



# VOX OCEANA

OCT 2022

NEWSLETTER OF THE RHODE ISLAND CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN GUILD OF ORGANISTS | VOLUME LV NO. 2

## RI CHAPTER OFFICERS AND APPOINTMENTS 2022-2023

Dean, Gigi Mitchell-Velasco  
pipeorganlady22@gmail.com

Sub-Dean (Acting)  
Stephen T. Martorella

Secretary, David Cranmer  
401-447-9848  
dcranmer45@cox.net

Treasurer, Doris Alberg  
401-365-7273  
dalberg1@cox.net

Publicity, Stephen T. Martorella  
401-885-0623  
steve.fbc@verizon.net

Newsletter, Althea Allard  
401-728-4431  
altheaallard@gmail.com

Historian, N. Peter LaMoria  
401-723-6974  
npeterlam@aol.com

Placement: Julie Tagen 401-885-7438

Membership: Christopher Souza  
401-368-2758

Auditors:  
Denise Petrucci, Jackie Gourd

Reg. Councillor: Leslie Smith  
northeastago@gmail.com

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

2022  
Adam Schneider  
adamsschneider39@gmail.com

2023  
Fred Jodry  
Lawrence E. Wilson 860-857-5493  
lewilson3rd@gmail.com

2024  
Philip Martorella  
Gina Vecchio 401-354-2366

[www.riago.org](http://www.riago.org)

## FROM THE DEAN

Dear Friends,

It has been a while since putting out a newsletter! We have been in transition with a new program for publishing them and hopefully soon they will be going out to you more often.

There is definitely a lot going on, and as you see, this publication will catch you up on past events and upcoming ones. I hope you have a chance to attend the First Church Boston Organ Concert on October 16th—THIS SUNDAY! There will be many stars of the organ from the historic churches all around the Back Bay area. (See attachments)

Our next chapter event will be a very informal open console/pizza party on Saturday, October 29 from 12-3 PM, a good old-fashioned “pizza and pipes” with a Halloween theme. We are hoping to have an opening season meeting that day and discuss what you would like to see in our chapter and to bring awareness to our scholarship funds and annual competition and our special main event in the spring. It will be informal and brief, and we would like to see you there to touch base and begin anew!

I wish you a happy healthy productive Fall!

*Gigi*

Gigi Mitchell-Velasco, MMus, CAGO, Dean

## PIZZA and PIPES for US!

As noted in Gigi’s message above, we are opening the in-person season with a Halloween-themed “Pizza and Pipes” for members on Saturday, October 29 from 12-3 pm at St. Paul’s Lutheran Church, 455 Elmwood Avenue, Providence (onsite parking available). Come in costume if you like. Bring music to play at the Open Bench opportunity. Gigi and Steve Martorella plan to play “scary music.” It should be fun.

It will also be a time for us to reconnect and plan together for the upcoming year. We are gathering from 12-3, but come for whatever time you have that afternoon. (We know that some of you will be hurrying away for church services, but plan to check in with us in the early part of the afternoon.)

Really looking forward to seeing you!

## RECENT EVENTS

### Silent Movie Night

“A good time was had by all” who attended the silent movie night orchestrated masterfully by our own Peter Krasinski on May 21 at Central Congregational Church in Providence. Attendees were astounded at the sounds coming from the Aeolian-Skinner Opus 1440, 1964, an instrument usually associated with sacred music and concert fare. Again and again, listeners mentioned how convincing were the sounds of planes taking off and bombs exploding.

Program notes gave an insight into Peter’s method: he reviews the film, visually memorizes it, and determines the appropriate sounds to accompany action and to delineate and distinguish characters. As a result, viewers were transported to a theater of a century ago--and enjoyed every minute of the experience. They also marveled that Peter played continuously for hours--with just one 15-minute intermission.

Thank you, Peter, for such a thrilling experience.

### Recital by 2020 Competition winner Nathan Schneider

Our Lois Conboy Scholarship winner, announced in June, 2020, **Nathan Schneider**, performed a recital for us at the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul, Providence, on one of the hottest afternoons of the summer. That didn’t stop our members and Nathan’s friends from coming out to enjoy a spectacular performance.

(By the way, see the final page of this newsletter for details on applying for a Conboy Award this year.)

## THANKS TO JUDGES

Thanks to our distinguished celebrity judges for the Conboy Awards:

**Mark Steinbach**, University Organist, Curator of Instruments, and Lecturer in Music at Brown University

**Monica Czausz Berney**, one of America’s leading young concert organists

**Robert Jan August**, Organist, conductor, and teacher in the US and Europe, has toured with Harvard University Choir, Texas Boys Choir, and is currently Assistant Music Director and Organist at St. Michael’s and All Saints in Dallas, Texas

## A PLEA

In this day of rolling AGO registration, when membership renewal is due in the anniversary month of your last dues payment, rather than universally in July, our Membership master, Chris Souza, is having a difficult task in assembling a Directory. To include all members in the Directory anticipated for Spring 2022, please note your renewal date and send dues to National several weeks in advance of expiration. Dues can be renewed online (perhaps the most efficient, since office staff are working from home). If you need to renew via US mail for reimbursement by your employer or for other reasons, it is especially important to initiate the process in advance to allow for the delay at headquarters. Your Chapter appreciates your support in this effort.

