



THE OPUS

Volume 42
Holiday Issue

December 2025

As has been our custom for many years, there will be no print issue of The OPUS for the month of December. However, this year we are again providing a special Holiday Issue in digital format only. Many of the regular features and ads will not appear, but this does give us the opportunity to share some timely news such as events scheduled for December, January, and beyond.

Rick Burk, Editor



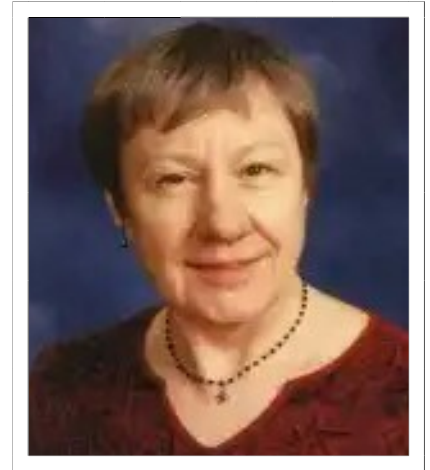
Notes from the Dean and Sub-Dean

I once had a pastor who required every Thanksgiving Day congregant to write a list of 10 things for which they were thankful. These were then collected and read during prayers. As a fidgety organist, I found this annoying and boring, as most lists said the same thing: "my family," "my health," "the church," "everything I have" etc. Nothing wrong with any of those blessings - but this is a good time to practice some focused thankfulness as well.

As we transition to the seasons of Advent and Christmas, consider being thankful for choir members, instrumentalists, volunteer helpers, supportive clergy, appreciative parishioners, past mentors and present colleagues who encourage you. And share that gratitude - it just may provide a well-deserved lift!

Thank you for your support of our St. Louis Chapter. Blessings on your work in the coming month. I hope to see you all at the Epiphany party in January, when we can be thankful for the fulfillment of another holy season!

Suzanne Manelli
Dean



Suzanne Manelli
Dean



Biff Hackman
Sub-Dean

Greetings STL AGO,

I would like to thank Earl Naylor for hosting our November program at The Episcopal Church of the Holy Communion in University City. He offered insightful remarks and fine playing on the newly renovated Dial Organ. We were also lucky to have the organ builder Robert Dial in attendance.

We will meet for our annual Epiphany Party on Friday, January 2, 2026. Our party will be hosted by Dawn Riske in the Monsignor Ryan Center at Christ the King Parish from 6:00 p.m. -10:00 p.m. The church is located at 7316 Balson Avenue in University City. Food and beverages will be provided and cash donations to offset food costs will be accepted. Please RSVP to me by phone or text at 314-650-9413 or by email at biffhackman@yahoo.com or by December 29.

We have several exciting Chapter events remaining in 2026. On Monday March 2, 2026, we will meet at Peace Lutheran Church for a "Conversation on Female Composer" presented by Dr. Karen Black, Professor of Organ at Wartburg College. She will present a recital at the church on Sunday March 1. We will conclude our program year with our Annual Closing Banquet on Monday May 11 at St. Timothy's Episcopal Church in Creve Coeur. More details on these events will be in upcoming printed editions of The OPUS and via email.

I wish you all the best this Festive Season and in the New Year!

Biff Hackman
Sub Dean, St. Louis Chapter of the American Guild of Organists
Biffhackman@yahoo.com / 314-650-3413



As we eagerly anticipate the 2026 National AGO Convention here in St. Louis there is some exciting news to share.

1. Registration is now open! Thanks to the herculean efforts of Regina Morris the website and registration platform is up and running!
2. You will want to register before January 31 to take advantage of the best Convention rates.
3. I love numbers and here are some facts as of 7:00 pm – Sunday, November 23, 2025:
 - a. 33 individuals have already registered for the convention.
 - b. 14 companies have registered for a total of 25 Exhibit Hall booths. So about ½ the booths have been spoken for.
 - c. Membership in the 2026 Club is steadily growing. This gift level of \$2026 or more will allow you to attend a special July 4 fireworks viewing at the Hyatt Regency for you and a guest. Gifts of any amount are welcome! Many AGO chapters have sent gifts and we hope to receive many more.
4. If you know of anyone who could support the Convention financially (choir members, friends, etc.) please reach out to them. If you need help, please contact Joseph Arndt, our Gifts and Grants Chair and he will provide some helpful suggestions.
5. The Officers of the Convention and Steering Committee have put in many hours to make the 2026 National AGO Convention one to be remembered for having excellent programs, worship, and work shops while remaining finically responsible, no easy task!!
6. Dawn Riske is working on a volunteer form which will be available after the first of the year. There are many ways Chapter members and friends will be able to help the Convention run smoothy. Some (but not all) tasks include staffing the hospitality table, helping with registration check-in, driving performers to and from rehearsals, helping load buses, ushering at concerts, checking name badges at the Exhibit Hall and so many more.
7. With only about six months before the Convention begins, please keep watching The OPUS and our Convention website (www.agostl2026.org) for the latest information.

