



Chiff Chat Supplement!!!

November 2021

Review of Recent Dinner and Organ Recital at First Church, Monson by Gay Paluch

On October 3, the First Church of Monson hosted a dinner followed by a recital featuring three organists who performed on the three manual Johnson & Son Organ, Opus 781, 1892. The First Church Music Committee served dinner for eighty guests; the main course featured chicken alfredo, green beans, and pickled beets and was topped by chocolate mousse cake. The recital, funded by a grant from the Monson Cultural Council, was performed by Kiel Krommer, Director of Music at First Church, Michael Lianos, Director of Music and Organist at The Cathedral of Saint Patrick, Norwich CT, and Ian Watson, Director of Music at First Parish in Lincoln MA. The concert was attended by 125 people who thoroughly enjoyed the variety of pieces and the singing of hymns, including the National Anthem.

Dean:

Martha Sienkiewicz

Directors:

Klaus Becker

Lori Bourret

Joe Geehern

Dianne Rechel

Treasurer:

James Barnes

Secretary:

Karen Banta

Chaplain:

Rev. William H. Wallis

News of Future Happenings in Monson! 😊

On December 4th, the First Church Music Committee will hold a ham dinner followed by a concert. The Fanfare Brass under the direction of David Neill will perform as will Kiel Krommer on organ. The audience

will be invited to join in the singing of Christmas carols. Tickets are \$20.00 for the dinner and concert. Contact Gail Pelletier at 413 267 4818 or gail.pelletier73@gmail.com. The Johnson Organ is currently under restoration of the wind supply reservoirs; the project is being undertaken by Czelusniak et Dugal, Inc. and funded by the Monson Community Preservation Committee. The work should be completed by May, 2022. A dedicatory recital by Monica Czausz Berney is planned for October 16, 2022 at 7 P.M.



Performers at October 3rd Concert in Monson
Left to right: Ian Watson, Kiel Krommer, Michael Lianos

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Review of Recent Organ Recital at The Brick Church, Deerfield
by Jean Pitman Turner

Recently on Sunday, October 3, 2021, ‘THE BRICK CHURCH’ MUSIC SERIES presented MARK STEINBACH, organist, in concert at THE FIRST CHURCH of DEERFIELD, in Deerfield, MA. Many members of the AGO Springfield Chapter attended this particular concert anxious to hear an organ recitalist “live” after a long hiatus due to the COVID pandemic. They were joined by about 80 other music lovers to hear this exciting recitalist. Mark Steinbach was not a name I knew before this summer in July. I was asked by my pastor to open up the church and honor Mark’s request to see and play our Opus 13, built by Richards Fowkes, Tracker Organ Builders from Ooltewah, TN. I was pleased to do so, for it would give me the opportunity to “scout” out potential recitalists for the BCMS future concerts. Mark had researched the builders and had played

by his wife Shin-Young Lee. After watching the videos together, Olivier spoke with us live for an hour-long Q&A session. Some of the topics discussed were the last restoration and how wellbalanced the organ is, the differences between French and English organs, descriptions of some of his predecessors, his teachers, the nine pipes from 1402(!) and the history of the site and its previous structures.. Of course we also discussed the current status of restoration efforts at the cathedral and were glad to hear that much progress is being made with approximately 200 workers inside on a daily basis. Because of the overwhelming presence of lead melted by the fire, each person entering has a time limit of two hours after which they must enter a mandatory decontamination area.Olivier has recently published a book called A l'orgue de Notre- Dame, soon to be published in English. The meeting was cohosted by our colleagueThierry van Bastelaer who handled the streaming aspect for us. He is from the DC area and we are most grateful to him.

And Now a Personal Interview with Oliver!

