



The CYPHER

Newsletter of the Southern Arizona Chapter
American Guild of Organists

Volume 45, Number 8
April 2026

Chapter Website: www.saago.org

2025-26 calendar at a glance

Janet Tolman with Arizona Symphonic Winds
Sunday, April 12, 3 p.m.
Christ Church United Methodist

SAAGO—How the West Was Won, Valerie Harris
Saturday, Apr. 18, 10 a.m.
St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

An Evening with Friends
Friday, Apr. 17, 7 p.m.
St. Andrew the Apostle Catholic Church

Ji Sun Lee, Organ and Michael Lich, Guitar
Sunday, Apr. 26, 3 p.m.
St. Albans Episcopal Church

Dong-ill Shin, Organ Catalina Organ Festival
Monday, Apr. 27, 7 p.m.
Catalina United Methodist Church

St. Michael's Festival Choir
Saturday, May 2, 3 p.m. & 7 p.m.
St. Michael's and All Angels Episcopal Church

SAAGO—Organ Exploration/Open Console Two Organs, and lunch
Saturday, May 9
9 a.m., Northminster Presbyterian Church
10:30 a.m., Catalina United Methodist Church

All the Bells and Whistles
Sunday, May 17, 3 p.m.
Christ Church United Methodist

April 18, How the West Was Won!

How the West Was Won: The Impact of Tourism on Organ Culture

Valerie Harris

Saturday, Apr. 18, 10 a.m.

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

7650 N. Paseo Del Norte—the northeast corner near original chapel (see map, p. 11)

Discover how the organ helped redefine the American West. During the golden age of railroad travel, visitors from the East flocked to Salt Lake City, where the Salt Lake Tabernacle and its famed organ became the highlight of their journey.

As railroads promoted these recitals, they helped reshape the image of the West—from rugged and untamed to cultured, beautiful, and inviting. Inspired by this movement, communities across the region—including Tucson—embraced organ music as a symbol of refinement and civic pride, launching their own recital traditions.

Join us to explore how music, tourism, and ambition transformed the West—and how this legacy still resonates today.

CAZAGO Dean Harris is a concert organist, church musician, presenter and educator, who performs regularly as guest recitalist on the historic Aeolian-Skinner organ at the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, and at the Musical Instrument Museum on the 1859 Robjohn organ. She holds a DMA in Organ Performance from Arizona State University, where she studied with Kimberly Marshall. She holds a Master's in Organ Performance and a Graduate Certificate of Church Music from Shenandoah Conservatory and a Bachelor of Music degree from Brigham Young University.



The Southern Pacific Train Station, in Tucson. December 1907. *Arizona Historical Society*

Photo of the early Salt Lake Tabernacle Organ on page 8

**AMERICAN GUILD
OF ORGANISTS**

**SOUTHERN ARIZONA
CHAPTER**

P.O. Box 31315
Tucson, AZ 85751-1315

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public document.



The CYPHER

Stardust (Dusty) Johnson, *Editor* (skj5@cox.net)

**Submission Deadlines for the 2025-2026 season
are the 15th of each month.**

NOTE: Chapter members are invited to submit program information for inclusion in THE CYPHER. We want to include your programs!

Please send program descriptions, along with pertinent information—title, date, location, time, brief description, cost, and photos—to Dusty Johnson, *CYPHER* editor. The information will appear in the print edition as well as in the online edition. Material may be edited as needed.

Please email information to

Dusty Johnson, editor, at skj5@cox.net by the 15th of the month. You may also send it via U.S. mail.

Advertising space available

Full page, \$150
Half page (horizontal), \$100
Quarter page (vertical), \$75
Quarter page (horizontal) \$75
Business card size, \$75
Website, any size, \$50

A *as in an organ from one blast of wind
To many a row of pipes the soundboard breathes.*
Milton—*Paradise Lost*. Bk. I. L. 708.

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Message from the dean...

Dear Colleagues,

The past several weeks have been a roller coaster of delights and challenges. Perhaps you can relate. Several weeks ago, I had a weekend that included a slightly more than 24 hour stretch of rehearsals interspersed with sleep, equipment set-up and tear-down, and a few breaks (such as driving, breakfast and lunch). Rehearsals included the entire program for the spring concert(s) of Sonoran Bells (one program, five performances) as well as a couple pieces for the TMTA Ensemble concert. Often some of us with students in the concert also perform in some of the pieces to avoid unoccupied pianos on stage.

