EXAMINATION DATES

SERVICE PLAYING CERTIFICATE TEST: October 1, 2020, through March 31, 2021.


CHOIR MASTER EXAMINATION: June 2, 2021 (morning and afternoon).

ASSOCIATESHIP EXAMINATION: June 3 and 4, 2021 (paperwork section both mornings; organ playing one of the afternoons).

FELLOWSHIP EXAMINATION: June 3 and 4, 2021 (paperwork section both mornings; organ playing one of the afternoons).

ELIGIBILITY

In accordance with the status of the AGO as a not-for-profit educational organization, the examinations are open to AGO members and nonmembers. Nonmembers will pay a surcharge. The Associate, Choir Master, Colleague, and Service Playing examinations may be taken in any order. The Associateship certificate, however, must be acquired at least one year before the Fellowship Examination may be taken. Holders of the ARCO or ARCCO certificates are considered eligible to take the PAGO examination, provided that applicants send a copy of the ARCO or ARCCO certificate with the completed application form.

APPLICATION PROCEDURES

Service Playing Certificate Test
Contact AGO Headquarters for application after July 1, 2020. The completed application may be submitted between September 1, 2020 and February 1, 2021. Tests may be taken at any chapter where a suitable organ and recording equipment are available, since the tests are recorded and the recordings are sent to Headquarters for evaluation.

Colleague Examination
For the November 2020 exam, contact AGO Headquarters for application form after July 1, 2020; application must be completed and submitted by September 15, 2020. For the May 2021 exam, contact Headquarters for application form after December 1, 2020; application must be completed and submitted by March 1, 2021. For the November 2021 exam, contact Headquarters for application form after July 1, 2021; application must be completed and submitted by September 15, 2021. Both sections of this examination (repertoire and keyboard skills) may be taken on the same day, or any section may be taken singly. Exams may be taken at any chapter where a suitable organ (not normally played by the candidate) is available, and recording is feasible, since the exams are recorded and the recordings are sent to Headquarters for evaluation.

Choir Master, Associateship, and Fellowship Examinations
Contact Headquarters after January 1, 2021, for application forms and a manual of procedure. The completed application must be submitted by April 1. Both sections of these examinations (paperwork and performance) may be taken in the same year, or each section may be taken singly. If only the paperwork section is to be taken, the examination may take place at any chapter, since the papers are sent to Headquarters for evaluation. But if the performance tests, or both sections, are to be taken, the exam must take place at one of the designated regional exam centers, since two examiners must be present for the performance tests. A list of these examination centers is available on the website. The candidate may choose the center that is most convenient.

AGO/NPM Joint Certification
Candidates who are members in good standing of the National Association of Pastoral Musicians may obtain Service Playing or Colleague certification in both organizations by earning a passing grade on these examinations, and, for the Colleague only, passing a written test administered by NPM. Separate application must be made to NPM to take the written portion of the NPM CAGO exam. In applying to AGO Headquarters for the examination, candidates must indicate their desire for joint certification, and for joint CAGO, candidates must also register with NPM. Certain options in each examination, indicated in the list of requirements, must be chosen. NPM joint certification candidates should be fully aware of all NPM certification requirements. Each examination will be graded by at least one examiner who is a member of NPM.

EXAMINATION FEES

Service Playing Certificate Test: $150. Student rate $125. Colleague: both sections $175, single section $130. Student rate both sections $150, single section $125.

Choir Master: both sections $300, single section $250. No student rate. Associateship: both sections $300, single section $250. Student rate both sections $275, single section $225. Fellowship: both sections $300, single section $250. No student rate. Surcharge for nonmembers of the AGO: $100. The same fees apply for reexamination. To qualify for the student rate, candidate must be age 25 or younger with proof of valid student ID. All checks should be sent to Headquarters and be made payable to the American Guild of Organists.

