

PipeNotes

American Guild of Organists – Milwaukee Chapter

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Volume 65 – May 2019



NORTH CENTRAL REGION

JUNE 16-19

2019



GREAT MUSIC ON A GREAT LAKE

There is still time to register!

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June 16 – 19, 2019

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JUNE 16-19
2019



By the time you read this column we will be officially 100 years old — yes!
MILWAUKEE 100 YEARS AGO
The exact date — May 5, 1919

I thought I might give you a taste of our pre-convention concert featuring a number of works by Alverno composers.

Just as Liz Walloch is sharing history from the archives that she lovingly organized here is some background on the Gesu concert repertoire. Dr. O.M.J. Wehrley was a dentist by profession and organist at Redeemer Lutheran (19th & Wisconsin Ave.) for 35 years. In his memory the Milwaukee Chapter commissioned Sr. Theophane Hytrek SSSF to write a composition. She was offered \$1,000 for this substantial composition which became *Psalms for Organ and Instruments*.

Movement 1—"Introduction and Passacaglia" has the inscription: Psalm 118 "Happy are they whose way is blameless . . ."; movement 2—"Recitative", Psalm 62 "O God, You are my God whom I seek . . .". The third movement—"Finale" has no specific psalm association in its score but I'm sure I saw a psalm reference in a newspaper article which had something to do with Old Hundredth. If you any of you come across that reference in your geekly wanderings I would be delighted to have that information!

The psalm basis and a conversation with Bill Erickson of Bach Chamber Choir made me wonder about a link with Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms*. Its text was arranged by the composer from the Book of Psalms in the original Hebrew. Part 1 uses Psalms 100 and 108, Part 2 uses 2 and 23, and Part 3 uses 131 and 133. Bernstein premiered the work at Philharmonic Hall in New York City on July 15, 1965. Alverno College presented the work when I was a student in the early 1970's so the faculty and Sr. T. were familiar with *Chichester Psalms*. Did it serve as germination? Is *Psalms for Organ and Instruments* Sr. Theophane's paean to the organ in psalmody?

The manuscript excerpt at left is the opening of the final movement. Meter varies throughout, most often based on the eighth-note. Sr. Theophane grouped the content of each measure. See the entry above the measure — (3+2+2+3+3). I can imagine the first local rehearsals of this piece, the ensemble's rhythmic challenge.

Check out the instrumentation—in addition to brass it includes harp and 4 percussion players (xylophone, glockenspiel, 3 timpani and various non-pitched percussion). It will be a challenge to bring in the 33" drum. Gesu's elevator is a grand plus but the size of the door to the choirloft is another thing. We have spoken about taking the pins out of the door hinges and angling the drum to make this possible.

The premier of *Psalms* took place on Wednesday, December 31, 1969 at St. Rita's Church in West Allis. Sr. Mary Jane Wagner was in contact with O.M.J. Wehrley's daughter Rita Sorenson. "I do remember the first performance. All the Wehrley "children" and their spouses were there to hear Sister play this! I remember that the director accidentally hit the music stand on the first upbeat and the music scattered all over the floor. There was a long silence while the score was reassembled. I also remember how beautiful St. Rita's church and organ was. Sister Theophane was, of course, wonderful!" I bet that Ed Zielinski, conductor of the Catholic Symphony and this premier, was doubly shaken by that experience.

Please join us for this pre-convention concert scheduled for Sunday, June 16th (3pm at Church of the Gesu on 12th & Wisconsin).

I trust your May/June will be filled church and family celebrations. 'Tis an incredibly busy time of year. Just as our music is comprised of notes/rests so must our lives. Take time for yourself...

