Dear friends and colleagues,

Once again we find ourselves at the beginning of the month, with much to look forward to! Not surprisingly, however, I find myself of late doing a lot of looking back and reminiscing. This has been a January to remember, and we have all been very lucky throughout.

First and foremost, Choralfest 2012, “Hail! Gladdening Light: Reflections on ‘Phos Hilaron’” was an enormous success! After weeks of rehearsals, complications, and monumental tasks and music-making, our ensemble of 49 members pulled off two incredibly talented and inspired concerts. The musicianship and magnitude of the program were outstanding, and it was truly a inspirational program. Thank you to all of those involved on making these concerts the immense successes they turned out to be.

Keep your eyes open! There will be recordings of Choralfest available soon. They will definitely come out on CD, and there is also a possibility of a video production becoming available. Watch for announcement soon.

Congratulations to those who played in the Don Freund concert! It was extremely well done, and an admirable job by all involved. Keep up the great work!

Looking ahead, we will need volunteers ASAP to assist with the AGO’s hosting duties for IU’s second audition weekend. We will need hosts for the Friday and Saturday reception room, as well as food for the pot-luck dinner at Dr. Fishell’s home. Look for further emails and the third floor bulletin board for sign-up sheets! Let’s work to be great hosts this weekend.

Finally, the AGO and the organ world lost a crucial member this month. Gerre Hancock was an incredible organist, musician, and advocate for the “King of Instruments.” Please read a special memorial in this issue by Bruce Neswick, who knew Dr. Hancock quite well.

Best wishes to you all for the month of February!

Sincerely,

Jonathan Rudy

Members are always welcome to meetings of the Chapter Executive Committee. The next scheduled meeting is Sunday, February 12 at 6 PM. Contact an Executive Committee member for details.
A look at the Month Ahead

AGO and Area Events

Monday, February 6, 12:20 PM — Hymnal Workshop, Chuck Peters
∞ MA407, Jacobs School of Music

Monday, February 6, 8 PM — Erica Gillette, Master’s Recital
∞ Auer Hall, Jacobs School of Music

Friday, February 10, 12:15 PM — Auditorium Recital
Yevgeniya Jaynes, Martha Sliva, organ
www.iuauditorium.com

Friday, February 10, 8 PM — Erica Gillette, Master’s Recital
∞ Auer Hall, Jacobs School of Music

Friday, February 10, 7:30 PM — Colin Andrews, organ
Cathedral of the Assumption, Louisville, KY
www.cathedraloftheassumption.org

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Cathedral of the Assumption, Louisville, KY
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Saturday, February 11, 8 PM — Loralee Culbert, Master’s Recital
∞ Auer Hall, Jacobs School of Music

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Sunday, February 12, 4 PM — Choral Evensong
St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, Indianapolis, IN
www.stpaulsindy.org

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St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, Indianapolis, IN
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Sunday, February 12, 8 PM — Elaine Sonnenberg, Doctoral Recital
∞ Auer Hall, Jacobs School of Music

Wednesday, February 22, 12 PM — David C. Sims, organ
* North Christian Church, Columbus, IN

Thursday, February 23, 12:15 PM — Bach Recital X, Janette Fishell
∞ Beck Chapel, Indiana University

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Sunday, February 19, 4:30 PM — Rudy de Vos, organ
Christ Church Cathedral, Indianapolis, IN
www.cccindy.org

Wednesday, February 29, 5 PM — Jonathan Rudy, Master’s Recital
∞ Auer Hall, Jacobs School of Music

* sponsored by Indiana Organists United -
music.indiana.edu/departments/academic/organ/alumni.shtml

∞ more information at music.indiana.edu/events

“… BUT HOW ARE THINGS IN NEW HAVEN?!”

Every one of my (two years’ worth of Yale-sponsored) lessons with Gerre Hancock began with one of his typical moments of schtick. It went like this (and it’s important to visualize the recipient, an awkward, shy hick from rural Washington state):

“Well, my young man, I don’t care about East Haven. I’m not really interested in North Haven. And I absolutely despise West Haven. But tell your Uncle Gerre: HOW are things in New Haven??!!”

