

THE COUPLER

THE DEAN'S MESSAGE



Spotlight on Black History

Dear DC AGO members,
Happy February!

Did you know that the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History includes a pair of organ shoes?

They belonged to organist and educator Althea Thomas, a native of Montgomery, AL, and were worn while she served as organist for Martin Luther King Jr.'s congregation at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery.

Thomas earned degrees from Alabama State University in both music and art. Many of the people in the higher positions at Dexter Avenue were



connected to Alabama state, including the university's vice president, who served as the choral director. He knew Thomas well and recommended
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FEBRUARY 2024

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Save the date

Carol Feather performs Sunday, Feb. 11 as part of our chapter's Music at the Monastery series in Northeast DC.

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MEMBER SPOTLIGHT ON JULIE EVANS



Julie Vidrik Evans at the console at Chevy Chase Presbyterian Church, where she is the director of music.

How did you become interested in the organ?

My mother used to play for church before she got married. She minored in voice and piano at the University of Kentucky and we actually had a Lowry spinet with the matchstick pedals in our home. When I was 9 years old, my mother began trying to teach me to read music. I still remember her remarking "You don't know your bass clef..."

Then in 1975 my father took me to see/hear Virgil Fox at Wolf Trap. Apparently I came home and told my mom, "I want to do that." I don't remember saying that and I never got the cape or "lasers"...

What is your educational and professional background?

Typical of a lot of you, I began playing organ in church at the age of 12. My mother found a great teacher in Dana Brown at Westminster Presbyterian in Alexandria. The summer before my 16th birthday I had subbed at many of the Baptist churches in Alexandria and was invited to play at Groveton Baptist Church for the last two years of high school. I had a terrifically inspiring choir director (a lieutenant colonel in the Army) and he challenged me to learn many accompaniments. My sight reading improved

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THE COUPLER

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MEMBER SPOTLIGHT ON JULIE VIDRIK EVANS

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by accompanying all the choirs. He was always giving me collections to use for preludes and postludes.

I got a small scholarship to attend James Madison University to study with Dr. Richard McPherson. He was a student at the University of Michigan and the Mason and Glasgow studios so that is my



lineage. I was incredibly fortunate to have him as a teacher and not have to go to school hours away. It was there that I took a year of piano lessons. I used the money I had saved to get my master's degree at The Catholic University and studied with Wojciech Wojtasiewicz.

I remained interested in the trio sonatas of Bach and eventually learned and performed all six. Of course I'm still learning them!

What are the organ's biggest challenges and joys for you?

My biggest joys are accompanying congregational singing and working out registrations for accompaniments for choir anthems. Biggest (sometime) challenges are shepherding/ ministering to the choir flock and being present for congregation members at exhausting times. There are a lot of moving parts to what we do. As a colleague put it, "it's a large basket of skills." Certainly self-care is important. See biking story below...

Why are you an AGO member?

The Guild encourages our profession in performance and church music ministry, and is a resource for all levels of study.

JULIE ON HER TITANIUM ROAD BIKE

What do you like to do when you are not on the bench?

Ride my titanium road bike 70-100 miles a week. Don't get me started on that topic! It is my meditation, and I could talk your ear off about it. I'm quite lucky that I can incorporate commuting to Chevy Chase Circle through the park during the week.

What's an interesting fact you would like people to know about you?

I'm a thrift shop junkie.

Tell us a funny/odd thing that happened when you were on an organ bench.

A custodian actually asked my permission to run the vacuum cleaner.

DEAN'S MESSAGE

From Page One

her to Dr. King when he was looking for an organist. She served with King from June 1955 until his departure for Atlanta in December 1959. Her performances of gospel anthems such as "Precious




ALTHEA THOMAS AT DEXTER AVENUE CHURCH

Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, later renamed Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church in MLK's honor, was his first and only pastorate. Althea Thomas served faithfully as organist for more than 60 years.

Next time you visit the National Museum of American History, be sure to stop by this unique exhibit!

Grace & peace,
Paul Byssainthe, Jr.

For an interesting interview with Thomas, go to <https://www.apr.org/news/2023-02-10/black-history-spotlight-althea-thomas>


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Organ Shoes worn by Althea Thomas

National Museum of American History

Details Related



Object Details

referenced
King, Jr., Martin Luther

Thomas, Althea
Bloch Company

Description (Brief)
Althea Thomas served as organist for Martin Luther King Jr.'s congregation at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama from 1955 until King announcing his departure for Atlanta in December, 1959. Her performances while wearing these shoes of gospel anthems such as "Precious Lord, Take My Hand" inspired King and his congregation every Sunday during the landmark Montgomery bus boycott.

