

[View this email in your browser](#)



American Guild of Organists
District of Columbia Chapter

THE COUPLER

July 2026

In this issue:

Dean's message

Member spotlight on Robert Baird

Upcoming recitals

Dean's message

By Robert Baird

It is a tremendous honor to serve as the next dean of the DC chapter of the AGO. I have long admired this chapter for its extraordinary musicianship, rich tradition, and generous spirit, and I am excited to help build on that legacy.

As we look ahead, one of my primary goals is to implement thoughtful new

processes that help our chapter operate efficiently, transparently, and sustainably.



Just as importantly, I hope we continue investing in the next generation of organists through scholarships, networking opportunities, and masterclasses that connect students and young professionals with experienced musicians.

Above all, I hope our chapter continues to be known for something that cannot be measured on a budget or calendar: friendly collegiality. Whether you've been a member for 50 years or are just discovering the organ, I want everyone to feel welcomed, encouraged, and valued. Our profession is strongest when we support one another, share ideas freely, and celebrate each other's successes.

I look forward to serving this remarkable chapter and getting to know many more of you in the months ahead.

Member spotlight: Robert Baird

How did you become interested in the organ?

My mother is a pianist, so I often joke that I have been playing the piano since I was born. I studied throughout my childhood and spent formative summers at Interlochen Arts Camp. Those experiences instilled not only a love for music but also a deep respect for artistry and disciplined practice.



Robert and son Maddox dressed for Halloween.

Although I grew up in the Episcopal Church and was captivated by the organ from an early age, I did not begin studying the instrument seriously until 2017.

I accepted my first organ position before I was entirely comfortable with the pedalboard, so there was certainly a season of learning on the job!

Thanks to generous mentors, supportive congregations, and many hours of practice, I gradually grew into the instrument.

My path may have been unconventional, but it has given me a deep appreciation for encouraging others wherever they happen to be in their own musical journey.

What is your educational and professional background?

I earned undergraduate degrees in piano performance and economics from Virginia Tech before completing a master's degree in organ performance at the Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins University, where I studied with Dr. John Walker, a past president of the AGO.

Before entering church music full-time, I worked in accounting and financial management while serving churches as an organist. Those years gave me an appreciation for thoughtful stewardship and organizational leadership.

I currently serve as director of music and organist at New York Avenue Presbyterian Church in the heart of DC. The church has welcomed presidents, statesmen, and civic leaders throughout its history, and counts Abraham Lincoln among its most

famous worshipers. It was also the home of the legendary preacher Peter Marshall. It is a tremendous privilege to lead music in such a significant sacred space. I previously served on the board of the Richmond AGO chapter as a member-at-large, and I am honored to now serve as dean of the DC chapter.

What do you like to do when you are not making music?

I love hiking and exploring the outdoors. Even more, I love spending time with my 6-year-old son, Maddox. One of our favorite traditions is spending a summer day at a water park or pool together. Those are the moments that remind me to slow down, laugh often, and enjoy life.

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

At one wedding, the bride's family took much longer than expected to come down the aisle. I was improvising to fill the extra time and without realizing it, slowly found myself weaving in the *Jeopardy!* theme. It wasn't until I heard laughter from the congregation that I recognized what I had done. Thankfully, everyone -- including me -- had a good sense of humor about it.

Organ events

Bach Festival at Grace

July 5-17 at Grace Episcopal Church, 1041 Wisconsin Ave. NW. Individual tickets \$35; students \$15. See flier below for more information.

Sunday, July 5, 1:30 pm: Cantata 82, soprano solo from Cantata 49, a cello suite

Friday, July 10, 7:30 pm: Charlie Powers, cello

Sunday, July 12, 1:30 pm: Piotr Pakhomkin, guitar

Friday, July 17, 7 pm: Dr. David Bond plays music by Bach and contemporaries Frescobaldi, Buxtehude, Clerambault, and Scarlatti.

Summer series at the Basilica

Recitals are offered at 6 pm each Sunday in July and August at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, 400 Michigan Ave. NE.

