

THE NEW ORGANISTS



Jay Mahrle: one of the six student organists at Christ Community Church, Carmichael, Calif.

Organists worldwide are wondering where the next generation of organists will come from. Articles have appeared in TAO addressing the subject and now a task force has been formed to take steps to interest young people in organ study.

While at the national convention in Dallas last year, I had the good fortune to sit next to Irene Shaw, of the Wichita (Kans.) Chapter, at one of the events. We began talking, sharing our backgrounds, and I became totally captivated by her "Pops for Kids" concept. Many of you will recall that she and her husband wore T-shirts with the logo on the back and a caricature of a pipe organ in bold colors on the front. She also did a workshop at the convention and I spoke to several organists throughout the week who were also just as excited about the ideas she had to share.

We are all familiar with the AGO Pipe Organ Encounters that encourage teenagers who have piano background and can play at least a Bach invention to attend. Irene and her innovative chapter have taken this one step further and are encouraging elementary children by introducing the pipe organ to them. Two excellent videos, each twelve minutes in length, are part of the program. One video is actually an organ crawl, which helps explain that the organ is not just the console and the few facade pipes one sees at first glance. The second video is a program of organ music written just for this project by John Leavitt and designed to appeal to young audiences; however, it is just as appropriate for any age. Mrs. Shaw has also included written materials that can be used in such an introductory workshop, or one may add other articles of interest.

Armed with all this information and the two videos, I asked our music director if I could schedule an introduction to the organ for any interested youngsters, even if they had no keyboard experience. Although he was not quite sure what I had in mind, he gave me his blessing and ran articles in the church bulletin. I was delighted to have ten sign up, with several more interested. Those with conflicting commitments asked if I would do another workshop at a later date. We met from 10 A.M. to noon and the time just flew by. I began by showing the two videos, then went to the console and ex-

plained very briefly about the keyboards and stops. Since our instrument is a three-manual Allen, I talked about the similarities and differences between pipe and electronic instruments. Then the children had a turn to play anything they desired (having been encouraged to bring whatever music they were working on). We experimented with different sounds, which fascinated them all. After each had a turn, one of the parents, who is also a Sacramento organist, played Bach's *Tocatta in D Minor* and I played Leroy Anderson's *Jazz Pizzicato* to show that one could be serious and also have fun with the King of Instruments. At the end of the presentation I asked if any of them would be interested in studying the organ and to my amazement, they all raised their hands!

After talking with each of these youngsters individually, I set up Christ Community Church's first Student Organists' Class, which meets the second Saturday of every month. Because I did not want to teach a beginning note-reading class, I decided to limit this group to those who were able to read treble and bass clefs. We began with four students and, just two months later, we now have six. In the first session I helped each one register a favorite piece, which I scheduled to be played in church prior to my prelude. I chose this place in the service because our congregation generally uses prelude time to visit and it seemed to be a low-pressure situation for a beginning organist. Interestingly enough, these youngsters commented this past Saturday that they wanted to play at some other point in the service because, as they said, "Nobody listens in the beginning!" I took the opportunity to explain that they could be instrumental in changing congregational behavior by first speaking to their parents, then to their classmates, suggesting that whenever anyone is either speaking or performing in church, it is only common courtesy to refrain from talking. They all agreed!

All six students have now had at least one opportunity to play in church and are working on their second selection. I am using the instruction manual to give more intensive training on the mechanics of the organ and use of stops. They have all been given permission to practice whenever the sanctuary is available. I generally practice in the mornings so there is no conflict with my time at the organ.

Aside from the obvious benefit of having six potential organists to nurture, there is an increased awareness of the organ and its role in worship, not only by the parents but by the congregation as a whole. I have had many people comment that they think it is a wonderful idea and are totally supportive. I am hopeful that this renewed interest will be evident in the size of the audience at my next recital in June, which I will be doing with one of the pianists on staff. He is going to do a few piano numbers, I will play a few organ selections, and we will perform a piano-organ duet. Again, the thrust of this concert will be to make people more aware of the keyboard artists in their midst.

This is a project that can be undertaken by any organist, regardless of size of instrument. My suggestion—try it! You won't be disappointed and we may just have an answer to the question, "Where are the young organists?"

RUTHANN LUNDGREN, Dean
Sacramento AGO Chapter

GREAT AUDITORIUM OCEAN GROVE NJ

SUMMER CALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS ORGAN RECITALS

GORDON TURK, ORGANIST



July 1st	SATURDAY	4:00pm
July 5th	WEDNESDAY	7:30pm
July 8th	SATURDAY	4:00pm
July 12th	WEDNESDAY	7:30pm

July 19th	WEDNESDAY	7:30pm
SPECIAL GUEST: PAUL FEJKO		

July 22nd	SATURDAY	4:00pm
July 29th	SATURDAY	10:00am
Aug. 2nd	WEDNESDAY	4:00pm
Aug. 9th	WEDNESDAY	7:30pm

Aug. 23rd	WEDNESDAY	7:30pm
SPECIAL GUEST: FREDERICK SWANN		

Aug. 26th	SATURDAY	4:00pm
Aug. 30th	WEDNESDAY	7:30pm

Sept. 2st	SATURDAY	4:00pm
SPECIAL GUEST: MICHAEL STAIRS		

SUMMER STARS

July 6th THURSDAY 8:00pm
NEW JERSEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

July 13th THURSDAY 8:00pm
The BOEHM QUINTETTE

July 20th THURSDAY 8:00pm
MENG-CHIEH LIU
PIANIST

July 27th THURSDAY 8:00pm
PHILIP SMITH PRINCIPAL TRUMPET
NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
GORDON TURK ORGAN

CHORAL EVENTS

LEWIS DANIELS, DIRECTOR
July 9th SUNDAY 7:00pm
41st ANNUAL CHOIR FESTIVAL
1,500 SINGERS

Aug. 27th SUNDAY 7:00pm
ORATORIO
Du Bois "SEVEN LAST WORDS OF CHRIST"
AUDITORIUM CHOIR & ORCHESTRA

OCEAN GROVE CAMP MEETING ASSOCIATION

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