



AMERICAN GUILD OF ORGANISTS

CHAPTERS IN EVERY STATE

Chartered 1896 by the Board of Regents, University of the State of New York

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

475 Riverside Drive, Suite 1260, New York, NY 10115; phone 212-870-2310; www.agohq.org

2014 National Competition in Organ Improvisation

The National Competition in Organ Improvisation seeks to further the art of improvisation by recognizing and rewarding superior performances in the field. A flourishing tradition of improvisation is fundamental to a truly vital musical culture.

Competition Rules

I—ELIGIBILITY AND REGISTRATION

The competition is open to all organists regardless of age or citizenship. First-place winners of previous AGO Improvisation Competitions are not eligible. Each competitor will complete the official application form and submit it along with the \$75 registration fee to AGO National Competition in Organ Improvisation at the AGO Headquarters address listed above. The entry must be postmarked by September 15, 2013.

Please note: A competitor may be disqualified at any time for failure to abide by these rules or for actions deemed to be in conflict with the spirit of the competition. Such disqualification will be made by common agreement between the NCOI leadership and the Executive Director of the AGO, in consultation with the National Councillor for Competitions and New Music.

II—PRELIMINARY ROUND

The preliminary round is by recording, evaluated by a panel of three judges. The recording must be made between October 20 and November 11, 2013, and monitored by an approved proctor such as an AGO officer, a teacher, or a recording engineer. The competitor is responsible for selecting the instrument and obtaining a proctor. The proctor will make four CD copies of the recording and submit them to AGO National Headquarters, postmarked not later than November 12, 2013. A field of no more than five semifinalists will be announced by February 1, 2014.

Performance Requirements

1. An improvisation on a given cantus firmus that includes a harmonization of the tune and an improvisation on the tune.
2. An improvisation on a given free theme.

Preparation time for this round: 30 minutes.

Maximum performance time: 15 minutes.

Proctor's Responsibilities

- Attend the entire recording session, with no other audience members permitted except a recording engineer.
- Make sure all recording equipment is working properly with a brief trial recording before giving the themes to the competitor.
- Receive the themes and proctor's form from the competition administrator and give them to the competitor 30 minutes before the recording session begins. The competitor may not play the organ or any other instrument after receiving the themes and before recording the improvisations.
- Ensure that the CD is high-quality, continuous, unedited, and free from background noise or other imperfections that would impair its effectiveness.
- Verify that all four CDs are properly labeled as instructed by the administrator and playable on standard playback equipment.
- Send the recordings, proctor's form, and themes to AGO Headquarters. The proctor's form will certify that the recording session was properly monitored and that the recording's quality and playability have been confirmed.

III—SEMIFINAL AND FINAL ROUNDS

All competitors must avoid the competition site outside of the appointed orientation, practice, and performance times, except for official AGO convention events. Each competitor will practice alone. Except for an NCOI Committee-approved person who may demonstrate combinations of the competitor's choice and/or provide registration assistance on instruments with no pistons, no one may listen to or accompany the competitor during practice sessions. A panel of three judges, none of whom will have served as a judge for the Preliminary Round, will serve for both the Semifinal and Final Rounds. Judges will be screened from the competitors, and no applause will be allowed.

Any communication, direct or indirect, between a competitor and a judge before the competition has concluded will result in the immediate disqualification of the competitor involved.

(A) SEMIFINAL ROUND

No more than five semifinalists will participate in the Semifinal Round, which will be held on Monday, June 23, 2014, at First Lutheran Church, Boston, Mass. AGO Headquarters, under the guidance of the Executive Director, will provide a travel and per diem allowance for each semifinalist to attend the competition in Boston. Semifinalists must arrive in Boston on June 20, 2014, for orientation and to make practice time arrangements. Each competitor will receive no less than three hours of practice time on the competition instrument in the days preceding the round. Immediately before the competition, each competitor will be allotted 30 minutes to consider the given themes. This preparation is without keyboard, but the competitor may make notes (forms, registrations, secondary themes, etc.) on the sheet of paper with the printed themes for use at the organ console; no other written notes are permitted at the console.

Performance Requirements

1. Historically inspired improvisation based on one hymn melody, chorale tune, or plainsong. This may be a single-movement improvisation (chorale fantasy); no fewer than four versets in the manner of Scheidemann or Weckmann; a partita à la Böhm, Pachelbel, or Bach; or plainsong verses including Plein Jeu, Fugue, a third movement of the competitor's choice, and a Dialogue sur les Grands Jeux in the manner of Couperin, Clérambault, or Grigny. The competitor will indicate his or her choice to the proctor prior to the improvisation, and the proctor will announce the choice to the judges and audience. [15-minute time limit]
2. Improvisation on one of the given free themes, or on one given free theme and a secondary theme of the contestant's choosing. [10-minute time limit]

The total maximum performance time is 27 minutes, during which time competitors may pause for no more than two minutes between the improvisations.

(B) FINAL ROUND

The judges will select no more than three finalists to participate in the Final Round, which will be held at St. Cecilia's Catholic Church, Boston, Mass., on Thursday, June 26, 2014. Each competitor will receive no less than three hours of practice time on the competition instrument in the days preceding each round.

Immediately before the competition, each competitor will be allotted 30 minutes to consider the given themes. This preparation is without keyboard, but the competitor may make notes (forms, registrations, secondary themes, etc.) on the sheet of paper with the printed themes for use at the organ console; no other written notes are permitted at the console.

Performance Requirements

1. Prelude, fantasia, or toccata and a fugue based on given theme(s), which may be sacred or secular. [15-minute time limit]
2. Free improvisation based on a given musical theme or a given nonmusical theme (literary passage or artwork). The competitor will indicate his or her choice to the proctor prior to the improvisation, and the proctor will announce the choice to the judges and audience. [10-minute time limit]

The total maximum performance time is 27 minutes, during which time competitors may pause for no more than two minutes between the improvisations.

IV—JUDGING CRITERIA

The judges' criteria for performance evaluation in all three rounds shall emphasize:

- Thematic use and development. Development of portions of the theme is acceptable.
- Harmonic integrity.

- Clear presentation of form.
- Timing as appropriate to style, form, development, and contrast.
- Stylistic consistency.
- Rhythmic integrity and interest.
- Intentional direction and melodic/linear contour.
- Effective use of the instrument, e.g., registration, range, texture.
- Sophisticated use of imitative counterpoint.

V—PRIZES Awards for the Final Round

FIRST PRIZE
\$3,000, provided by McNeil Robinson

SECOND PRIZE
\$2,000, provided by Dobson Pipe Organ Builders

THIRD PRIZE
\$1,500, provided by Pamela and Steven Ruitter-Feenstra

AUDIENCE PRIZE
\$1,500, provided by Robin and David Arcus

COMPETITIONS COMMITTEE

Tom Trenney
Jay Peterson
Mary Newton
Chelsea Chen
Michael Barone

Christian Lane, Councillor for
Competitions and New Music