Wishing you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!!

Burnell L. Hackman
Convention Coordinator

*You will find additional information from
the Convention Registrar on page 4.*



American Guild
of Organists

St. Louis Chapter

2025-2026 Yearbook

News from the Chapter Registrar

There are several updates to the 2025-2026 Chapter Directory:

The correct mailing address for new Chapter member, Dr. Todd Pettit, is 6119 Ray Ave. 63116. Todd's email address is unchanged.

The Chapter welcomes long-time Chapter Friend, Wes Proctor, as a Special (Senior) Member! The directory still lists him as a Chapter Friend.

Please add Amy Crousore to your directory. Her email address is amycookcrafts@yahoo.com

News from the 2026 AGO National Convention Registrar

The biggest Convention Registration news for St. Louis AGO Chapter members is that there is **no** special Chapter member discount, since the Steering Committee has decided that the Transportation Package is optional for all registrants.

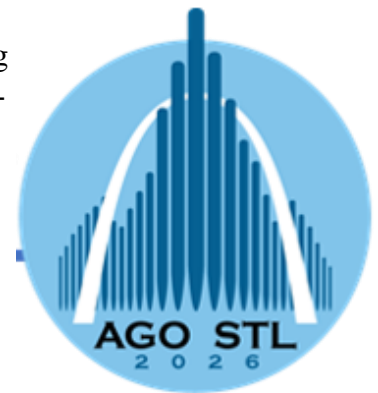
Initially, when the plan had been to make transportation included in the cost of registration, we were going to offer a "No Transportation" option to local Chapter members. This is no longer needed.

We are encouraging out-of-town participants to add the Transportation Package to their Convention registration. This option is available to everyone—including St. Louis Chapter members.

The Super Saver Rates end January 31, 2026, for everyone. So, we encourage all Chapter members to register for the Convention before that date. You should have received an email with a direct link to the Registration site.

However, I STRONGLY ENCOURAGE you to study the [Convention website](#) **before** you start the Registration process. The Convention website has detailed descriptions of all the Workshops, Workshop Presenters, Performers, Venues, and optional events. You will be much better prepared to go through the Registration process, if you have already made your choices in your own mind **BEFORE** you start registering. Otherwise, the process may seem a bit overwhelming.

Please contact the Convention Registrar at agostl2026registrar@gmail.com if you encounter any difficulties.



JANUARY CHAPTER EVENT

Epiphany Party

Friday, January 2, 2026

6:00 - 10:00 p.m.

Monsignor Ryan Center

Christ the King Catholic Church

7316 Balson Avenue

University City, MO 63130

Food and beverages will be provided and cash donations to offset food costs will be accepted.

Please RSVP to Sub-Dean, Biff Hackman by Monday, December 29 via email at bifhackman@yahoo.com or by phone or text at 314-650-9413. "Plus ones" welcome.

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Dec 7 The other three Bs

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Dec 28 This year's favorites

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An Opportunity of a Lifetime

I do not think I ever stopped being a student, because the longer I live the more I realize how much I don't know and how many time-honored postulates I need to reexamine. In my generation, all those Musical Heritage Society recordings Marie Claire Alain performing baroque organ literature and the ubiquitous boxed sets of vinyl featuring Nikolaus Harnoncourt and the Concentus Musicus playing just about everything else was regarded as the quintessence of historic performance practice. And it certainly was – at that point in time. Fast forward to today. Just like the disciplines of physics and chemistry, a lot of new discoveries turned my 1970s textbooks into material for the recycle bin.

If you read your September TAO, you should have seen an advertisement for a **free** (yes, I said “free”) November event at Indiana University Jacobs School of Music – a “Back to Bach Organ Weekend.” I found out about this back in the summer and decided to go after my colleague and friend, Gereon Krahforst (remember, he used to be in St. Louis at the Cathedral Basilica), told me I really needed to go and get some face time with Ludger Lohmann. The prophetic word was confirmed by one of Dr. Lohmann's well-known students, Nathan Laube, to whom I addressed the same question when he was in Jefferson City for a concert on November 2. Dr. Lohmann was the senior researcher on the GOArt organ research project of Göteborg University and is on loan to IU for one month each semester for the next two years. He is regarded in Europe as The Authority on 16th through 18th century keyboard practice. Oh, I should also mention he is one of the finest organists I've ever heard and an insightful teacher. At the time of this writing, I am still pouring over my notes and figuring out the myriad of applications in my own practice. Aside from the master classes, complete reconstruction of a Leipzig *Hauptgottesdienst* (for the 22nd Sunday after Trinity) and outstanding student and faculty performances, we all experienced a watershed event when he performed *The Art of the Fugue* (BWV 1080) on the Opus 91 C. B. Fisk in Alumni Hall (an instrument I like more and more every time I hear it or get to play it).