Olivier Latry LIVE Thanks to our friends in the Springfield Chapter of the American Guild of Organists, we were extraordinarily privileged to be invited to join a live Q&A with Olivier Latry, Organiste Titulaire, together with a video presentation of the organ at Notre Dame de Paris as it was before the 2019 fire engulfed the cathedral. Using Watch2Gether technology, we were able to see the master play Bach's famous prelude and Fugue BVW 565, a Daquin Grand Jeu et Duo, and the Finale of Guilmant's Sonata No.1, as well as the exquisite Dupre Cortège et Litany. Olivier Latry joined us from his home in Paris, where generously gave us an hour of his time in informal conversation before demonstrating the delightful three-manual practice organ which he shares with his wife, the organist Shin-Young-Lee. Springfield Chapter: Olivier, thank you for joining us. When the organ is rebuilt, would you like to see it altered in any way? Olivier Latry: No, it is really well-balanced tonally since the 2015 rebuild; if we change it in future, it would be technically rather than tonally. In the 19992 rebuild, we noted that there were some things we would like to change with the wind chests. It wasn't possible to do that then, but the current rebuild after the fire allows the chance to do that. The sound of the organ, though, is very satisfactory as it is.

SC: what are the differences between French and English organs? OL: English organs - including those of the English School found in North America - are more gentle than French ones - much more polite. French organs are rougher in some ways, perhaps reflecting the character of the people and the language itself. The French are very demonstrative, and the reeds of a French organ reflect this - they are much more colourful. When I played Saint-Saens 3rd Symphony in the Royal Albert Hall in London with a French orchestra, they said they had to play completely differently to reflect the sound of an English organ.

SC: You have been at Notre Dome for more than 30 years. Hove any of your predecessors served for as long? OL: Eugène Sergent arrived in 1847 and stayed until his death in 1900, so serving 53 years. He was followed by Louis Vierne, appointed in 1900 and in post until he famously died in office - and at the organ - at the end of a concert in 1937. In fact, I was told about that by my teacher who was at the concert. Pierre Cochereau was appointed in 1955 and in post until his death in 1984, when the tradition of having several titular organists was re-established, and I was appointed along with Philippe Lefebvre, Yves Devernay (who died in 1990) and Jean-Pierre Leguay (who retired in 2015). There are also two titular organists of the Choir Organ, so five of us altogether.

SC: is the restoration of the cathedral on track? OL: We are all hoping, but we will see. The building work is going well, with scaffolding everywhere, but it is still not safe to be in the cathedral for more than two hours at a time because of lead contamination. There are more than 200 people working on site at the moment. The organ will be restored, starting before the end of this summer, by the same teams who carried out the last restoration. We hope it will be ready for the reopening of the cathedral in 2024. The Grand Organ was not damaged by the fire, the heat or the water used by firefighters, but the Choir Organ was badly damaged by water, and only some of the middle pipes will be salvageable from that instrument. The Grand Organ has nine pipes dating from 1402, in the pedal quint - it is amazing to see them; they look very aged. There are more pipes from the 17th-century, but most pipes are from the 18th century. Cavaille-Coll kept nearly the whole organ from that time, but revoiced the foundations.

SC: have you been continuing to teach? OL: yes, at the Paris Conservatoire. It was difficult to do that remotely last year, but we are now allowed to have one student at a time, and we hope things will improve soon. The Conservatoire has three practice instruments, one in the style of Silbermann, one in the Romantic style, and the third a unit instrument of 12 rank making 48 stops. There is also the big Rieger organ in the Organ Hall, of 51 stops, and a German style organ.

SC: are you playing live concerts? OL: it is possible to play in Europe, but not yet to travel to the US.

SC: is the instrument laid out with the 'Choir/ organ on the bottom keyboard? OL: Traditionally the Positive organ was the bottom keyboard, as the English Choir, but Cavaille-Coll reversed it and put the Great at the bottom. His preference was to have a natural crescendo from the top keyboard to the bottom across the five manuals. In fact, he wrote that it should be possible to progress from the Swell Bourdon to Full Organ without hearing individual stops being added. The French style of playing can be said to be very lazy. Often manuals are coupled to the bottom manual, and there is a preference to play there - we know Messiaen preferred to play on the first manual, and we have Dupres own score of the Widor Toccata showing his registrations that do the same thing. The Cavaille-Coll *appel* (barker?) machine helps too.

SC: do young people want to study the organ in France? It depends where you are. There are dynamic organ teachers - and hence classes - in Le Havre, Dijon, Rennes and Nantes, for example. We have 10 students at the Conservatoire, with great competition for those places.