This year's TMTA event was the 73rd annual Ensemble Concert presented by the Tucson Music Teachers Association. The annual concerts involve a couple dozen duos, duets, and even trios, played from memory by dozens of piano students performing on twelve pianos in Centennial Hall, conducted by Dr. Timothy Kolosick. Then, more recently, I had another similarly busy weekend, except including the Ensemble Concert itself. Fortunately, the concert was followed by Pima Community College's Spring Break. Towards the end of the break, I was in Chicago to attend the Music Teachers National Association's 75th annual convention (but more about that next time).

Last month I touched upon the value of our connections with others, but we have other important connections as well. I've been thinking of

our connections with our heritage and traditions, and also our connections with ourselves. One book in particular set me to thinking about the intrapersonal connections with music that we have as musicians. Connecting ourselves with how the brain actually 'works' has much to do with goals and intentions. Molly Gebrian delves into such topics in her recently published book from Oxford University Press: "Learn Faster, Perform Better: A musician's guide to the neuroscience of practicing." In her book, she provides an engaging and entertaining investigation into how our brains really function, and how we can harness these insights to inform and improve our own individual musical activities. Insights from her book are already changing the ways I practice and rehearse, but I feel like I'm only just beginning to incorporate some of the practice strategies that she discusses.

Whether we are immersing ourselves in the ever-unfolding act of re-creating music, practicing, or during 'services,' making music 'with our own two hands' (or even both hands and both feet!), or even as an active listener, music helps connect us with ourselves, with one another, with history, and with the world around us.

Stay connected...

Raymond T. Ryder, Dean

"I would rather write 10,000 notes than a single letter of the alphabet."

— Ludwig van Beethoven

Chapter and Member Programs

Janet Tolman, Organ, with the Arizona Symphonic Winds

Sunday, April 12, 3 p.m.,
Christ Church United Methodist
655 N. Craycroft Rd.
Free

The Arizona Symphonic Winds, under the direction of László Veres, will for the first time in its 40-year history, perform a major work with organ, featuring organist and past chapter dean, Janet Tolman, in Saint-Saens "Finale" from "Symphony No. 3." Comprised of 65 volunteers, Arizona Winds, presents concerts throughout the Tucson area and is well known for its free concerts in the park. Both László Veres and Janet Tolman are well known to the Tucson musical community. Be sure to mark your calendar for this unique performance.



An Evening With Friends St. Andrew's Concert Series

Friday, Apr. 17, 7 p.m.
St. Andrew the Apostle Church
800 Taylor Drive, Sierra Vista
Free Will Offering

Billie Hayes and Francie Schofield will perform an eclectic mix of musical styles ranging from Broadway show tunes and Hollywood movie themes to cathedral hymns and concert hall classics in arrangements featuring both solo works and duets for organ, piano and flute. A freewill offering will be accepted for the ongoing maintenance and restoration of the historic 1949 Moller pipe organ.

Ji Sun Lee, Organ and Michael Lich, Guitar

Sunday, Apr. 26, 3 p.m.
St. Alban's Episcopal Church
3738 N Old Sabino Canyon Rd.
Free Will Offering

The concert features Dr. Ji Sun Lee, St. Alban's new music director, and her husband, Michael Lich, classical guitarist. The Lee/Lich duo has performed in S. Korea, Germany, and extensively in the US. The program includes the premiere duo performance of Kip Winger's work, "Windrunner," originally for guitar and orchestra. The performance also includes solo and duo works by Vivaldi, Bach, Schubert and more



Dong-ill Shin, Organ Catalina Organ Festival

Monday, Apr. 27, 7 p.m.
Catalina United Methodist Church
2700 E. Speedway Blvd.
\$\$

Don-ill Shin is a renowned South Korean organist who is also professor at Yonsei University as well as university organist. He is well known for winning major international competitions and for his innovative collaborations with traditional Korean instruments and classical artists like Yo-Yo Ma.