EXAMINATION WORK SHEETS

Materials from Headquarters are available online to assist candidates preparing for Guild examinations. These include: exams and solution booklets from the previous five years; the current editions of the Colleague Examination Study Guidelines and the Service Playing Certificate Test Study Guide; ear-training exercises for AGO; CAGO, and PAGO exams; Preparing for AGO Exams; Articles Reprinted from The American Organist; and an extensive bibliography. For practice purposes, it is highly recommended that candidates for Choir Master, Associateship, or Fellowship certificates work out a full set of a prior year’s paperwork tests, within the time limits specified, some time before the actual examinations are given. For those taking the Colleague Examination or Service Playing Certificate Test, the respective study guidelines offer comprehensive approaches to preparation. The 2013 Revised Edition of the Examination Hymn Booklet is available as a PDF. Previous editions are no longer valid. Requests should be sent to Paul Wolf, Certification Program Administrator, at exams@agohq.org. The updated Manuals of Procedure for the Service Playing Test, Colleague Exam, and Associateship/Fellowship Exams are available online.

EXAMINATION WORKSHOPS

Examinations are not held for workshops sections. For the Choir Master, Associateship, and Fellowship Examinations, no papers or books may be brought into the examination room. All candidates’ answer sheets are retained at Headquarters. Candidates will receive examiners’ comments as a matter of course.

DISABILITIES ACCOMMODATIONS

The AGO aims to make the certification examinations inclusive of all qualified organists and conductors, regardless of disabilities. To that end, the AGO invites candidates with disabilities to submit requests for reasonable accommodations using our standard “Request for Reasonable Accommodations” form. This form is available on request from the program administrator. All requests shall be handled in strict confidence. For all upper-level exams, these requests must be received in proper form by February 1. For the Service Playing exam, they must be submitted between August 1, 2020 and January 1, 2021. For the Colleague, the respective deadlines are August 1, 2020, January 1, 2021, and August 1, 2021.
SERVICE PLAYING REQUIREMENTS

The repertoire pieces are not played first as a group of three, but separately at the beginning, middle, and conclusion. The candidate will perform one (and only one) work from each of Groups A, B. and C. The test shall be recorded at a site with a suitable organ and recording equipment, then sent to AGO Headquarters for evaluation by two national examiners. The recording must be continuous and completely unedited, and provided as a single track. A proctor will be appointed, and will be the only person in the room with the candidate when the test is given. (If a singer is employed for question S3, he or she will be permitted in the room only at that time.)

GROUP A
Any chorale prelude from Bach’s Orgelbuchlein. Any fugue with pedal by Bach, including the fugues from the so-called “Eight Little Preludes and Fugues,” sometimes attributed to Bach. Any chorale prelude with pedal by Buxtehude (any edition).

GROUP B

GROUP C

Candidates seeking NPM certification should choose a work from the Dupré collection as their Group B piece, or a work from the Near collection as their Group C piece. (Or they may choose both.)

S1. (10 points) Prelude repertoire. The candidate will prepare and perform one work from either Group A, B, or C.

S2. (10 points) Opening Hymn with two transpositions. The candidate will select and use one hymn from the 2013 Revised Examination Hymn Booklet, which may be requested from Headquarters. He or she will transpose the hymn into two keys, not more than a major second in either direction. The keys will be chosen (and announced on the recording) by the proctor. The transposed versions are not to be written out in advance, and the hymn is not to be played in the original key first. No introduction is required.

S3. (10 points) The candidate will select one of the four psalm accompaniments in the 2013 Revised Examination Hymn Booklet, and will play refrains and two verses of the psalm as though it were being sung in a service of worship. Depending on the candidate’s choice of psalm, a singer may be required in order to render a satisfactory performance on the test. (The aforementioned Revised Examination Hymn Booklet indicates which psalms require a singer.) If a singer is needed, the candidate may engage (at his or her own expense) any singer, including one with whom he or she performs regularly. Neither the candidate nor the examination proctor may serve as the singer. (The singer will be permitted in the examination room only during this portion of the test.) The identity of the singer will not be revealed on the recording to examiners in order to preserve the candidate’s anonymity. For NPM certification candidates, the required psalm selection is either Psalm 22 (Guimoto) or Psalm 32/34 (Gelineau).