Sheri

May 2019

8 (Wed) 12:15 Estrella Piano Duo
The Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist
812 N. Jackson St
Milwaukee, WI

14 (Tues) 7:30 Mario Buchanan, Organ
Church of the Gesu
1145 W. Wisconsin Ave
Milwaukee, WI

15 (Wed) 12:15 Alan Hommerding, Organ
The Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist
812 N. Jackson St
Milwaukee, WI

16 (Thurs) 12:15 David Porth, Organ
St. John's Lutheran Church
7809 Harwood
Wauwatosa, WI

22 (Wed) Clement Mattox, Trumpet
Michael Batcho, Keyboard
The Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist
812 N. Jackson St
Milwaukee, WI

29 (Wed) 12:15 Adrien Zitoun, Cello
Chi Li, Violin
The Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist
812 N. Jackson St
Milwaukee, WI

31 (Fri) 7:30 Cathedral Brass in Concert
The Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist
812 N. Jackson St
Milwaukee, WI

June 2019

1 (Sat) 7:00 Chant Claire Chamber Choir
Between Earth and Sphere
St. Joseph Center Chapel
1501 S. Layton Blvd
Milwaukee, WI

5 (Wed) 12:15 Jeremy Hinicker, Guitar
The Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist
812 N. Jackson St
Milwaukee, WI

5 (Wed) 7:00 Gregory Zelek, Organ
St. Peter's United Church of Christ
424 Fremont St
Kiel, WI

7 (Fri) 12:00 Dr. Aaron Mathews
Music on the Hill
St. John the XXIII Parish
St. Mary's Site
551 Johnson St
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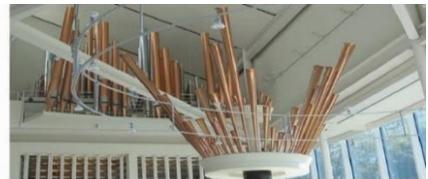
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From the Archives

Liz Walloch, Archivist/Historian

Hosting conventions for the Wisconsin Chapter, when did it all begin?

The topic of hosting a convention began in the early 1930s as I learned from meeting minutes in the archives. At that time, the chapter was included in the Midwestern Region along with Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio. As I read through these minutes of the chapter, they were enthusiastic to be host city for a convention. After much table discussions among the board and committees, the chapter decided to put a “hold” on the topic deferring it for the time being. In 1945, the chapter revisited the topic and decided to step “forward” and host a convention in 1946. With the wheels in motion, the chapter’s board and committees were set to task to plan their first convention. The Illinois chapter sent favorable support to Milwaukee to host the convention in 1946. In the years since their first discussions to 1945, the chapter’s membership grew. They sent delegates to attend other conventions in the region and learned by observing, getting ideas to consider when the chapter was set to host. The Wisconsin chapter was ready in 1945 to take the lead and host. The 1946 convention became a reality. The pipes were tuned for further conventions in 1957, 1969, and 1981. Let’s see what musical offerings were included in this inaugural convention.

*Wisconsin Chapter hosts their first convention
-- Midwestern Regional Convention—
June 24 and 25, 1946 in Milwaukee*

Here is a snapshot of the convention

--Thirty Chapters from the Midwestern region participated in this inaugural convention

---Six (6) organ recitals were performed with recitalists of Sr. M. Theophane, Wilbur Held, Dean of Minnesota Chapter, Dr. Emory, L. Gallup, Dean of Illinois Chapter and Dr. D. Deane Hutchison, Dean of Peoria Illinois Chapter

--Two (2) Lecture/Demonstration offered—Choir Problems—Gregorian chant

Keynote Dinner Speaker--Mr. Jack T. Wilson, Chief Physicist, Allis Chalmers Manufacturing Company addressing “Some Physical Aspects of Formal Counterpoint,” illustrated this with a series of slides showing sound based on Bach’s Great G minor Fugue.

This convention was planned with easy of traveling to each event by either walking or taking the trolley, fare was 10 cents; taxi fare from downtown was 35 cents.

This two (2) day convention was filled from morning to evening. Let’s explore the daily schedule.

