

[View this email in your browser](#)



American Guild of Organists
District of Columbia Chapter

THE COUPLER

April 2026

In this issue:

Dean's message

Chapter events

Upcoming recitals

Member spotlight on Ariana Corbin

Shenandoah Church Music Institute

Dean's message

As we move through the final days of Lent, our choir lofts are filled with the frantic rustle of scores and the jubilant rehearsal of *Jesus Christ is Risen Today*. Yet, for many of us, there is a profound dissonance between the "Alleluia" on our consoles and the news headlines.



Working in the shadow of the Capitol and White House, we are uniquely positioned at the intersection of sacred tradition and global reality.

How do we authentically perform "uplifting" music when the world feels increasingly turbulent?

It is difficult to reconcile pastoral Easter imagery with the stark reality of current events: the devastation of warfare, the displacement of millions, and the heartbreaking struggle for human rights and immigration justice at our own borders.

Closer to home, the political landscape often feels like a departure from the moral compass we seek to follow. When rhetoric from the highest offices conflicts with the values of compassion and truth, the "joy" of the season can feel performative, even hollow.

As organists and pastoral musicians, we are not mere holiday entertainers; we are the stewards of a communal emotional landscape. The dichotomy we feel is not a failure of professionalism—it is an honest reflection of the human condition. Historically, the greatest sacred music was birthed from periods of intense suffering and upheaval. The "cheerful" music of Easter is not meant to ignore the darkness of Good Friday, but to stand in defiance of it.

When we play a major-key toccata while the world feels "in the minor," we are practicing a form of musical resistance. We are insisting that the final word belongs to hope, even when evidence is scarce.

On Easter morning, as the sun rises over the Potomac and the first chords of the processional ring out, let our music be more than just "cheerful." Let it be a courageous, honest, and steadfast declaration that even in a turbulent world, light is unquenchable.

Upcoming chapter events



Richmond organ crawl

On April 11, our chapter will join the NOVA AGO chapter and Hilbus chapter of the Organ Historical Society for an organ crawl in Richmond. The highlight will be a visit to the new Juget-Sinclair organ (Op. 55) at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart. While it is too late to sign up for bus transportation, AGO members and nonmembers alike are invited to meet the group at the cathedral at 1 pm.

Board elections

Our chapter will soon be electing board members for the 2026-2027 year. To nominate yourself or someone else, please send an email to dcagochapter@gmail.com.

Juneteenth workshops

We hope you can join us for our annual Juneteenth day of workshops on Saturday, June 20th at First Baptist Church DC. More information to follow!

Organ events

Sunday, April 5, 2 pm: Easter Day organ recital at Washington National



Cathedral.

Saturday, April 11, 7 pm: Todd Wilson plays a recital at Bush Hill Presbyterian Church, 4916 Franconia Rd., Alexandria. See flier below.

Sunday, April 12, 4 pm: Ronald Stolk, organist at St. Patrick's Church, plays a recital at St. Joseph's on Capitol Hill, 313 2nd St. NE.

Sunday, April 12, 4 pm: Angela Kraft Cross (above) plays a recital at the Franciscan Monastery, 1400 Quincy St. NE.

Monday, April 13, 12:10 pm at St. Mark's Capitol Hill and Tuesday, April 14, 12:10 pm at Church of the Epiphany, 1317 G St. NW.: Washington Bach Consort presents the cantata Nach dir, Herr, verlanger mich. Organist Jeff Kempskie plays Schmucke dich, o liebe Seele and the Fantasia super Komm, Heiliger Geist.

Tuesday, April 21, 12:10 pm: Loic Georgeault Florence Rousseau plays Fantasia in G and Dies sind die heil'gen zehn Gebot by J.S. Bach and Deuxieme Choral and Piece heroique by Cesar Franck. Church of the Epiphany, 1317 G St. NW.

Friday, May 1, 7 pm: The White House Historical Association and St. John's Church, on the occasion of America's 250th anniversary, will host "An Evening with the Choir of Westminster Abbey." The group of up to 30 boys and 12 professional adult singers has a repertoire ranging from plainsong and Tudor polyphony to 20th-century masterpieces and new commissions. 1525 H St. NW. For tickets, click [here](#).

Sunday, May 3, 4 pm: Music director Maria Balducci plays the annual Marian concert at St. Joseph's on Capitol Hill, 313 2nd St. NE.

Tuesday, May 5, 12:10 pm: Kitty Yang performs Fugue in E-flat Major (St. Anne,)

Prelude and Fugue in A Minor, Pastorale, Passacaglia and Fugue in C Minor and Toccata in F Major. Church of the Epiphany, 1317 G St. NW.

Music at Midday



Michael Stefanek, left, and Craig Williams will perform at National City Christian.

National City Christian Church offers Music at Midday programs most Fridays from 12:15-1 pm. The church is at 5 Thomas Circle NW in DC.

April 3: No recital (Good Friday)

April 10: Duo Arpeggione – cellist Claudio Jaffe and pianist Catherine Lam – performs music by J. S. Bach, Ludwig van Beethoven, Camille Saint-Saëns, Arthur Foote, and David Popper.

April 17: Craig S. Williams, organist and choirmaster at the Cadet Chapel in West Point, NY, performs organ works of Grimoaldo Macchia, Alejandro D. Consolacion II, Cecilia McDowall, and Felix Mendelssohn.

April 24: Baltimore organist Michael Stefanek presents works by Paul Fey, Florence Price, J.S. Bach, Scott Joplin, Chelsea Chen, and Louis Vierne.



Member spotlight on Ariana Corbin



Ariana at the console at Washington National Cathedral.