SAAGO—New Program—Organ Exploration/ Open Console, two organs and lunch

Saturday, May 9

- ◆ 9 a.m., Northminster Presbyterian Church
- ◆ 10:30 a.m., Catalina United Methodist Church

Join your colleagues for the opportunity to see, hear and play two notable Tucson instruments, both designed and built by Quimby Pipe Organs. QPO is regarded as one of the premiere organ building firms in the U.S., with organs at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine (NYC, 151 ranks), Fourth Presbyterian Church (Chicago, 143 ranks), First Baptist Church (Jackson, MS, 155 ranks), St. Margaret's Episcopal Church (Palm Desert, CA, 71 ranks), etc.—and, of course, Tucson, AZ.

Holy Week and Easter Services,

Trinity Presbyterian Church
400 E. University Blvd.

Maundy Thursday, Apr. 2, 5:30 pm, Fellowship Hall
Shared meal followed by the Lord's Supper.
Sandwich fixings provided. Bring a side dish to share.

6:30 pm, Service of Tenebrae, Sanctuary
Scripture readings and music relate the story of Jesus' life from the Last Supper to the Crucifixion as candles are extinguished and the sanctuary darkens.

Good Friday, Apr. 3 at noon, Chapel
A service of Scripture and hymns based on the seven last words of Christ.

Easter, Apr. 5, 10:20 a.m., Sanctuary
A celebration of Christ's Resurrection. The Trinity Choir and Orchestra presents the cantata "Calvary's Lamb" by Mary McDonald, directed by Dr. Bruce Chamberlain.



Catalina Organ Festival

2025-2026 Season



Dong-ill Shin

Monday, April 27, 2026 - 7:00 PM

Internationally acclaimed for his exceptional technique and musical insight, Dong-ill Shin has performed at major festivals and concert halls around the world and earned top prizes at leading international competitions. Currently Professor of Organ and University Organist at Yonsei University in Seoul, he brings artistry, depth, and brilliance to every performance.

Catalina United Methodist Church
2700 E Speedway Blvd, Tucson AZ

\$10 Student
\$25 Seniors
\$30 under 60



VISIT WWW.CATALINAMETHODIST.ORG/ORGAN-FESTIVAL/ FOR INFO AND TICKETS!

Congratulations to Noah Smith, grandson of SAAGO members William and Yvonne Kuhlman

Noah Smith was the winner of the first prize in the Annamae Rotman Young Organists Competition sponsored by the Grand Rapids, Michigan chapter of the American Guild of Organists. The Scholarship was established in 2013 by Dr. Richard Rotman in honor of his mother. The 10th annual competition was held at Calvin Church, Grand Rapids this year. The organ is a 50 rank Aeolian Skinner updated by Quimby Pipe Organs in 2009. Noreen Walters, past SAAGO member and former organist at Our Saviour's Lutheran Church was one of the judges.

Noah is Organist and Director of Music at the famous Fountain Street Church in Grand Rapids. He is a graduate of the University of Oklahoma where he studied with Damien Spritzer.

The Scholarship was established in 2013 by Dr. Richard Rotman in honor of his mother.



Back Row: Dr. Richard Rotman, Matt Jakubism, Dr. Gregory Crowell, Dr. Norene Walters, Noah Smith.
Front Row: Ann O'Neill, Rebecca Voogt

Photo, courtesy of the Grand Rapids AGO Chapter

Ji Sun Lee and Michael Lich

SUNDAY APRIL 26, 2026 AT 3:00 PM

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DR. JI SUN LEE, MUSIC DIRECTOR.



Jeffrey Campbell

SATURDAY, JUNE 20



Kristin Holton Prouty

SATURDAY, JULY 18



**In From the Heat
SUMMER CONCERTS**



Lunch at noon in the Fellowship Hall followed by an organ recital in the Sanctuary

Lunch & Concert: \$20 per person / \$30 for two

www.catalinamethodist.org/organ-festival/

Catalina United Methodist Church



New Ruffatti Organ for St. Augustine Cathedral

This past February, Lars Andersen, SAAGO Membership Chair, played the service at the Saint Augustine Cathedral for the ordination and installation of the eighth bishop of the Diocese of Tucson. Lars reported that it was a spectacular and significant service. He also reports that a contract has been signed with Ruffatti Organs of Padua, Italy, to replace the McDowell organ. The McDowell has been removed and the church is using a three-manual Marshall & Ogletree digital instrument whose stops from the Swell, Great and Pedal emanate from the rear gallery with an antiphonal division in the choir area on the nave floor. The rebuilt Ruffatti organ will be re-installed in the rear gallery and will have a new console built by Ruffatti of 4 manuals.