SC: where were you when you learnt of the fire? OL: my wife and I were in Vienna, ahead of a concert. A friend alerted me, and I spoke to the organist who had been playing for Mass when the cathedral was evacuated. The organ - and the cathedral - were saved by the firemen who took the decision to enter the building at great personal risk and to fight the fire from within. Had they not done so, it was estimated the building would have been lost within 20 minutes. They saved the cathedral.

SC: is the organ kept safely pending the restoration? OL: it is as well-protected as it can be. It has been dismantled for a year now; it wasn't the immediate priority to dismantle it, and we needed to ensure that there was no lead contamination, which thankfully we were able to confirm. Everything is a priority in such a restoration - the stained glass has been removed; now they are cleaning the side chapels.

SC: how will the renovation affect the acoustic of the cathedral? OL: This has been a big issue for me, We are told there will be no risk that the acoustic will be different as the stone is so thick, and where it is being replaced it will use material from the same quarries as it did 800 years ago. The only difference is that the cathedral will be totally clean and without the layers of dust of the years, so the sound will be brighter, but that will change over time as dust gathers - dust is good! It was suggested that we sold some of the damaged materials - for example from the roof timbers - to raise money but they are an historical part of the cathedral and required to be kept.

SC: this is not the first disruption of the cathedral - wasn't it used for storage in the French Revolution? OL: the cathedral was deconsecrated during the Revolution, and dedicated to the secular goddess of wisdom. They used it as a grain store, and but organ was saved - as in many French churches - as the organists used them to play *La Marseillaise*, and Napoleon ordered the cathedral reopened. By the middle of the 19th-century it was in such poor condition that they did not know if it was restorable. Victor Hugo was essentially responsible for the restoration through his publication of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* which attracted many tourists to the cathedral and caused the city to restore it.

SC: are you writing a book? OL: In fact, it has recently been published - *A l'orgue de Notre Dame*. [ink]. It is in French but there is supposed to be an English version in a year or so.

SC: how did you come to be organist of Notre Dome? OL: I never thought it would be possible. I was 22, and applied to a competition run by the Diocese. There were two rounds of competition - the first at Ste Clothilde, and the second at Notre Dame, because the Notre Dame organ at the time was barely playable and could only be

used for improvisation. One of the tests at Notre Dame was to improvise for exactly 15 minutes - you have to be able to stop exactly when needed, and there are lights on the console to tell you when to start, to be prepared to stop, and to stop playing. I started to play the organ at 12, and to learn seriously at 16, when my teacher was Gaston Litaize, who was superb.

SC: what are you practicing now? OL: I am working on some transcriptions - of Dukas' The Sorcerers Apprentice and Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue. I have just released some Liszt Improvisations [ink] and am also working on the transcription of Holst's The Planets.

SC: do you compose? OL: no, not really - improvisation goes faster! I have published an improvisation on Salve Regina [published at jwpepper.com - add link]

SC: Olivier, thank you so much. To friends - there is no obligation, but any donations to Friendsofnotredamedeporis.org to help the restoration would be very much appreciated. Do please say thank you and you heard about it through this event.

75TH ANNIVERSARY ZOOM



The Springfield MA Chapter of the AGO was founded on November 1, 1946, making this year our 75th anniversary. While we had been looking forward to this milestone for a couple of years and planning events, we were unable to present them. On Sunday November 7 we will have a Zoom meeting, starting at 5:00 PM. Our Chaplain Fr. William Wallace will install this year's officers:

Dean-Martha Sienkiewicz
Secretary-Karen Banta
Treasurer-Jim Barnes
Board Member-Klaus Becker
Board Member-Lori Bourret
Board Member-Joe Geehern
Board Member-Dianne Rechel

Elizabeth George, Director of Member Engagement and Chapter Development, will present a brief history of the AGO, which is celebrating its 125th anniversary this year. She will virtually present a certificate to our Chapter, recognizing our 75th anniversary.

Members will be able to present their memories of previous chapter members and events.

Martha will send link for this zoom program 24-48 hours in advance.

Note Bene: Remember to set your clocks back one hour on Saturday Nov 6