***Up for dues renewal? Do it today--please.  
Your membership matters!***

## CATCHING UP WITH...

*Editor’s Note:* In an effort to connect our members through the newsletter during these days of limited in-person gatherings, we are inviting you to share a brief item about your work, on-the-side or primary; a special interest or accomplishment; a tip you have discovered in your work with colleagues or students. Please send me an email for inclusion in this column, and perhaps recommend another member I might invite to participate in this exchange. Then, when we are able to meet in person, we will not be strangers, but friends in the making.

Thanks,

*Althea* (altheaallard@gmail.com)

## FAREWELL TO JAMES BUSBY

Thanks go to Steve Martorella, who interviewed James Busby upon his retirement from St. Stephen’s Church, Providence. The wide-ranging and insightful interview captures the personality and humor of Mr. Busby. You may read the exchange between these two consummate musicians in the attachment to this newsletter.

We wish James Busby well as he embarks on his next chapter.

## CONBOY AWARD WINNERS

We are pleased to announce two winners of the 2022 Conboy Awards: John Black and Mary-Kathryn Fletcher. We wish them success in the pursuit of their goals and trust that the award will further their musical development.

### John Black



Thank you for the generous award, detailed feedback, and all of the work that provided this program.

John Black is earning a Doctorate of Musical Arts in conducting at Boston University, where he works as teaching assistant for the university's auditioned choir for music majors. He received a Master's of Sacred Music at BU, studying organ with Peter Sykes, and holds master's and bachelor's degrees in music and music education (respectively) from RI College. Black is the director of music at Greenwood Church and assistant conductor of the Providence Singers, and has also appeared as pianist with Ensemble Altera, the RI Children's Chorus, and the RI Civic Chorale. Recently performing organ recitals at Holy Cross Cathedral in Boston, First Presbyterian Church of Pompano Beach, Florida, and Marsh Chapel at Boston University, Black is in demand as organist, pianist, and conductor.

### Mary-Kathryn Fletcher



Hello!

First, I just wanted to say thank you again for the scholarship award! The prize was wonderful, but so was the feedback and the comments that I received that will help me become a better organist.

As for what I'm doing now, this fall I have started my first semester as an MSM student at Boston University, studying the organ there with Peter Sykes. I'm currently preparing several new pieces that include works by Buxtehude, Vierne, and, of course, Bach. But I want to add onto these pieces with a look ahead to 2023, where we will celebrate both the 150th anniversary of Reger's birth and the 100th anniversary of Daniel Pinkham's birth. I very much enjoy both of these composers' music, so I am excited to learn at least one piece by each in the coming months.

December 2nd I will be playing a recital at First Evangelical Lutheran Church in Brockton as a part of their noontime Advent concert series.

**CONGRATULATIONS TO BOTH OF OUR WINNERS!  
WE LOOK FORWARD TO FOLLOWING YOUR CAREERS.**

*We extend our sympathies to the family of Reverend Thomas Conboy at his recent passing, and we again thank the family for their generous donations to establish the awards program in memory of his wife and our colleague, Lois.*

## PLACEMENT LISTINGS

Contact Julie Tagen (401-225-9594) to list

Lutheran Church 08/14/21  
54 Cedar Swamp Rd., Smithfield, RI 02917  
Office Administrator 401-232-7575  
Allen G220 \$10-16,000 organist

St. Michael's Episcopal Church 09/05/21  
399 Hope ST, Bristol, RI 02809  
Loretta Frances 401-253-7717  
\$18-20,000 organist/ director Our Redeemer Evangelical

St. Martin of Tours 09/29/21  
50 Orchard Ave., Providence, RI 02906  
Gabe Alfieri 508-226-0956  
Reuter \$11-13,000 organist

Christ Congregational Church 01/10/22  
1350 Pleasant St., Brockton, Ma 02301  
Murray Kidd boardofmusic@brocktonmusic.org  
Austin \$15-18,000 organist

Haven United Methodist Church 01/10/22  
200 Taunton Ave., East Providence, RI 02914  
Joan Klein 401-438-4911 organist/pianist

St. Andrew's Episcopal 01/21/22  
182 Willow Ave., PO box 6, Little Compton, RI 02837  
Norman MacLeod 401-314-5671  
Allen \$200/wk interim organist

## SUBSTITUTE LISTINGS

Contact Julie Tagen (401-225-9594) with changes.