Lars Andersen

The following diocesan news article gives detailed information about the new instrument and includes interesting photos. It's a really neat article containing good information. Be sure to at least peruse it!

<https://news.diocesetucson.org/news/more-than-a-thousand-pipes-two-craftsmen-yet-one-calling>

Lars also included this brief history.

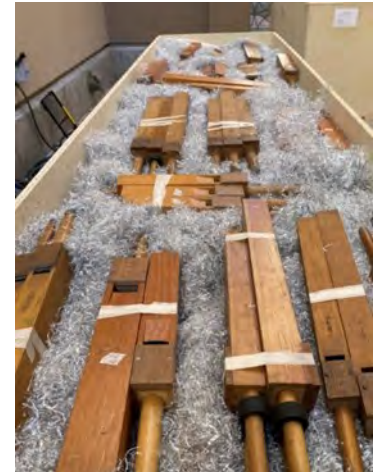
Key Historical and Technical Details

Builder: The organ being replaced was designed and built in Tucson by David McDowell, completed in 1968. Flor Peeters performed the dedication concert in November of 1968. McDowell was a local organ builder who also built organs for many Tucson churches, including such Tucson landmarks as Saint Philip's in the Hills Episcopal Church (replaced with Holtkamp instrument in 1986) and Trinity Presbyterian Church (still extant).

Composition: The instrument features 38 ranks.

Early History: While guitars were the primary instruments when the cathedral was founded, the church eventually transitioned to more traditional liturgical music. A used organ was first installed in the choir loft in the mid-1940s, primarily consisting of Kilgen components with various additions made over the subsequent decades.

Recent Restoration (2026): In early 2026 the McDowell organ was removed to undergo a major renewal led by craftsmen from Fratelli Ruffatti, a world renowned organ firm based in Padua, Italy.



Pipes packed and ready to ship to Italy



The Process: All 16,44 pipes were carefully removed, labeled, and packed for restoration

The Goal: The project focuses on preserving the existing pipes, which are considered rare and valuable assets, rather than on replacing them.



David McDowell
1918-2011

Chaplain's Reflection



Dear SAAGO friends -

THANK YOU to all of our working church musicians for your exhaustive labors at Holy Week and Easter. This is one of the two busiest seasons of the church year for musicians - in some traditions, Christmas is likely the busiest; in others, it's

clearly Easter and its associated observances. My thanks for all the energy and music you have poured out for the people of God. I hope that you are all able to get some good rest before we enter into the home stretch of the program year. God bless you all for your faithful labors

The Rev. Canon David Benedict Hedges, BSG
Rector, Saint Michael & All Angels Church
(520) 886-7292
Emails are checked Tuesday through Friday

Roy Johnson Memorial Scholarship

Students may apply for a scholarship!

Established by the Southern Arizona Chapter of the AGO in memory of Professor Roy Andrew Johnson, the scholarship is available to assist in funding organ study as follows:



- ◆ lessons at any level through collegiate;
- ◆ introductory organ lessons for pianists;
- ◆ Registration fees for an educational event, including a Pipe Organ Encounter (POE);
- ◆ for collegiate level students, registration fees for regional and national conventions of the AGO.
- ◆ for collegiate level students, full membership in the American Guild of Organists, Southern Arizona Chapter.

Scholarship awards for organ study will range from \$350 to \$1500. For educational events, the scholarship will cover the cost of registration. Application forms are online at www.saago.org.

Salt Lake Tabernacle Organ, early photo



When initially constructed, the organ had tracker action and was powered by hand-pumped bellows; later it was powered by water from City Creek. Today it has electro-pneumatic action.

Attend the St. Louis Convention for world-class performances, professional development workshops, and networking with over 1,000 colleagues



National Convention, July 6–10, 2026

St. Louis, MO

Hosted by the St. Louis Chapter

AGOSTL2026@agostlouis.org

St. Andrew's Concert Series
Presents



Featuring

Billie Hayes ♪ Francie Schofield

Friday, April 17, 2026 at 7:00PM

St. Andrew the Apostle Church

800 Taylor Drive, Sierra Vista, AZ 85635

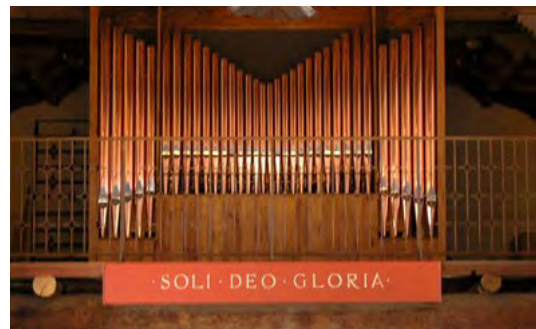
For more information please call (520) 226-5574

There is no charge to attend this concert. A freewill offering will be accepted.