A pair of black tap shoes made by Bloch, modified to play organ bass pedals. Thomas removed the metal taps on the bottoms of the shoes to use them as organ shoes.

Credit Line
Gift of Althea Thomas

ID Number
2019.0071.01

ORGAN EVENTS

Plus see Music at Midday on Page 5

Saturday, Feb. 3, 7:30 pm: Benjamin J. LaPrairie, organist of the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, performs on the Sterling house organ, 15902 Jerald Road, Laurel, MD. Advance reservations are required by email to: kasterling@verizon.net. \$30 per person. See flier on Page 8.

Sunday, Feb. 4, 4 pm: Marvin Mills performs on the Casavant organ (Opus 3914) at Christ Church on Capitol Hill, 620 G St. SE. A reception follows. See flier on Page 6.

Sunday, Feb. 11, 4 pm: Carol Feather (Trinity Presbyterian, Arlington, VA) performs as part of Music at the Monastery, the members' recital series of the DC AGO chapter. Franciscan Monastery of the Holy Land, 1400 Quincy St. NE.

Sunday, Feb. 18, 2 pm: Kola Olowabi, University of Notre Dame organ professor, plays a Presidents Day recital at Washington National Cathedral, 3101 Wisconsin Ave. NW.

Friday, Feb. 23, 8 pm: Christa Rakich, right, performs on the Pasi organ at St. George's Episcopal Church, Arlington. A Northern Virginia AGO chapter program. <https://www.oberlin.edu/christa-rakich>



CHRISTA RAKICH

Sunday, March 3, 8 pm: Gabriel Galdo performs on the new Kegg organ at the Chapel of Christ the King at Christendom College, Front Royal, VA. Music from Elgar Sonata No. 2, Reger, Hakim. Co-hosted by the Northern Virginia and Winchester AGO chapters. Facebook: <https://fb.me/e/1ut8ldIK4>

Monday, March 4, 12:10 pm: The Bach Consort presents Sehet! Wir gehen hinauf gen Jerusalem, BWV 159 in St. Mark's Capitol Hill's Downtown Cantata Series. Organist Jeffrey Kempskie performs. **The program repeats Tuesday, March 5, 12:10 pm at Church of the Epiphany, 1317 G St. NW.**

Wednesday, March 6, 4 pm: DC chapter organ crawl at St. George's Episcopal Church, 915 N. Oakland St., Arlington followed by a meal. RSVP to John Nothhaft at jpnthft@gmail.com. <https://saintgeorgesmusic.org/organ>

Sunday, March 10, 4 pm: David Beatty (freelance organist, Annapolis, MD) performs as part of Music at the Monastery, the members' recital series of the DC AGO chapter. Franciscan Monastery of the Holy Land at 1400 Quincy St. NE.

Sunday, March 17, 4 pm: Third Annual Annandale Bach Birthday Marathon at St. Alban's Episcopal Church, 6800 Columbia Pike, Annandale. An afternoon of short performances of organ works of J. S. Bach by students from the Peabody Institute on the church's mechanical action organ (John Leek, Op. 1). Drop in and depart at will. At 6 pm, concertgoers and musicians will continue to celebrate J.S. with a festive reception with beer and German fare.

MUSIC AT MIDDAY

On Fridays from 12:15-1 pm, National City Christian Church presents Music at Midday. The church is at 5 Thomas Circle NW in DC. Donations are gratefully accepted.



Friday, Feb. 2, 12:15 pm: Composer and organist Roy L. Belfield Jr. (Towson, MD), left, performs works by African American composer Phillip Barnette McIntyre along with music by Jehan Alain and Charles-Marie Widor.

Friday, Feb. 9, 12:15 pm: Composer and organist Ralph Holtzhauser (Youngstown, OH), right, performs works by Carl Haywood,



George Shearing, Sharon Wills, Florence Price and William Bolcom.



Friday, Feb. 16, 12:15 pm: Organist Glenn Little (Stafford, VA), left, performs an organ suite by Florence Price followed by African American spirituals arranged for organ by Adolphus Hailstork and Calvin Taylor.

Friday, Feb. 23, 12:15 pm: Nigerian countertenor Andrew Chukwuka Egbuchiem, right, who lives in New York City, performs vocal works by African and African American composers, including Jacqueline Hairston, Harry T. Burleigh, Leslie Adams and Fred Onovwerosuoke, followed by music of Antonio Vivaldi, G.F. Handel and Gioachino Rossini.