S4. (10 points) Choice of one anthem from the following anthem list. The candidate will play the accompaniment as though accompanying a competent choir.
Susa: Adam Lay in Bondage from Two Marian Carols (E.C. Schirmer ECS2776).
Roberts: For the Bread Which Thou Hast Broken (available as a PDF courtesy St. James Music Press via the Guild’s program administrator).

S5. (10 points) Middle Hymn, no required transposition. The candidate will select and use one hymn from the 2013 Revised Examination Hymn Booklet, different from the hymn chosen for question S2 above. He or she will play two stanzas as though leading a large, enthusiastic congregation. Use of pedals for at least one stanza is mandatory. Some contrast in the presentation of the two stanzas is expected, as is sensitivity to the text. NPM candidates are required to select “Sing of the Lord’s Goodness” from the PDF of the Revised Examination Hymn Booklet to play for S5.

S6. (10 points) Choice of a second anthem from the list at S4. The candidate will play the accompaniment as though accompanying a competent choir.

S7. (10 points) Offertory repertoire, one piece from a group not chosen for S1.

S8. (10 points) The candidate will sight-read a short passage of music. The candidate’s grade will be based on his or her ability to maintain the indicated tempo with accuracy of notes and rhythm. (The sight-reading question and information regarding the examination procedure will be sent from Headquarters to the chapter dean prior to the test date.)

S9. (10 points) Closing Hymn, no required transposition. The candidate will select and use one hymn from the 2013 Revised Examination Hymn Booklet, different from the two hymns chosen for S2 and S5. He or she will play two stanzas as though leading a large, enthusiastic congregation. Use of pedals for at least one stanza is mandatory. Some contrast in the presentation of the two stanzas is expected, as is sensitivity to the text.

S10. (10 points) Postlude repertoire, one piece from the group not chosen for S1 or S7.

Note: In S5 and S9, the first stanza should use the harmonization given in the Examination Hymn Booklet. In S2, both stanzas are to be transposed from the given harmonization, one stanza in each key announced by the proctor.

AGO EXAMINATION PRIZES

The following prizes are awarded each year:
FAGO Prize—$600, for highest overall score on FAGO Exam (both sections).
AAGO Prize—$500, for highest overall score on AAGO Exam (both sections).
ChM Prize—$500, for highest overall score on ChM Exam (both sections).
S. Lewis Elmer Award—$500, for highest overall score on any of the above three exams.

To qualify for any of these prizes, both sections of an examination must be taken in the same year, and the overall score must be at least 85%.

CAGO Prize—$300 for the highest passing score of the combined May and previous November tests. Both sections must be passed at the same time.

The recently developed Achievement Awards are administered at the local chapter level; further information on these is available on the AGO website.
COLLEAGUE REQUIREMENTS

The Colleague Examination shall be recorded at a site with suitable organ and recording equipment, then sent to AGO Headquarters for evaluation by two national examiners. The recording must be continuous and completely unedited, and provided as a single track.

SECTION 1 – Repertoire at the Organ
C1. (25 points) Organ Pieces: Candidates will prepare one work from each of Groups A, B, and C. The candidate may play the following repertoire in any order. The repertoire is valid from November 2019 through the May 2021 exam. New repertoire for the November 2021 exam will be published in the July 2021 TAO.

GROUP A
J.S. Bach: O Mensch, bewein dein Sünde gross, BWV 622, from Orgelbüchlein (any edition).
J.S. Bach: Mov’t I from Concerto in A Minor after Vivaldi, BWV 593 (any edition).

GROUP B
Healey Willan: Prelude on “St. Columba,” from Thirty Hymn Preludes, Vol. 1 (Peters EP6011). Note: This work is not in the public domain and photocopies should not be used.

