



# VOX PRINCIPALIS



The Newsletter of the  
Sioux Trails Chapter of the American Guild of Organists

October 2014

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## A Message from the Chapter Dean

*from Wayne Wagner*

Many of you were able to attend our fall get-together and enjoyed starting our 35<sup>th</sup> year with two activities that have been chapter favorites for as long as I can recall – a good meal with vibrant conversation and good organ music played excellently by one of our members. (Thanks, Chad!) We were also very pleased to have Marilyn Schempp, Councilor for the North Central Region of the AGO, with us that evening. Her presence reminded us that we are part of a much larger group of persons who have a common interest in the organ and organ music.

Something that may be unique as an AGO chapter, or at the very least is worth recognizing by our chapter, was in my thoughts on the drive home that evening. At the meeting we noted that several attendees and other current chapter members were involved in the formation of our chapter 35 years ago. At the same time, about one fourth of the members who attended our first event this fall were undergraduate organ students at Bethany Lutheran College, Gustavus Adolphus College, or Martin Luther College. Add to that everyone in between, and we have a wonderfully complementary blending within our chapter membership in several respects! And, having organ programs with a solid number of students at three colleges located within our immediate area is a significant asset for our chapter.

Our past year included dinners, recitals (students, members, and others), and educational presentations about Cavaille-Coll organs and about hymn playing. As was done at our annual meeting during the September dinner, sincere thanks are extended to...

- All who helped in any way to make our past year another successful one!
- Executive Committee members whose terms ended in June – Michael Asmus, David Porth, and Mark Thompson.

- Executive Committee members and others who help to plan and administer our various events.
- Summer recitalists who are chapter members. Eight of the ten recitals in 2014 were presented by chapter members. In addition, the remaining two recitalists have very close connections to our chapter. (As has been our practice for many years, those who were with us at our annual dinner received our thanks by the chapter paying for their dinner.)

Our current plans for the 2014-2015 season are to present a similar menu of opportunities to learn, to reach out to our communities, to socialize, and in a variety of ways to encourage one another. To that end, the chapter officers truly hope that you find membership a rewarding part of your life during the coming year.

As we are beginning our yearly activities, we welcome especially new members who have joined or re-joined our chapter. We're happy to have you with us! To all of our members – your membership in our chapter is greatly appreciated. Your attendance at our events is an excellent way to experience benefit from your membership. Join with other members as often as you can! Also encourage other organists and persons with an interest in the organ to attend an event and to consider becoming a member of our chapter.

One final item – be sure to renew your membership using the ONCARD procedures that you should have received by now. If you have not, please contact the national office. They will be happy to be of assistance.

We look forward to seeing you throughout the coming year. If you have suggestions, concerns, or other thoughts related to our events or chapter operation, do feel welcome to contact me or any of the other officers.

All the best for each of you,  
Wayne

## Tales from aboard: a Tour of German Organs

from Paul Otte

I am happy to report on the tour my wife and I led to Germany from July 8-22, 2014. It included visits to several historic organs and churches. The tour group included several organists and one organ installer, Mr. Dennis Davis of Glencoe. The tour began with an "Organ Vespers" in the Kaiser Wilhelm Gedächtniskirche in Berlin, an event which is held daily at 5:00 and 5:30 p.m. The organ there is a 1962 Karl Schuke. We visited the Nikolaikirche there where the careers of Johann Crüger and Paul Gerhard intertwined. One primary focus of the tour was a day in Wittenberg, "hometown" of the Protestant Reformation. In preparation for the 500th anniversary of that event in 2017, the two main churches in town were unfortunately closed for renovation and covered in scaffolding, not an uncommon sight in this country that cherishes its long history. These churches contain the 1864 Ledegast organ and the 1983 Sauer organ.

No pilgrimage to Germany is complete without visiting the Nikolaikirche (1862 Ledegast) and the Thomaskirche in Leipzig (1889 Sauer & 2000 Woehl) where Johann Sebastian Bach served as cantor in the prime of his life. The Thomaskirche is one of the earliest places in Europe which documented the use of organ music in worship services. "Organ Songs" were mentioned here as early as 1384 for a Maria Mass. There we noted the grave of J. S. Bach as well as the window dedicated to him (and, of interest to Minnesotans, a window dedicated to Gustavus Adolphus).

We attended Sunday morning worship in the St. Anne Church in Eisleben, the town where Luther was born and also, by coincidence, where he died. The organist surprisingly played "The Great Gate of Kiev" by Mussorgsky as a postlude, perhaps brought to mind by the events in the Ukraine this summer.

We spent a day in Freiberg, where Gottfried Silbermann had his workshop. His magnum opus still sings in the spectacular Freiburger Domkirche. This September/October, there is celebration of the 300th anniversary of this organ in Freiberg. We heard a recital by the Cantor Clemens Lucke in the St. Peter Church on another substantial Silbermann instrument and also had the opportunity to play it briefly afterward. We only missed hearing our colleague Dean Billmeyer from the University of Minnesota who was to play a recital there the next day.

We visited the Bach House in Eisenach and were treated to a demonstration of period instruments and also toured the fine museum attached to the house. Traveling on to Dresden, we heard the fine new organ built by Kern of Strasbourg in a noon "Organ Devotion" -- a daily event in this newly rebuilt architectural masterpiece.

While visiting some beautiful cities, we were able to see the soaring new Rieger instrument in St. Peter's Church in Regensburg, and the instrument in St. Lorenz in Nuremberg. It is one of the largest church organs in the world consisting of three separate organs playable from one main console. We also visited Pachelbel's church in Nuremberg. Here's a bit of trivia for you: The largest organ in Germany (16,013 pipes) was built for the Nazi

Party Luitpold Hall, sometimes called the Congress Hall, in Nuremberg by the Walcker firm in 1936, but it was destroyed in bombing during the war.

After visiting Würzburg and Rothenburg ob der Tauber and a little cruise on the beautiful Rhine, our last stop was at the St. Valentinus church in Kiedrich, home to the oldest playable *in situ* organ in Germany which was built somewhere just before 1500. Unfortunately, we were again thwarted in our attempts to visit this instrument by refurbishment activities in the church, but



The oldest "in situ" organ in Germany in St. Valentinus Kirche in Kiedrich, near Frankfurt. (Photo: P. Otte)

I got to play a little, wheezy harmonium in the funeral chapel adjacent. I was not consoled at that console. But, it gives me another reason to go back to Germany! I was able to find a recording of this instrument available through the OHS website, and it is quite spectacular.

Our farewell dinner was held at Kloster Eberbach, known for its wonderful wines and for its perfectly Romanesque chapel. We had a marvelous time. If any of you are going on your own, I'd be happy to help you with any travel arrangements and itinerary planning. Just give a call.

## November Chapter Event Changed

A concert to be given by Finnish organist Kalevi Kiviniemi at Gustavus has been canceled due to unforeseen reasons. This was also scheduled as a chapter event for the STAGO, originally scheduled for 21 November 2014. An organ crawl to Sleepy Eye, MN is being planned as a replacement. St. John's Lutheran Church in Sleepy Eye has been in the media as of late, having newly renovated their Wicks organ. Chapter treasurer Ron Shilling was recently featured in a news-story on KEYC-TV about the organs renovation.

A date and time have yet to be selected; however, this organ crawl will happen in mid- to late-November. More information will be communicated once details are finalized.

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