Monday, June 24, 1946

10:00 am Organizational Meeting

-- four (4) organ recitals throughout the day

11:15 am at Kenwood Methodist Church

2:00 pm at St. Robert’s Church

3:15 pm at Temple Emanu-El

5:00 pm at Immanuel Presbyterian Church

Lecture

4:00 pm Topic “choir problems”

Closing the day

8:00 pm Lutheran Vespers and Choral program

Tuesday, June 25, 1946

--two (2) organ recitals
10:30 am at Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church
2:45 pm at St. Joseph Convent

Demonstration Lecture
2:00 pm Gregorian Chant demonstration at St. Joseph
Convent Recital Hall

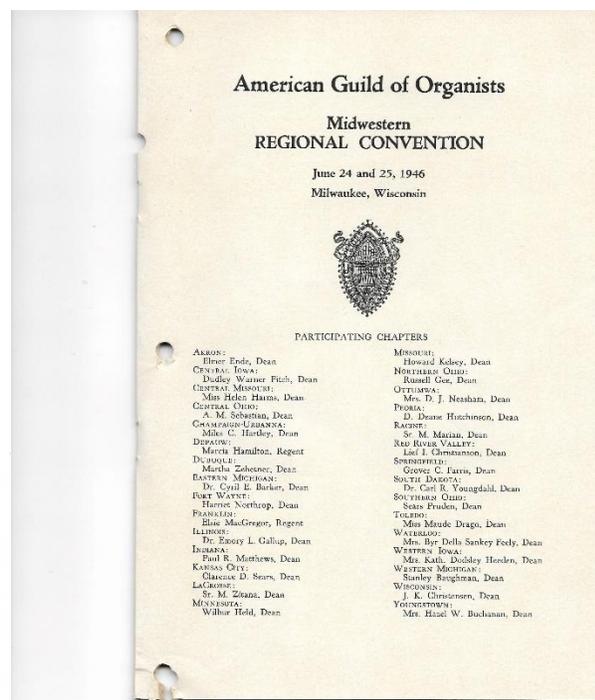
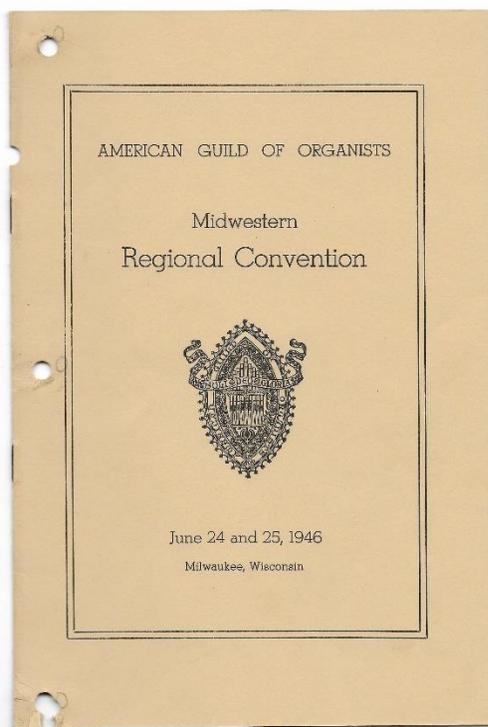
Choral Program
4:00 pm Gregorian Chant with Sr. M. Clarissima
directing a choir of nuns

Closing the Convention with
4:20 pm Solemn Vespers in Honor of the Blessed
Virgin Mary and Benediction

Dinner followed at the Hotel Pfister with a music program performed by students of local Conservatories. The after
Dinner Speaker was Mr. Jack T. Wilson, Chief Physicist of Allis Chalmers Manufacturing Company. His topic,
"Some Physical Aspects of Formal Counterpoint" was illustrated by slides showing sound, using the Great G minor
Fugue of Bach as his basis.