GROUP C
Paul Hindemith: Mov’t II from Sonate II (Schott ED25588). Note: This work is not in the public domain and photocopies should not be used.

C3. (10 points) Accompaniment of Vocal Solo: Calvin Hampton, The Magnificat, from Christmas Oratorio (Wayne Leupold WLT00028).
Note: C2 and C3 must be played on the organ.

C4. (15 points) Hymns: The candidate will select two hymns from the 2013 Revised Examination Hymn Booklet, which may be requested from AGO Headquarters. NPM candidates are required to play one hymn from the 2013 Revised Examination Hymn Booklet and substitute James J. Chepponis’s “Melodic Gloria” (GIA No. G-7822) as the second hymn choice.

For each hymn (not the “Melodic Gloria”), the candidate will introduce the tune and then play two stanzas as though leading a large, enthusiastic congregation. The introduction may be original or may be selected from published repertoire; it need not be elaborate but should serve well to prepare the congregation for singing, and should not exceed approximately one minute in length. Some contrast should be evident in the accompaniment of the two stanzas, at least one of which must be played with pedal. Sensitivity to the text will be expected.

SECTION 2 – Keyboard Skills
C5. (10 points) Play a passage of organ music (on three staves) at sight.
C6. (10 points) Do a, b, or c. NPM candidates must choose b or c.
   a. Harmonize a simple hymn tune.
   b. Harmonize a plainsong melody.
   c. Accompany a “folk-style” hymn tune in an appropriate manner.
C7. (10 points) Transpose a passage of music, not more than a major second in either direction.
C8. (10 points) Do a, b, or c.
   a. Improvise a passage of music (of approximately eight measures) consisting of two (approximately four-measure) phrases, each involving a modulation and a clearly defined cadence.
   b. Improvise a passage of music (of approximately 16 measures) consisting of two (approximately eight-measure) phrases based on a given melodic motif, each involving a modulation and a clearly defined cadence.
   c. In a passage of approximately 30 seconds’ length, provide a bridge or modulatory passage between two hymns (in different keys) from the 2013 Revised Examination Hymn Booklet. The hymns will be specified on the examination sheet.

A room with a piano will be provided for candidates for a 20-minute preparation session for questions C6, C7, and C8.

CHOIR MASTER REQUIREMENTS

SECTION 1 – Practical Work (approximately 45 minutes will be allowed)
Ch1. (75 points) Rehearse and direct the choir in the performance of all or any portion of all the following works (in any order the candidate chooses):
Hans Leo Hassler: Kyrie from Missa Secunda (public domain score available on IMSLP.org; in any chosen edition, bar lines and modern clefs recommended).
Aaron Copland: At the River, SATB (Boosey & Hawkes M051455133). This work is not in the public domain.

The choir, consisting of at least four singers, will be provided at the examination center. The examiners will determine which portions of the pieces will be rehearsed. The candidate will be expected to rehearse the choir as though preparing for an actual performance. Attention should be given, within the context of the rehearsal of these works, to aspects of good choral singing, including general musicality, balance, methods of tone production, and clear enunciation of the text. If the candidate prefers, an accompanist (not an examiner) will be available to play parts on the piano.

Ch2. (25 points) Demonstrate keyboard ability by harmonizing a melody, playing harmonic progressions at the piano or organ as directed, and playing a hymn from the 2013 Revised Examination Hymn Booklet.

SECTION 2 – Paperwork Tests (3 hours will be allowed)
Ch3. (15 points) Ear Tests: (A) Write down from dictation a short passage in two parts, for which the key and time signature will be announced and the tonic chord played. (B) Candidates will be given a copy of a passage in hymn style. This will be played with some deliberate wrong notes and/or rhythms, which the candidates will be asked to identify. Each test will be played four times, allowing 30 seconds between each playing.

Ch4. (15 points) Analysis: Demonstrate knowledge of theory through analysis of a piece of choral music.