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Marvin Mills



Photo: Shannon Finney Photography



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Young organist plans concert series

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ORGAN CONCERT SERIES

“The Charles Reardon Experience”

2/10 - All Saint's Catholic Church
9300 Stonewall Rd, Manassas 7:30 pm

2/17 - Trinity Episcopal Church
9325 West St, Manassas 5:00 pm

3/16 - Saint Paul United Church
1400 G Street, Woodbridge 7:00 pm

3/23 - Grace United Method Church
9750 Wellington Rd, Manassas 3:00 pm



Help Send Us To Europe!



Charles Reardon, a 17-year-old organist from Northern Virginia who was spotlighted in the July 2023 issue of *The Coupler*, has been given the opportunity to tour through Europe this summer, performing in a wind ensemble made of select high school musicians from the East Coast. To help fund the trip, he has created a fundraiser organ concert series with four others also aiming to tour. The organ is the foundation of the ensemble, which includes a trumpeter, oboist, percussionist and cellist/flautist. The program features 10 pieces (most of which Charles arranged for his unique ensemble), including an Irish jig, Baroque quartet music, Gershwin, Sousa, and finishing off with mighty Widor.

Sterling Organ House Presents Benjamin J. LaPrairie

Organist of the National
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In a Pipe Organ Concert
Saturday, February 3rd, 2024
at 7:30 in the Evening



It is with great pleasure that we invite you to the second concert in our 2024 Concert Series, a special appearance by renowned Concert Organist, **Benjamin J. LaPrairie**.

From our collection of over 100 pipe organs digitally recorded for our *Hauptwerk* virtual pipe organ, Mr. LaPrairie has chosen three magnificent historical instruments for you to enjoy. The Tobias-Henrich-Gottfried-Trost organ in the Stadtkirche of Waltershausen, Germany, was built in 1730. It is an ideal instrument for the performance of Bach and his contemporaries. The William A. Johnson & Son organ of 1877 is one of the finest American Romantic organs in this country. Finally, the 1855 organ by the famous French builder, Aristide Cavaillé-Coll, in the Cathedral of St. Omer, France, is a masterpiece of the French symphonic style of organ building.

This concert will include spoken commentary providing a rare opportunity to learn about and experience three superb pipe organs representing different traditions of organ design.

Where: Sterling Organ House, 15902 Jerald Road, Laurel, MD 20707

Tickets: The entry fee is \$30 per person. Advance reservations are required to hold your seat(s). Please request your reservation by sending us an email at kasterling@verizon.net with the names of all persons you are requesting seats for. We much prefer payment in advance through one of the handlers listed below. If you are unable to use them, then we will accept cash or a check at the door.

Please send your payment through: Venmo to @Kevin-Sterling-12; or through PayPal or Zelle using the email address shown above. Most of the funds collected will support our artist.

Further information will be emailed to registered guests closer to the date.

JOB OPENINGS

District of Columbia

Adjunct professor of music/applied organ: University of DC. \$50 per contract hour. Click [here](#).

Maryland

Director of music: St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Waldorf. \$21,000-24,000 annually. Three-manual Rodgers Trillium 927 organ. Click [here](#).

Organist/pianist: Neelsville Presbyterian Church. \$12,100-15,000 annually. Click [here](#).

Minister of music: Episcopal Church of the Ascension, Gaithersburg. Casavant pipe organ. \$20,000-24,000 annually. Contact the church.

Director of music ministry: Pilgrim United Church of Christ, Wheaton. \$20,000-24,000 annually. Click [here](#).

Music director: Channing Memorial Church, Unitarian Universalist, Ellicott City. Part-time. \$9,800 to 10,800 for a 10-month period. [Click here](#).

Director of music: Holy Redeemer Catholic Church, College Park. Full-time. From \$50,000 annually. Click [here](#).

Music director: First Baptist Church of Suitland. Part-time. \$18,000-20,000 annually. Click [here](#).

Virginia

Director of music: Church of the Good Shepherd, Burke. \$45,000 annually. Click [here](#) for details from agohq.org.

Organist: St. John's Episcopal Church, Arlington. \$10,800-13,500 annually. Click [here](#).

Director of music and organist: St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Arlington. Part-time. \$20,000-\$24,000 annually. Click [here](#).

Organist: Fredericksburg United Methodist Church. Hybrid organ by R.A. Colby Organs Inc. \$25,000-30,000 annually. Send resume and recording (video preferred) to davidkirven@fumcva.org.

Music director: Friendship United Methodist Church, Falls Church. Part-time. Click [here](#).

THE COUPLER

Promote your event, product or cause with an advertisement in The Coupler, the official publication of the District of Columbia Chapter of the American Guild of Organists.

Rates: full page (4 issues), \$100; half-page (4 issues), \$50; quarter page (4 issues), \$25.

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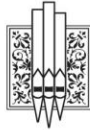
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