Looking back on that, with a wry smile on my face and after ALL those years, I’m beginning to realize that Gerre had several things he was desperate to convey:

1) that we should all feel welcome in his presence, even if he was the Organist and Master of the Choristers (can you imagine a loftier title?) of Saint Thomas Church, Fifth Avenue, New York City;

2) that, at the same time, we should probably be on guard, for being in the presence of greatness carries with it responsibilities, chief among them to accept a challenge, in this immediate case, to try to meet his high-camp schtick halfway; and

3) that humor can diffuse and disarm, while at the same time sending out signals of worldliness borne of great experience: his schtick was a subtle assertion of control without any of the blatant machinations of typical control freaks.

None of this would have mattered except that it was all in the service of conveying the magic of what he did,
what he was and what he taught.

Uncle Gerre, the folksiness of his self-styled appellation notwithstanding, was the most important American church musician of the last century. Hiding behind the exterior of warmth and hospitality (it didn’t matter if you were from one of the great European cathedrals or a rural church from the Wild West: he couldn’t have been more thrilled to have you around) was the determination and stamina required to build the finest church music program in the land. His choir of men and boys was polished yet spontaneous; the liturgy at Saint Thomas during his tenure was marked by both finesse and passion; and his playing, generous and utterly thrilling in its imaginative breadth, practically shouted: “I’m so very glad you are here!”

Us Yalies and New Yorkers attended as many of his services as we could, gripping the back of the pew in front of us, in anticipation of the joy ride that awaited us. You had no idea where he was going to take us. Similarly gripping were his organ recitals. Have you ever played the Reger BACH? Or ended a program with a full-blown improvised symphony? These were weekly occurrences for Gerre, and they happened all over the world. Indeed, I doubt that any performer in our field enjoyed as broad a range of performing venues as he did, and this partly accounts for his ecumenical allure. It wasn’t just his fellow Episcopalians (about whom he could be hysterically sardonic in his observations) who loved him. A quick glance at Facebook will show just how universal, democratic and pan-denominational his appeal really was.

Because of his warmth of personality, everyone felt that they had an inside track to the man, and whereas some in his shoes might have been tempted to use that influence destructively, Uncle Gerre used it only to spread goodwill.

And what goodwill! We have lost our Great Encourager! No question was too small to answer; no letter of recommendation too trivial a task; no letter too mundane to answer (with the utmost courtesy, I might add). How such an exquisite musician found the capacity also for such selflessness, while never forfeiting his out-sized musical gifts, will likely remain an eternal mystery.

Please join me in giving thanks for the life of Gerre Hancock.

Bruce Neswick

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**January Happenings**

**Right:** Juan Carlos Zamudio conducts Morten Lauridsen’s *O Nata Lux* at the Choralfest concert on Friday, January 27 in Auer Hall.

**Left:** Elizabeth Clark rehearses William Bryant’s *In Praise of the Giver* from *Three Introits on Phos Hilaron* at St. Meinrad Archabbey as part of the annual Choralfest concert there on Saturday, January 28.
Every two years, the American Guild of Organists holds a National Convention in a major US city. This summer, the convention is being held in Nashville, Tennessee, a little more than four and a half hours driving from Bloomington. Two of IU’s own, Professor Janette Fishell and recent graduate Dongho Lee, are featured in the convention as lecturer and recitalist, respectively. A reduced registration fee ($200) is a special incentive made for full-time students. Regular registration for non-students is $350 and increases on February 15 to $410. One can expect additional costs from bus transportation, hotel fees, travel to/from Nashville, and any food costs including the banquet. IU will host an alumni/current student reception during the convention week. For more information, and to register, visit www.ago2012.org. Hope to see you there!

JinHee Kim, graduate student of Chris Young, is available for substituting and other organ-related work. Please email her at kim686@indiana.edu.