Ch5. (10 points) Gregorian Chant: Answer questions on Gregorian chant, including range, names of intervals, names of neumes, and finals and dominants of the ecclesiastical modes. Candidates will be expected to read and transcribe Gregorian notation.

Ch6. (15 points) Hymnody: Answer questions on the history and literature of hymns, both texts and tunes, from earliest examples to the present.

Ch7. (10 points) Liturgy: Answer questions on liturgy and liturgical trends. The candidate is expected to be familiar with the historic liturgies of the Western church, and also with contemporary trends in at least one present-day denomination.

Ch8. (10 points) Choir Training: Questions will deal with the vocal and musical training of both adult and children’s choirs.

Ch9. (15 points) Choral Repertoire: Demonstrate knowledge of choral literature for various types of choirs.

Ch10. (10 points) General Musical Knowledge: Answer questions on the history and literature of music.
ASSOCIATESHIP REQUIREMENTS

SECTION 1 – Tests at the Organ
(approximately 40 minutes will be allowed)
A1. (40 points) Candidates will prepare one piece from each of the following four lists, and be prepared to play all or any portion of each piece, as requested by the examiners. One (and only one) of the selections will be a slow movement, marked with an asterisk * in the lists below. The candidate may play the repertoire in any order.

LIST A
Georg Böhm: Prelude and Fugue in D Minor (Edition Schott ED 21679, Sämtliche Orgelwerke/Complete Organ Works, Vol. 32 of Meister der Norddeutschen Orgelschule/Masters of the North German Organ School, or Breitkopf 6634, Sämtliche Werke, Band I Nr. 4, also available from Ludwig Masters or imslp.org).
Franz Tunder: Komm, Du Gerechter Geist, Herr Christ (Breitkopf 6618).
*François Couperin: Chaconne sur la Taille from Messe pour les Cœurs (any edition).

LIST B
J.S. Bach: Allegro (iii) from Trio Sonata No. 3, BWV 532 (any edition).
J.S. Bach: Allegro (not Trio Sonata) (any edition).

LIST C
*Frank Bridge: Adagio in E Major from Six Fugues on the Name BACH.
*César Franck: Pièce héroïque from Pièces de Fantaisie, Quatrième (any edition).

LIST D
Olivier Messiaen: Apparition de l’église éternelle (any edition).
Calvin Hampton: Voluntary or Postlude on Engelberg.

SECTION 2 – Paperwork Tests
First Session (3 hours allowed)
A2. (10 points) Play a passage of music in open score on four staves employing C and F clefs.
A3. (10 points) Transpose a passage of music, not more than a major second in either direction. The candidate will be permitted to play the passage once through in the original key.
A4. (10 points) Play the continuo part of a chorale or short instrumental movement from a figured bass. The bass and figures will be given.
A5. (10 points) Harmonize a brief passage of music in four parts, for which a treble melody will be given, and for part of which an unfigured bass will be given.
A6. (10 points) The candidate will prepare a hymn from a U.S. hymnal, with English text, readily available in print (as though leading a large, enthusiastic congregation. He or she will introduce the hymn followed by two stanzas brought by an interlude. The introduction and interlude may be selected from published repertoire, or improvised. Contrast between the two stanzas and sensitivity to the character of the text and tune will be expected. The candidate may choose an interlude in the form of a modulatory bridge with a change of key for the second stanza.
A7. (10 points) Do a, b, or c.
   a. Improvise five or six variations over a given ground bass.
   b. Improvise a brief prelude on a given bass line.
   c. Improvise a brief prelude on a given chant.

SECTION 2 – Paperwork Tests
Second Session (3 hours allowed)
A8. (25 points) Analysis: Respond to questions regarding a composition (printed on adjacent pages of the test pamphlet), which may be drawn from any important period, style, or performance medium. Medium ventures as to composer, approximate date, harmonic and contrapuntal texture, and/or form.
A9. (20 points) Fugue: Candidates should be prepared to analyze examples, respond to questions, correct intentional errors, and write brief examples of 18th-century fugal composition.