ST MICHAEL'S FESTIVAL CHOIR 2026

- ◆ Motivated and self-driven singers of any age are invited to participate in this community ensemble
- ◆ Singers will receive scores, recordings, and part tracks. The expectation is that they learn the music on their own, then come prepared to two or more of the rehearsals, plus the dress rehearsal (April 29 at 6:30pm).
- ◆ Performances are on May 2, 2026 at 3 p.m. and 7 p.m. at St Michael's Episcopal Church (602 N Wilmot Rd)
- ◆ The Choir will sing four pieces totaling about 25 minutes of music (music does not need to be memorized—maybe except for one piece)
- ◆ There is no fee to participate; however, singers will be asked to offer a donation of \$30, or as much as is feasible for them. Donations cover the costs of music, accompanist, and all the instrumentalists.
- ◆ The first half of the concert will be the Poulenc Organ Concerto (the instrumentalists that we have for this piece—strings and timpani—are those we have for the choral pieces).
- ◆ More information and an online form to register is here: <https://form.jotform.com/260335609037152>

Dr. Chris Fresolone, Director of Music
520-886-7292
music@stmichael.net

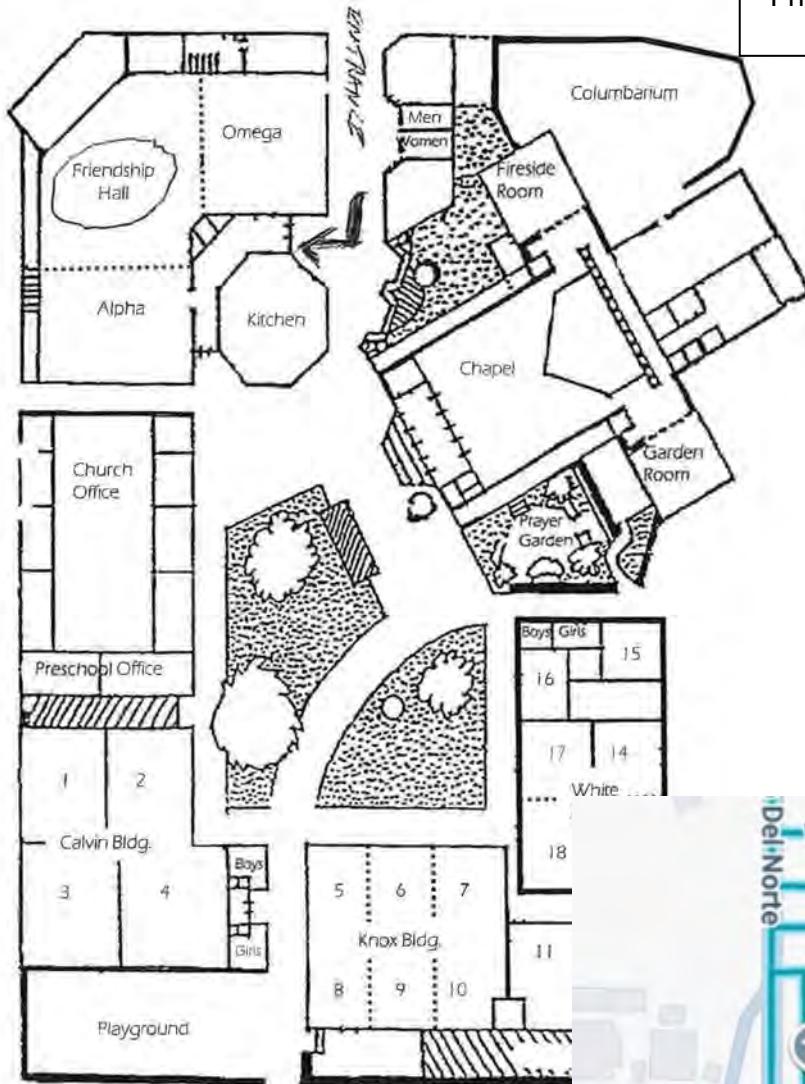


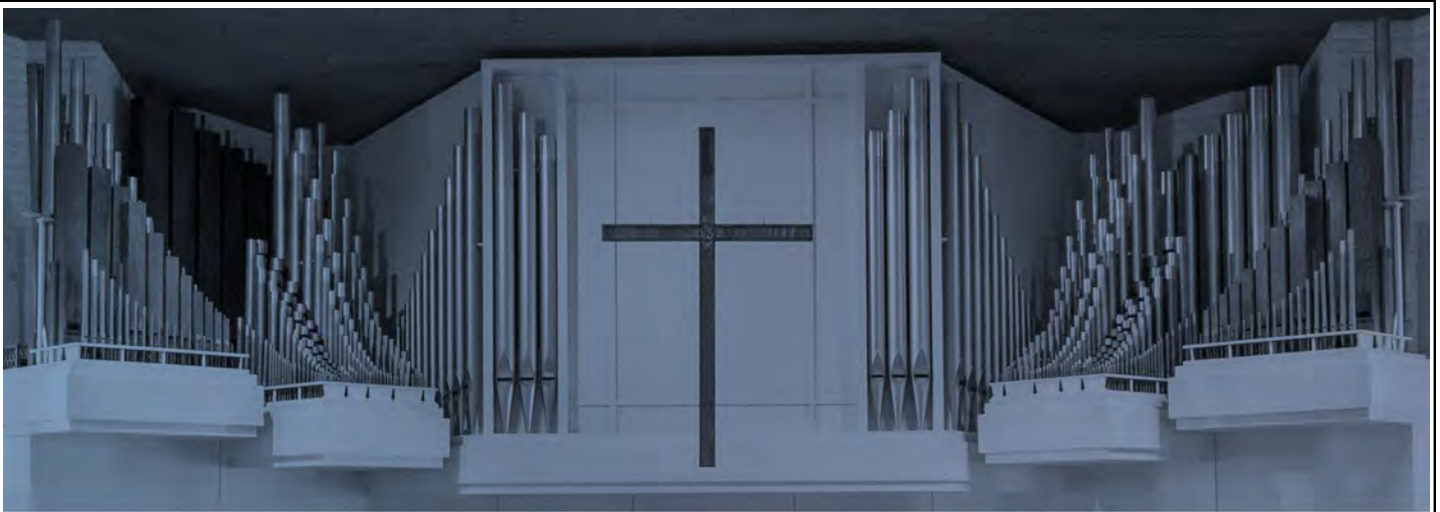
Arizona Symphonic Winds under the direction of László Veres

ST. ANDREW'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH – NE CAMPUS

PARKING

See inset below which shows that the NE campus is north of the present sanctuary. . SAAGO is meeting in Friendship (Fellowship) Hall). See arrow in drawing on the left.





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Updated SAAGO & Member Programs April-June

Janet Tolman with Arizona Symphonic Winds
Sunday, April 12, 3 p.m.
Christ Church United Methodist

An Evening with Friends
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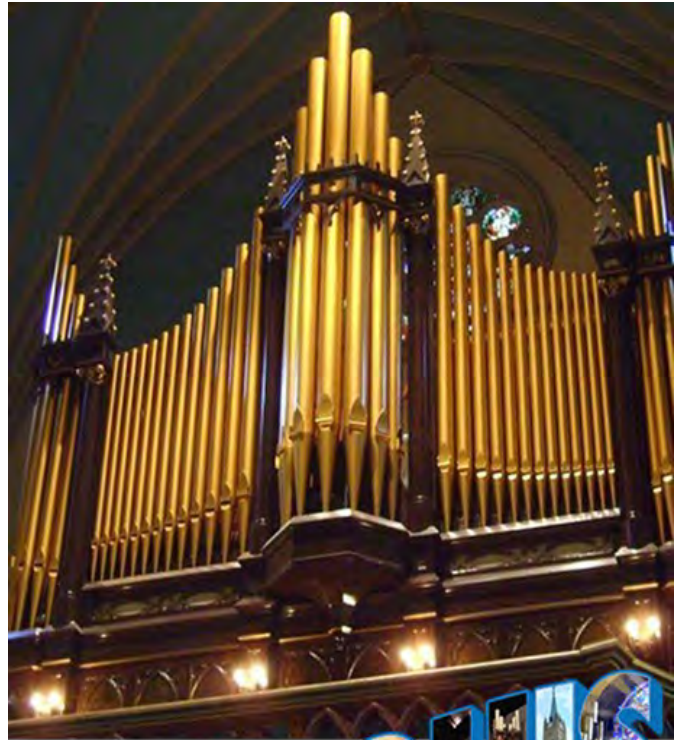
SAAGO—Organ Exploration/Open Console
Saturday, May 9, 9 a.m., Northminster ; 10:30 a.m.,
Catalina United Methodist Church