July 5: David Ball and Emma Whitten of Orange, CA

July 12: Iris Lan of Washington, DC

July 19: Woosug Kang of Nashville

July 26: Gabriele Studer of Alba, Italy
 Aug. 2: Lynn Trapp of Baltimore
 Aug. 9: John Mitchell of Reston, VA
 Aug. 16: Andy Brown of Philadelphia
 Aug. 23: Peter Latona of Washington, DC
 Aug. 30: Adam Chlebek of Washington, DC



Other organ events

Saturday, July 11, 3 pm: Sofia Korsakova, left, plays a recital as part of the Sterling Organ House's celebrity series in Laurel, MD. Music by Bach, Muffat, Saint-Saens, Howells, Escaich, Gubaidulina, and Bovet. For tickets (\$50), email kasterling@verizon.net.

Sunday, July 12, 4 pm: Kevin Birch plays a recital at St. Joseph's on Capitol Hill, 313 2nd St. NE.

Sunday, Aug. 9, 4 pm: Paul Hardy plays a recital at St. Joseph's on Capitol Hill, 313 2nd St. NE.

Note: National City Christian Church's Friday Music at Midday programs resume in September.

Avoid dueling recitals

Send upcoming events to dcagochapter@gmail.com ASAP to get them on our calendar at dcago.org. That way others planning recitals for 2026-27 can see what has already been scheduled for certain days.



Donner masterclass

Austrian organist Stefan Donner led a masterclass for our chapter June 27 at St, Matthew's Cathedral downtown. Clockwise from far left are Daniel Aune, Abbie Wood, Anna Elise Smith, host Tom Stehle, Donner, Sarah DeLacy, Justin Connors, Isabel Hartlieb from the Austrian Cultural Forum, Dan Elmer, Patrick Merrill, Colin Carmody, Kevin Paton Cole, Francesca Cho, Joe Vitacco, Caleb Bates and Christopher Hoh.

(Photo by Joe Vitacco)

Job openings

Listings are continuously updated on our website, dcago.org. Click on the Membership tab. To submit a listing, send an email to dcagochapter@gmail.com.

31st Bach Festival

Grace Episcopal Church,
Georgetown
Washington, DC



1041 Wisconsin Ave NW
www.gracedc.org
(202) 333-7100

Sunday, July 5th, 2026, at 1:30 PM

Regino Madrid, Violin Charlie Powers, Cello

Foster Wang, Violin Trevor Mowry, Oboe and Oboe d'amore

Derek Smith, Viola Soo Young Chrisfield, Soprano

Shouvik Mondle, Baritone

& Francine Máté, Harpsichord, and Director of the Bach Festival

Works include *Cantata No. 82*, a soprano solo from *Cantata No. 49*, and *Cello Suite BWV 1009*.

Friday, July 10th, 2026, at 7:00 PM

Charlie Powers, Cello

The Program will be *Johann Sebastian Bach's Cello Suites BWV 1007, BWV 1008, and BWV 1009*.

Sunday, July 12th, 2026, at 1:30 PM

Piotr Pakhomkin, Guitar

Works include the *Chaconne from the d minor Partita, BWV 1004*, and the *Vivaldi D Major Concerto RV 230 arranged for the organ by JS Bach*.

Friday, July 17th, 2026, at 7:00 PM

Dr. David Bond, Organ

Works include music by *JS Bach* contemporaries *Frescobaldi, Buxtehude, Clermabault, Scarlatti*, and music by *JS Bach*.