FELLOWSHIP REQUIREMENTS

SECTION 1 – Tests at the Organ
(approximately 45 minutes will be allowed)
B1. (40 points) Candidates will prepare one piece from each of the following four lists, and be prepared to play all or any portion of each piece, as requested by the examiners. One (and only one) of the selections will be a slow movement, marked with an asterisk * in the lists below. The candidate may play the repertoire in any order.

LIST A
Vincent Lubeck: Nun lasst uns Gott dem Herren (Breitkopf & Härtel or reliable online edition).
Giroloam Frestredale: Toccata Seita VI from The Second Book of Toccatas, Canzoni etc., 1637 (any edition).

LIST B
*J.S. Bach: An Wasserflüssen Babylon, BWV 653b (any edition).
*J.S. Bach: Allein Gott in der Hoh’ sei Ehr, BWV 682 (any edition).
J.S. Bach: Fugue in E Minor (‘Wedge’) from Six Fugues on the Name BACH.
J.S. Bach: Allegro (third movement) from Trio Sonata No. 2 in C Minor, BWV 526/3 (any edition).

LIST C
Jean-Jules Roger-Ducasse: Pastorale (Durand or any edition).
*Mauro Durante: Lascia Creator, Op. 4: Adagio from p. 18 through the state ment of the theme of the chorale, p. 27 (Durand).

LIST D
Galvin Hampton: Voluntary or Postlude on Engelberg (Wayne Leupold WL 110).
Herbert Howells: Psalm-Prelude, Set Two, No. III, Sing Unto Him a New Song, Ps. 33:3 (Novello).
Jean Langlais: Dialogue on the mixtures from Sixte brêne (Alphonse Leduc).
*Gerre Hancock: Schonster Herr Jesu from A New Liturgical Year (Augsburg Fortress 11-10810).


Anton Heiller: Meditation über die gregorianische Oster-Sequen “Victimae paschali laudes” (Doblinger).
Egil Havland: Nun danket alle Gott from A New Liturgical Year (Augsburg Fortress 11-10810).
F2. (10 points) Play a passage of organ music at sight.
F3. (15 points) Play at sight a passage of music in open score on four staves employing C clefs (soprano, alto, and tenor) and bass clef.
F4. (10 points) Arrange at sight for the organ the piano accompaniment of a vocal score (which itself may be a reduction of an original accompaniment for orchestra).
F5. (10 points) Transpose a passage of music, not more than a major third in either direction.
F6. (15 points) Improvise a short piece (approximately two minutes in duration) in ternary form on a given theme. The candidate will supply a recognizable contrasting motif for the middle section. Clarity of form and structure will be expected.

SECTION 2 – Paperwork Tests
First Session (3 1/2 hours allowed)
G7. (20 points) Counterpoint: Candidates should be prepared to analyze examples, respond to questions, write brief examples of counterpoint in 16th-century style.
G8. (15 points) Fugue: Candidates should be prepared to analyze examples, respond to questions, and write brief examples of 18th-century fugal composition.
G9. (15 points) Essay: Write an essay on one of three given topics concerning the life and music of Max Reger.

Second Session (3 1/2 hours allowed)
G10. (15 points) Ear Tests: (A) Write down from dictation a short passage in four parts, for which the key and time signature will be announced, and the tonic chord played. (B) Write down from dictation a short passage of two-part counterpoint, for which the key (but not the time signature) will be stated, and the tonic chord played, Test A will be played five times, Test B four times. One minute maximum is allowed between each playing.
G11. (15 points) Orchestration: Demonstrate knowledge of the capabilities of orchestral instruments, the craft of orchestration, and the historical stylistic use of the orchestra through responses to questions, analysis of examples, the transcription of a brief passage for orchestra or ensemble, and/or the reduction of the orchestral score for performance on the organ.
G12. (20 points) Composition: Write a composition for unaccompanied voices on a given text. The length will be specified. Imaginative use of the tools of composition will be expected.