Youth of St. Philip's Fundraising Concert
Saturday, May 9, 7 p.m.
Saint Philip's in the Hills Episcopal Church

All the Bells and Whistles
Sunday, May 17, 3 p.m.
Christ Church United Methodist

SAAGO—Social, Potluck & Business Meeting
Sunday, June 7, 4 p.m.
Colonia Verde Clubhouse

Attend the National Convention!



Meet us in
ST. LOUIS
2026 AGO National Convention

St. Louis 2026 Convention Venue
Christ Church Cathedral (Episcopalian)
Aeolian-Skinner (1965), 70 ranks/4 manuals

April Composers' Birthdays

Rachmaninoff, Prokofiev
Torelli, Busoni, Suppé, Tartini,
Spohr, Stradella, Leoncavallo,
Kuhnau, Lehár
Carissimi





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October 17-19, 2025

Voices of Immigrants

Folk Songs from the Irish, English, Scandinavian, Jewish, Mexican and Cuban traditions

November 21-23, 2025

Give Me Your Tired

SHAW *To the Hands*
LAURIDSEN *Lux Aeterna*
Stephen Paulus Emerging Composers Competition Winner

December 11-14, 2025

Lessons & Carols by Candlelight

An American Christmas

December 17, 2025 Holiday Special

January 16-18, 2026

Music of the Pioneers

COPLAND *Old American Songs*
Stephen Foster songs, hymns, African American Spirituals

February 27-March 1, 2026

I Dream a World

RUNESTAD *Dreams of the Fallen*
BOYER *Dreaming a World*

April 17-19, 2026

West Side Story & The Great American Songbook

THE AMERICAN DREAM

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Chronicling the American
Journey through Song

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—Preamble to the Declaration of Independence

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January 20



Will Liverman

March 3



Filigree Ensemble

April 7



Jennifer Johnson Cano

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III/32
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St. Louis Convention snapshot

Cathedral Basilica of St. Louis

Kilgen/Moller/Wicks/Quimby (2024) 114 ranks



Position Available

PIANIST/ORGANIST


St. Mark's Presbyterian Church
Tucson, Arizona

ABOUT ST. MARK'S

Moved by compassion and rooted in faith, we are a community actively engaged in ministries of peace, justice and reconciliation. Gospel-based hospitality and welcome form the heart of our congregation. We are LGBTQIA+ inclusive, committed to gender and racial equity, and honor the dignity of all persons. We are thoughtful; we are creative; we are joyful; we are persistent! Through worship, prayer, and action, we seek to become the Beloved Community reflecting the love and justice of Jesus Christ. Learn more about us at www.stmarksaz.org

POSITION OVERVIEW


St. Mark's Presbyterian Church is seeking a Pianist/Organist to provide instrumental music for worship services and serve as accompanist for our church choir. This is a part-time, salaried position averaging 10 hours per week annually. The Pianist/Organist reports to the Music Director with accountability to the Lead Pastor/Head of Staff.



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Ryan Phillips, M.M., Music Director

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Apr 15



**Matteo Bocelli
Jun 25**



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**THE
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Apr 26



**An Evening with
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"Somebody Feed Phil"**

Apr 24



**Sierra Hull
Apr 9**



**Christian McBride
& Edgar Meyer
Apr 8**



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Consider underwriting a chapter program. Contact Dave Horr, treasurer, for information and possibilities...

DAVID A. HERR

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Support our chapter with a financial gift.

Consider underwriting a concert, making a contribution to the general fund or to the Johnson Scholarship Fund.

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Organ Pipes: each pipe, whether metal or wood, is made by hand.



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