



PIPELINE

American Organist Guild—Red River Valley Chapter

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May 2006

The Contemporary Service *(Follow up)*

Is the contemporary service a valid form of worship in the Christian church? First, let us define "worship".

One definition given in Webster's Collegiate Dictionary is "Reverence tendered a divine being (God) or a super natural power". (Paganism?) Worship for us is then the edification of the Almighty God. One popular Bible verse describing worship is, "Be still and know that I am God". As we enter the sanctuary, we were taught in Sunday School that we were now in God's house and to show due respect. In the Catholic and Episcopal Churches, worshippers kneel before sitting down which demonstrates a profound love and respect for Jesus Christ who sacrificed everything to atone for our sins.

Historically, worship is also art, which has produced gigantic cathedrals, astounding woodcarvings, priceless stained glass windows, and statues of apostles, saints and stupefying architecture.

In more recent times, the Christian church has undergone the greatest change in worship attitudes and practices in the history of the church. No longer is the sanctuary respected as the Lord's temple but now has become a venue for entertainment, or as some call it, "Theological entertainment" with organs and art being shown the door.

The profound disrespect for organs and organists is legion. We can then harken back to Mozart who called the pipe organ, "the king of the instruments". French philosopher Honoré de Balzac called the pipe organ, "the most ingenious musical instrument ever devised by man."

Roy Stahl, former Concordia College music professor, once said upon hearing the worship team; "It would be like asking the band at a Saturday night dance to play "Beautiful Savior!" Paul Jacobs, who was interviewed for the Diapason Magazine said "[Praise Music] is extremely destructive to beauty because it serves the opposite purpose of what true music and art serve and that is, it numbs us." A pastor once responded referring to praise band music, "Church music should be the very best that can be gleaned from talented and highly trained composers

in order for it to be worthy of worship". During the AGO workshop on April 1, 2006, an organist made mention of praise music, whereby Dr. Olsen said that this is really not music at all. Carl Schalk made this comment in Metro Lutheran, published for the Twin Cities area. He warned against using new worship resources not worthy of the Christian worship. He says composers of contemporary worship erode the very gospel they purport to proclaim. "Third rate work is not acceptable." He declares and calls upon musicians to focus on integrity, not performance. "We need to judge between shoddy and on the other hand, that which is appropriate for the worship of God."

One particularly sad result is that the congregations are not participating for the most part but are just being regaled by the band and its singers. While many bands will try to teach the melodies to the crowd, by the time the next Sunday worship comes, worshipers are faced with learning a brand new melody. With the insipid and trite tunes being played, many have no motivation to learn them and simply stop participating. (The next time you attend a contemporary service, just look around and see how many lips are moving. You will be surprised.) When one sees the ineptitude of those who write the lyrics for praise music, it makes one wonder if they ever had any religious training.

Many AGO members are forced to participate in these activities as a part of their job description. An AGO member is also required to abide by the declaration of Principals put forth by the national headquarters. The fourth paragraph reads:

"We believe that at all times and in all places it is meet, and right, and our bounden duty to work and pray for the advancement of Divine Worship in the Holy gifts of strength and nobleness; to the need that God's House may be purged of its blemishes, that the minds of all may be instructed, that the honor of that House may be guarded in our time and in the time to come."

(continued on page 2)

MYTHS: Reasons Why People Don't Join AGO

MYTH: AGO is only for organ teachers. **TRUTH:** AGO is for all organists, whether one is a teacher, or not.

MYTH: AGO is too expensive. **TRUTH:** The average cost of a regular AGO membership is \$7 per month.

MYTH: AGO is only about organ music. **TRUTH:** AGO promotes education in the fields of choral music, handbells, composition and musicology.

(Credit: Martha Sobaje)

Organist Guild Lunch Club

~First Friday of the month at Noon
~Fargo downtown Fryin' Pan Restaurant
~Everyone is welcome!

Chapter Officers

Dean: Lance Johnson
Sub-Dean: Vicky Wms Sieben
Secretary: Bill Tweten
Treasurer: Marty Baumgartner

Board Members at Large

2006: Michael Olson, Robyn Vinje
2007: Brad Steen, Dawn Pappenfuss
2008: Sue Clambey, Sally Harmon

(The Contemporary Service, continued from page 1)

Perhaps one of the most negative aspects of the contemporary worship is its profound disrespect to those who hold their tradition and worship practices treasured. Many who have their own church adopting the new worship have left for other congregations who either do not have this new worship or hold it in another part of the church. The author has seen some of the best families in his own church bail out. Many are shocked to walk into a neo-gothic church with its high vaulted ceilings, stained glass windows, beautifully carved woodwork and pipe organ only to be greeted by guitars and a set of drums. For all the years they worshipped in the traditional style, this is now all invalidated and they are forced to endure the new modern worship.

So I leave my readers with this question: As you begin your worship, and Christ is in your presence with His hands outstretched showing the scars from His crucifixion, should He be greeted by guitars and amplifiers or a congregation singing hymns of praise accompanied by a mighty pipe organ?