This first convention was history in the making. From the conventions that followed to our upcoming convention
this June, from the years the chapter was known as the "Wisconsin" chapter to its current naming "Milwaukee"
chapter, the chapter history is a da capo, back to where it all began-- May 5, 1919. Come, be a part of our history.
Join us for this year's convention--June 16-19, 2019, North Central Region--Milwaukee 100 Years--Great Music
on a Great Lake!

P.S. I am chairing the Hospitality Committee for the convention. Volunteers are needed, that means every
member's presence is needed. I promise, no heavy lifting involved, just assisting with welcoming attendees to have
a wonderful music filled time in Milwaukee.



NORTH CENTRAL AGOYO

Max Drischner – A Life of Upset



Lesser known even among twentieth-century German organists, Max Drischner (1891-1971) played, composed, and lived in the crucible of twentieth-century history. Born in the German Silesian town of Prieborn (modern day Przeworno, Poland), he studied theology for seven semesters beginning in 1910 before studying music at the Berlin Music Academy under Wanda Landowska.

One great benefit of Drischner's works is that he customarily dates his compositions precisely, sometimes even giving the circumstances surrounding the work. Firmly grounded in the Lutheran chorale tradition, his work combines baroque technicality with clear insight of Romantic and twentieth-century idioms.

During World War I, he volunteered as a medical orderly and spent time in France on the Western Front. When on leave in February 1918, he composed a dramatic passacaglia on "Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir." One can only imagine the experiences and memories that were informing this composition, and yet one can sense the outlet this music and composition afforded Drischner to process and cope with his experiences. His faith evidently supported him as well: He wrote a prelude on "Lobe den Herren, den mächtigen König der Ehren," a powerful hymn of praise and joy, while at a gathering place for those wounded in battle in Montmedy, France.

Drischner's main corpus of composition came about in the 1920s and 1930s, while he was cantor and organist at the St. Nikolai Church in Brieg, Germany. Theologically astute, his compositions not only reveal the musical potential of chorale melodies, but also reflect the theological import of their traditional texts (see especially his preludes on "Es ist gewisslich" and "O Traurigkeit, O Herzelied").

Brieg was declared a fortress city in 1945 ahead of the advancing Red Army. Drischner moved with his mother and sister (he was married in 1928 but divorced in 1938) back to his hometown. There he served both the evangelical-Lutheran church and the Roman Catholic parish until 1946. After the reconfiguration of the borders in central Europe at the end of World War II, Drischner and his family were driven out of their homeland, which was now in Poland. He wrote a chorale prelude on "Herr Jesu Christ, dich zu uns wend" in 1946 for a service held in St. Michael's Church in Erfurt for those driven out of East Prussia, for whom he could feel a great deal of personal solidarity.

He settled in Herrenberg, West Germany in 1947 and moved to Goslar (Niedersachsen) in 1955. He continued to write chorale works for organ, which show a maturity in style while maintaining distinctive qualities that run throughout most of his work. Astonishingly, he writes as late as 1952 such cheery chorale settings as "Der Tag, der ist so freudenreich" and "In dir ist Freude." He also gives vent to more distressing emotions in "Wer nur den lieben Gott lässt walten" (1952), whose chorale text no doubt took on an even more profound meaning for the composer, having endured the cataclysmic fall of Germany in the mid-1940s.

His more complex organ works were written during his tenure as cantor and organist in Brieg, and unique among his works is the "Sonnenhymnus," a free passacaglia in E major that not only took up a central position in his musical legacy, but also was a musical reminder of his homeland and past life in Silesia once he had been driven out.

While other facets of Max Drischner's life and work deserve more thorough attention (his choral compositions, close friendship with Albert Schweitzer, and personal political and religious views), the connection of specific chorale works to specific experiences in his life reveal much about the faith and musical formation of the man who lived the events we learn about in world history courses. The history he encountered gives his music a greater depth for us who play it, and his music in turn helps us understand the history.

His main chorale works are now published by Thomi-Berg (Planegg bei München).

Patrick Ernst
Holy Saturday, 2019