my balcony at the Ramapo Mountains and dream of days past. Before the snow I enjoyed hiking them-thar-hills or biking because our gym and indoor pool remained closed. Now I'm resorting to walking along Ringwood Ave. Not so pretty!

Old Paramus Reformed Church has had both live services (with social distancing of course) and because of our new video and audio system, we can post each service our YouTube and Facebook pages. One interesting innovation is our "Thoughts on Thursday", a 10-15 minute discussion Pastor Rob Miller and I post each week about the coming Sunday service. I love this opportunity to work with him and to talk a little more in-depth about what each of us will be focusing on for up-coming worship.



Kathryn MacCourt

In mid-May, because of the pandemic, our choir members at Grace Episcopal Church, Westwood, began the tedious task of recording music voice by voice, each person using whatever audio equipment was available to them. I learned to edit/mix the audio files each week using open-source (free!) software. Organ accompaniments are added into the mix as needed. The choir has wanted to record every Sunday and Holy Day since then. We present the majority of our music by streaming the audio alongside a PowerPoint with appropriate visual images, and it has been extremely well received.

In planning for Christmas, we wanted to bring everyone together in something new and inclusive, and Lessons and Carols provided a framework where we could do this. The final service was a combination of our many varied talents and included a total of eleven hymns/carols chosen so that our congregation could sing along (from home, muted!) with as many Christmas favorites as possible, each one recorded remotely by a total of ten choristers from our blended choir. Some of the recordings were played using our usual PowerPoint technique, but for a few of the carols, we decided to forego the prepared visuals in favor of allowing the congregation to watch everyone singing along from home. Before each lesson, the children of our churches presented the standard introductions in prepared video clips, generously staged and provided by their parents. The nine lessons were read live online by readers chosen from both churches. Even though our bishop has mandated that we refrain from in-person worship, this turned out to be an effective vehicle for worshipping in community, and was received with great enthusiasm by congregants and choristers alike.

Our ORGELKIT Steering Committee unpacked, set up, and then re-packed our beautiful OrgelKit. It's amazing how easy the process was, even if it was our first time. Plans for introducing it to our membership and setting up the guidelines for use by our chapter members will be implemented when we pull out of this pandemic ~~next week~~, ~~next month~~. How about this summer???