I would like to take this opportunity to thank those who furnished information for my series on the contemporary service: Pastor David Holte, Rene Clausen, Dr. Timothy Olsen, Paul Jacobs, Jean Hanson, Roy Stahl, Majorie Possehl, Dan Marks, Sue Knorr, Dale Lammi, Ramon Daveluy, Joyce Johnson Robinson, Diapason magazine, The American Institute of Organ Builders, Metro Lutheran Newsletter, Billboard Top 10 (1950).

~Lance E. Johnson

In the next issue, "Are colleges scaring away organ students?"

Board Meeting Notes

Thursday, April 20th, 2006: The RRVAGO Board met at Boulger Funeral Home. Members present were: Lance Johnson, Vicky Sieben, Sue Clambey, Robyn Vinje, Marty Baumgartner, Michael Olson, and Bill Tweten.

Review of Tim Olsen Recital and Organist Workshop—The Board had nothing but glowing remarks about the wonderful recital given by Dr. Tim Olsen—and his insights during the organ workshop. The use of a large screen in front of the sanctuary to watch the organist's hand and footwork was a great hit!

The profit from the Olsen recital is \$61.00 to date. There was discussion about paying an additional fee for the workshop, and because of the confusion, Robyn moved that we secure a written contract in the future for our recitalists, and Vicky seconded. Motion passed that we secure contracts to avoid any conflicts regarding fees. Other recital concerns were discussed. Concordia had publicized that the recital was free. The church was not available to rehearse during the afternoon when Tim would have had the best time to practice. The Pipeline didn't have a promotional ad in the April issue, because it wasn't written with the intent of being sent out before the recital. The Forum didn't put the concert in the arts listing for the day.

Sue moved that Marty be reimbursed \$105.85 for the rental car for Tim. This was placed on Marty's own credit card. Motion passed.

Next item of business was the election of officers. Lance brought forward the following candidates: Dean: Vicky Sieben; Sub-dean: Robyn Vinje; Secretary: Ruth Discher; Treasurer: Lance Johnson; Members at Large: Ruth Strawn and Alpha Roeszler. Marty will see that the ballots for the 2006-2007 RRVAGO officers are sent to the members through electronic mail.

The last item of business was to discuss names of new perspective members for the RRVAGO. Eighteen names were submitted and members of the board will be in contact with them to be sure they have the opportunity to receive the membership form!

Marty moved to include the substitute list in the regular Pipeline as an added feature. Robyn seconded. Motion passed.

Future topics to discuss: Vicki suggests that we send an abbreviated version of the Pipeline to our newly formed church list. Michael suggests that at the May meeting we talk about and select next years' recitalist. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

~Bill Tweten, Secretary

Pipeline Profile

Marty Baumgartner, Treasurer



First of all let me say that writing a profile seems somewhat to me like writing an obituary.

For those of you who do not know what I do, I am a funeral director. So as any obituary goes, let's start chronologically.

I was raised on our family farm near Rothsay, MN. I graduated from high school and then attended Concordia College in

Moorhead. I graduated in 1994 with degrees in Business Administration and Biology. (Yes, I also think that is a very strange combination.) Following Concordia, I graduated from the University of Minnesota College of Mortuary Science in Minneapolis. After completing (and also passing) all of the exams I began working in Forest Lake, MN. This was very brief, and I soon returned to Fargo and began working as a licensed funeral director for Boulger Funeral Home. I have been employed there for the past 11 years.

I am also employed at Peace Lutheran Church where I have served as organist for almost five years. Peace is a wonderful congregation and I cherish my time there.

During my years at Concordia I was fortunate enough to have had the opportunity to study under Peter Nygaard. Those years of lessons at Concordia were one of the greatest blessings that I have ever received.

I live in Fargo with my wife Sheila, and our sons, Ethan (4) and Avery (2). With two little ones there is absolutely no quiet time at our house!

There it is—more information that anyone ever wanted.

To close any good obituary—I mean profile, I must say that in lieu of flowers—your attendance is requested at our home for the chapter family potluck on May 7. Please come, bring your family, and enjoy an afternoon at our home.

~Marty

NOTICE

**The *Pipeline* will be back in your mailbox in August.
Please mark your calendars to get content in for
this issue by July 15.
Thank you!**

NOTE: The "Pipeline Profile" has been created so members can get to know more about each other. We encourage everyone to write their own profile and send it along with a picture of yourself (.jpg or .bmp format) to us at rvago@hotmail.com. We may need to edit content if necessary and will feature a member in each edition (space permitting). We look forward to meeting each of you!

Highlights of Hymn Playing Workshop

"Leading Congregational Singing, Basic Hymn Improvisation and Registration"

Presented by Dr. Tim Olsen

Trinity Lutheran Church, Moorhead, MN

April 1, 2006

It would be hard to describe the incredible workshop that Dr. Tim Olsen led for the RRVAGO on April 1—but I will try to convey the highlights. Since Dr. Olsen is both a Midwestern boy and a Concordia graduate....we were all busting with pride and overwhelmed with his incredible knowledge. (Okay, maybe Eastman School of Music and Dr. Higgs also had a little bit to do with it!) I had heard Tim play his student recital at Concordia years ago and I knew we were in for a real treat!