I heard the BWV 1080 performed a long time ago and it was a one hour, fifteen-minute act of archaeological piety in D-minor. Even with an engaging pre-concert discussion and good handouts illustrating how all the *contrapuncti* were put together, I thought I was going to enjoy the evening as much as getting my teeth cleaned. Oh, was I wrong! I was blown away by one of the most gripping, captivating performances I ever heard, and so was everybody else. In the IU performing arts culture, standing ovations are very, very rare; the audience has experienced great performers year after year and, to coin a showbiz phrase known to stand-up comics, it's “a tough room to play.” Ludger didn't just get a standing ovation, it went on for over five minutes. The Hoosiers' 11-0 win over Wisconsin wasn't the only showstopper that day.

Here is your opportunity: There is another free event coming up February 13-15, 2026, that will focus on Bach's predecessors. You can experience some great performers, wonderful instruments, masterclasses, and instruction by simply reaching out, signing up, and booking a room for your stay (Oh, and line up a Sunday sub, but don't call me; I will not be available). Your only out-of-pocket expenses are for travel and lodging. Here is a link for more information: <https://blogs.iu.edu/jsomorgan/2025-2026-organ-weekends/> Hey, what a unique way to spend Valentine's Day weekend!

The organ department is planning two more of these in the Fall of 2026 and late Winter 2027. The current plan is to focus on German Romantic in Fall of 2026 and the final event in 2027 will be a bit of a surprise! Stay tuned.

Please feel free to reach out to me if you would like to know more. And, as an IU alum and “regular” at music school events, I can give you some travel tips and recommends.

In the meantime, Merry Christmas and Blessed New Year.

William Sullivan

Events Calendar

Check the Concerts and Events section of the Chapter website (www.agostlouis.org) for the most current list of upcoming events. When visiting that page, be sure to click on the heading of each concert listing for full details, including contact information, driving directions, etc.

Sunday, December 7 - 3:00 PM

ReBellion Handbell Ensemble presents "The Stars of Christmas"

Hope Lutheran Church

5218 Neosho Street, St. Louis, MO 63109

Featuring traditional and seasonal music for handbells. A reception will follow the program.
The concert is free and open to the public.

Monday, December 8 - 7:00 PM

ReBellion Handbell Ensemble presents "The Stars of Christmas"

Nazareth Living Center

2 Nazareth Lane

St. Louis, Mo. 63129

Featuring traditional and seasonal music for handbells. A reception will follow the program.
The concert is free and open to the public.

Saturday, December 13 - 4:00 PM

ReBellion Handbell Ensemble presents "The Stars of Christmas"

With the St. Louis Wind Symphony

Kirkwood United Methodist Church

201 W. Adams Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63122

Featuring traditional and seasonal music for handbells. A reception will follow the program.
The concert is free and open to the public.

Monday, December 15 - 7:00 PM

ReBellion Handbell Ensemble presents "The Stars of Christmas"

Friendship Village Sunset Hills

12563 Village Circle Drive

St. Louis, Mo. 63127

Featuring traditional and seasonal music for handbells. A reception will follow the program.
The concert is free and open to the public.

Wednesday, December 17 - 12:15 PM

Organ Recital: Bill Stein and Kevin Chunko

First Presbyterian Church of Kirkwood

100 East Adams, Kirkwood, MO 63122

Join us for this free half-hour recital performed on our beautiful Casavant organ.

For more information, please visit conspirito.kirkwoodpres.org.

Sunday, December 21 - 3:00 PM

Christmas at Peace

Peace Lutheran Church

737 Barracksview Road, St. Louis MO 63125

Sunday, December 21 - 5:00 PM

Choral Concert: Handel's Messiah

Christ Church Cathedral

1210 Locust Street, St. Louis, MO 63103

A special choral concert with prayers featuring the Cathedral Choir and Orchestra.
A reception sponsored by the St. Martha's Guild will follow the concert.

BOARD OFFICERS

2025-2026 Chapter Leadership Team



OFFICERS:

Dean - Suzanne Manelli
 Sub-Dean - Biff Hackman
 Secretary - Gaye Anderson
 Treasurer - Mike Kaberline
 Past Dean - Jeffrey White

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

Class of 2026

Stephen Jones
 Mark Lawson
 Sharon Whitlock

Class of 2027

Mary Hitchcock-Reinhart
 Earl Naylor
 Spencer Smith

Class of 2028

Joseph Arndt
 Luella Foster
 Matthew Gerhardt

APPOINTED POSITIONS:

2026 Convention Coordinator
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Auditor
 Denis J. Doelling
Certification Coordinator
 Brent Johnson
Dinner Reservations
 Dr. Cathy Bolduan
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 Jeff White & Regina Morris
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THE OPUS

The Official Publication
 of the St. Louis Chapter
 of the American Guild of Organists
 3526 Oxford Blvd.
 St. Louis, MO 63143-4209
 Special Holiday Issue

You are invited to submit material for publication consideration.
 Material and calendar items should be e-mailed to newsletter@agostlouis.org.

Copy deadline for the January issue is December 15.

Send address changes or mailing label requests to:

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 St. Louis MO 63143-4209