How did you become interested in the organ?

I grew up in a very small Church of the Nazarene that had no organ. Piano was the instrument I had in church and at home, so that was what I chose to pursue for my undergrad at the University of Michigan.

While in school, I met an organ student who invited me to some of his performances. I saw that the organ could be a virtuosic concert instrument, and it intrigued me greatly.

I went on to Florida State to work on a master's degree in piano performance. But I became unhappy with the pressures of piano competitions and felt a lack of spiritual substance in what I was doing as a pianist. I started taking lessons on the side with organ professor Iain Quinn, and gradually I began spending more time practicing organ and less time at the piano.

I became enamored with the idea of a career in church music, which would allow me to marry my music to my faith. Dr. Quinn convinced me to stay on for another master's in organ performance, and eventually I got my doctorate in organ as

well. It took a long time for me to find my way into the organ world, but I've never looked back!

What is your professional background?

I had various small church jobs as a pianist before switching my focus to the organ. My first real organ job was at an Episcopal church in Tallahassee, where I led a choir of eight staff singers from the FSU College of Music. Toward the end of my doctorate, Dr. Quinn encouraged me to check the AGO postings for any job that would allow me to finish up the writing part of my degree remotely. The organ scholar job at the National Cathedral came up, and I was so surprised and happy that I got it! My two-year contract ends in July, so I am applying for other jobs.

What is a memory you will take from your time at National Cathedral?

Playing for President Jimmy Carter's state funeral was one of the most special things I'll ever have the privilege of doing. I wish I could have appreciated it more when it actually happened.

I got the news over Christmas break, so I had to snap back to work mode while visiting my family in Michigan. There is so much hectic preparation that you don't have time to grasp the gravity of the situation.

The day of the funeral felt very unglamorous. I had to walk through the Secret Service checkpoint at 4:30 am and then just stay in place until it was time for the prelude to start. I couldn't even warm up on the chapel organs, since military musicians were in those spaces. So I just ran through my prelude pieces on my office keyboard and tried to keep my brain awake.

By the time the prelude began, I was already exhausted, and then I had to sit through another hour plus of music from the military ensembles, and then a two-and-a-half-hour service after that. It was extremely draining, and you can't fully feel the weight of the moment when you're that tired. But I was glad I could be there to honor such a special person.

What do you like to do when you're not making music?

Free time is hard to come by when you're working in a high-pressure church job like I am. I like to go for walks and spend time in nature. I also enjoy reading great books, cooking simple food, and going to all the wonderful museums in DC.



Ariana with Sophie and Mia

I am the proud mom of two 15-year-old cats. I've had them since I was 12 years old. It's nice to have fluffy kitties to snuggle with when I come home.

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

I was playing a Sunday Eucharist on a hot, humid summer day in Tallahassee. The church was stuffy and crawling with all kinds of bugs. An enormous wasp was flying around the choir loft during the whole service and landed on the upper manual while I was playing a hymn. I was desperately blowing at it to make it go away while hoping I wouldn't get stung. Eventually it flew away to the choir stalls, and I think one of the altos smacked it with a hymnal!

Shenandoah Church Music Institute

Shenandoah University's Church Music Institute continues with this summer's annual conference. Registrants may take for credit toward a Certificate in Church Music at either the grad or undergrad level, or they may choose to audit the sessions. Primary focus this year is on keyboard skills and repertoire. Other topics include choral rep, handbells, worship planning, and philosophy of church music. Guest clinician for Week One, June 14-19, is Marianne Kim, and for Week Two, June 21-16, is Jan Kraybill. Bios of the clinicians, the weekly schedule, registration info, and more can be found at www.su.edu/cmi. Contact CMI Director Wayne L. Wold at wwold@su.edu for further details.

SHENANDOAH UNIVERSITY'S
CHURCH MUSIC INSTITUTE

Week One: June 14–19, 2026 with Clinician Marianne Kim

Week Two: June 21–26, 2026 with Clinician Jan Kraybill

ORGAN & PIANO

Plus other church music topics led by specialists and clinicians!



Dr. Wayne L. Wold, Director
cmi@su.edu

su.edu/cmi

Job openings

Current job listings in the DMV are available at dcago.org under the Membership tab. To submit a listing, send an email to dcagochapter@gmail.com.



BUSH HILL CONCERT SERIES

ORGAN RECITAL

TODD
WILSON,
ORGANIST



SATURDAY,
APRIL 11, 2026
7:00 PM

FREE ADMISSION

with Dr. Lisa Caravan,
Assistant Professor of
Music at the Eastman
School of Music



Regarded across America and around the world as one of today's finest concert organists, Todd Wilson serves as head of the organ department at the Cleveland Institute of Music, and Curator of the E.M. Skinner Organ at Cleveland's Severance Music Center.

BUSH HILL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

4916 FRANCONIA RD., ALEXANDRIA, VA 22310
WWW.BUSHHILL.ORG





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

John Nothaft, dean

Ronald "Trey" Walton, subdean

Eric McAfee, treasurer

Patrick Walker, membership secretary

Kevin Biggins, member-at-large

Justin Connors, member-at-large

Lyn Loewi, member-at-large

Adam Perry, member-at-large

Evelyn Simpson-Curenton, member-at-large

Anna Smith, member-at-large

Contact us at dcagochapter@gmail.com.

Visit our website at dcago.org.

Contact the editor

To reach Coupler editor and website administrator 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 <<Email Address>>

[why did I get this?](#) [unsubscribe from this list](#) [update subscription preferences](#)
DC AGO chapter · 1566 Wisconsin Ave NW · Washington, DC 20007-2759 · USA