The first half of the workshop was master class of sorts. Peter Rogahn, a talented Concordia student studying with Peter Nygaard, performed his recital pieces and then was given wonderful suggestions by Dr. Olsen. Here are the gems of wisdom that I wrote down during this half.

The first piece played was Messian's "La Nativite". This dramatic piece is truly a handful! Here I was reminded about the importance of knowing about the composer and the "story" of the piece. This work is filled with different modes of transposition, is very rhythmic and has strange sonorities that beg you to dig further in understanding how this would be played. A very difficult piece, and wonderful to hear! Dr. Olsen talked about the precision needed to keep the rhythmic writing clean. He emphasized using the smallest subdivided value to count and clean up the rhythms, especially in slowest passages. He also demonstrated using the "acoustic" of the room you are playing in. The toccata sound is more brilliant and crisp when the last chord of a flourish is cut off quickly—allowing the room to add the reverberation and excitement. The "silences" of the rhythms are also as important as the chords themselves.

The challenge of playing "double chords"....in fast passages when repeated chords of 1/16th notes are required and your forearms begin to play "out" and fatigue..... Dr. Tim's suggestion is to play the two chords in one motion....the first chord on the downward motion and the second chord is played as

you lift up....very energy efficient! This cleans up the sound and keeps the arms relaxed. (I can't wait to try this on Widor!)

Many other great general organ performance tips:

"Always be able to play a piece faster than the speed limit!" (Dr. Higgs)

"Practice difficult passages slowly and use various rhythms and dotted note values to move through the passage easier"—(Ruth Berge also used this method with her students.)

"Bench height is critical—have the bench high enough, that when you relax your legs they barely make the pedals sound." (I bet many of us play with the bench too low!)

"In Baroque music, the tocktus—or beat—remains the same from meter to meter"

"In hymn playing, make sure that the flutes aren't muddying down the sound."

"When you practice hymns, you must start by reading the hymn as poetry and getting the feel for the tempo and registration from cues in the text."

"One of our biggest jobs as organist is to practice, practice, practice!"

"We must LEAD the congregational song and not follow them."

"You must follow the punctuation of the text, to know where to break phrasing in the hymn."

"Paul Manz always said....you need one beat of rest between stanzas of a hymn."

"Organ idiomatic – don't play pianistic music on the organ as if it were a piano"

"Must keep the beat going between stanzas—need time to breathe and swallow for the congregation. You must practice this for every hymn!"

"Hymn tempos are determined by many factors: text, placement of hymn in the service, size of sanctuary/congregation, and tradition of the congregation" (It really is a lot to think about!)

"Registration for hymns—suggest Principals 8' and 4' is usually minimum. Use 2' and Mixture also."

"Don't play *ff* all the time, but never under-support a congregation."

"The normal "touch" for hymn playing is legato."

"You must practice hitting pistons between stanzas as well!"

"Pedal registrations should always balance the manuals. For example: 8'4'2' Principals in the manual will need 16'8'4' in the pedal."

"Avoid only using only the 16' pitch in the pedal for hymns."

"When women sing a stanza alone, or in a more "prayerful" stanza, don't use the 16' in the pedal."

"In hymn registrations, you can add to the Plenum (Principal Chorus): start with the 8'4'2' and then can add mixture, 16' Bourdon or 16' Quintadena, and add 16' or 8' Trumpet or other reed. Also can couple in other manuals if necessary."

"For smaller instruments, try stops at different octaves."

"Avoid using celestes in hymn playing."

"Avoid over-coupling to the pedal in hymn playing"

I hope this summary helps add more tips for your hymn playing and enjoyment. Dr. Tim Olsen did an absolutely fantastic job and those fortunate enough to attend the event had a great time. If you are interested in having a copy of the workshop handouts prepared by Dr. Olsen, contact one of the board members and we'll be sure to get a copy for you.

Unfortunately, not many organists attended this workshop. We all need to continue "honing" our craft and making our instruments sound as good as they can; or we will lose the majesty and historic sound of the mighty pipe organ!

~Bill Tweten, Secretary RRVAGO and Organist at Messiah Lutheran, Fargo

If you are interested in getting the *Pipeline* delivered right to your email box, please send a message to rrvago@hotmail.com and include the email address that the newsletter should be sent to. For those without email, we will continue to mail the newsletter as we have in the past.

We encourage feedback as well as submission of articles for publication. Please send your articles by the 15th of each month to rrvago@hotmail.com. We reserve the right to accept, reject, edit or modify any submission.

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funeral service

Serving When the Need is Greatest

Upcoming Events

May 7, 2006

Family Potluck Dinner

Marty & Sheila Baumgartner res. ~ 4:00PM

2709 - 39th Ave SW, Fargo, ND



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