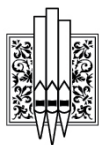
For more information scan the QR code or contact **Francine Máté**,
Director of the Bach Festival, at bach@gracedc.org

Admission: \$35

Student: \$15

Purchase tickets here

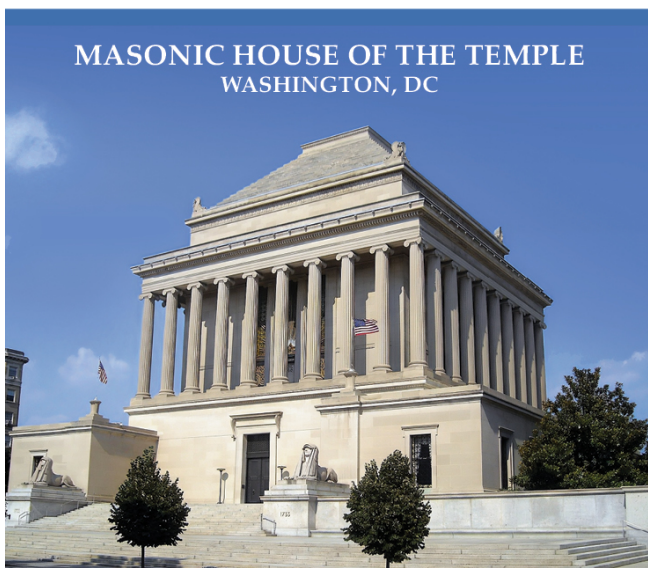




R.A. Daffer Church Organs, INC.

ESTABLISHED 1977

A full-line representative for pipe,
digital, and hybrid organ solutions.



MASONIC HOUSE OF THE TEMPLE
WASHINGTON, DC

Randy Sheets,
Sales Representative
540-842-4450
Rsheets@dafferorgans.com
www.DafferOrgans.com



Custom Rodgers console with Pau ferro
drawknobs and reverse color wood keys.
A hybrid instrument with a newly rebuilt
Schantz organ with 22 ranks of pipes

CH COPEMAN HART
CHURCH ORGAN BUILDERS

Fratelli Buffatti

RODGERS®

JOHANNUS

Makin
Church Organ Builders



Acoustical Design
Collaborative Ltd

Acoustic Design Services

Acoustical Design Collaborative, Ltd is an independent consulting firm specializing in ecclesiastical spaces where natural acoustics for music and unobtrusive amplified speech are essential for traditional worship celebration. Services provided to building committees, architects, and organ builders include:

- **Acoustic & Audio-Visual Systems Design**
- **Room Reverberation Enhancement**
- **Choir & Organ Space Planning**
- **Speech Intelligibility Assessment**
- **Sound System Tuning & Adjustment**
- **Expert Opinion, Peer Review & Client Advocacy**

We strive to provide professional advice based on prudent design criteria, cost-effective solutions, clear concise recommendations, and open communication, delivered in a timely and economical manner.

A strong personal involvement characterizes our services. After understanding the design issue, we use a systematic technical approach, tempered with practical experience to provide a range of options factoring budget and aesthetic concerns that are concisely summarized to facilitate informed decisions.

Your acoustic challenge may be one we have already solved. Please contact us to see how our combined 45 years of consulting and university acoustics teaching can improve your house of worship.

Tel: 410.821.5930

Your Sound...Our Passion

info@akustx.com

AGO chapter board

Robert Baird, dean

Rob Church, treasurer

Eric McAfee, assistant treasurer

Kevin Biggins, membership secretary

Justin Connors, social media director

Anna Elise Smith, chapter young organists coordinator

Paul Hersey, education coordinator

Caleb Bates, member-at-large

Sarah DeLacy, member-at-large

Patrick Merrill, member-at-large

Evelyn Simpson-Curenton, member-at-large

Contact us at dcagochapter@gmail.com.

Visit our website at dcago.org.

Contact the editor

To reach Coupler and website editor Pat Henry, send an email to dcagochapter@gmail.com. Coupler advertising rates for four issues are \$125 for a full page, \$65 for a half page or \$35 for a quarter page.

Life members

Blanche Curfman
Nancy Dodge
Robert Grogan
Eileen Guenther
Irv Lawless
Kenneth Lowenberg
Donald Sutherland
David Hearn (deceased)
Albert Russell (deceased)



American Guild of Organists
District of Columbia Chapter



This email was sent to dcagochapter@gmail.com

[why did I get this?](#) [unsubscribe from this list](#) [update subscription preferences](#)

DC AGO chapter · 1566 Wisconsin Ave NW · Washington, DC 20007-2759 · USA