### AVAILABLE SUNDAYS & WEEKDAYS

Babbitt, Jonathan 401-864-9009  
Casteel, Eden: 401-932-5589  
Clarke, Margaret: 401-726-4128 (all)  
Higgins, Stephen: 401-441-2270 (comfortable with any keyboard situation)  
Jones, William: 401-848-4327 (all)  
Kohl, Karen: 401-787-2695 Please Inquire  
MacCubbin, Jay: 401-521-0698  
Nicholson, Nancy: 401-521-9097 (all)  
Norton-Jackson, Diana 401-714-2700 interim, sub, no weddings  
Tagen, Julia L.: 401-225-9594 (all, weddings/funerals/interim)  
Taylor, Terry: 401-253-9030 (tutti@fullchannel.net)  
Vecchio, Gina: 401-954-2163  
Wilson, Lawrence: 860-857-5493 Organ; Sacred Jazz Composer/Arranger

### AVAILABLE WEEKDAYS ONLY

Black, John: 401-737-1230 (all, available Saturdays & weekdays)  
Castellani, Roger: 917-621-6530  
Cranmer, David: 401-447-9848  
Martorella, Philip: 401-615-0769 (no Sun. a.m.)  
Seaholm, Edward 401-309-2167  
Sobaje, Martha: 401-626-0099 (weddings, funerals)  
Westhaver, Verna: 401-683-2636

---

### SUBMISSIONS

DEADLINE: 20th of each month. SUBMISSIONS: Send Word or Text files to [altheaallard@gmail.com](mailto:altheaallard@gmail.com) or to Althea Allard, 166 Suffolk Ave., Pawtucket, RI 02861. ADVERTISING: Word doc, PDF (print ready), JPG (high resolution), or TIFF. All files should be grayscale at 300 dpi resolution. Email to [altheaallard@gmail.com](mailto:altheaallard@gmail.com)

---

### ADVERTISING RATES

1/4-page ad (3.5"W x 5"H): \$18 -or- 1/8-page ad (3.5"W x 2.5"H): \$10  
Flyers provided electronically for inclusion with newsletter (for RIAGO members): \$10.  
Make checks out to RIAGO and mail to Althea Allard by the 20th. \$25 non-members.

# THE FOURTH ANNUAL LOIS CONBOY MEMORIAL AWARDS 2023

The Rhode Island Chapter of the American Guild of Organists (RIAGO) is pleased to announce its Fourth Annual Lois Conboy Memorial Awards 2023. The Reverend Thomas Conboy, Jr. wanted to memorialize his wife, Lois, by having RIAGO grant awards in her name. It is the Chapter's desire to support young artists who wish to pursue the organ as a career.

There are three Scholarship Awards: a Young Artist Award (\$1,200), an Encouragement Award (\$500) and a Discovery Award (\$300).

The Young Artist Award is open to anyone who is a New England native or resident, 30 years old or younger, and is or has been or will be enrolled in a program of organ study at a University, Conservatory, or College, or is a graduate of any music program.

The Encouragement Award is open to any undergraduate or graduate student 30 years old or younger, and is or has been or will be enrolled in a program of organ study at a University, Conservatory, or College, or is a graduate of any music program.

The Discovery Award is for anyone in Rhode Island who wants to learn more about the organ, regardless of age. The award money may be used to pay for organ lessons, Pipe Organ Encounters (POE), workshops, or any other program involving organ discovery and learning.

Application Deadlines:

Deadline for submissions for the Young Artist and Encouragement Awards is May 15, 2023. Winners to be announced on or before June 15, 2023.

The Discovery Award accepts submissions on a rolling basis and is awarded on a "first come, first served" basis. Applications are open until November, 2023.

Only one award per candidate in any given year, and any previous Young Artist winners are ineligible to apply again.

To apply, email [riago.events@gmail.com](mailto:riago.events@gmail.com) and we will send you an application form.

---

Lois Conboy began organ lessons in junior high school. She attended Westminster Choir College in Princeton, New Jersey, focusing on Organ and Choral Conducting. After marrying the Reverend Thomas Conboy, Jr., she completed a degree in Education from California State University (PA), and later, a Master of Education. Moving to Rhode Island in 1972, when Rev. Conboy became pastor of Calvin Presbyterian Church in Cumberland, Lois oversaw the selection and installation of the new organ in their newly constructed church. She served as volunteer Organist/Choir Director at Calvin for over fifteen years, and during those years, spent every "vacation Sunday" playing at other churches. After retiring from Calvin, Lois served as interim and in her last years in Rhode Island, served as Organist/Choir Director at the Community Church of Providence. Lois loved RIAGO and was active in workshops and conventions, but most of all, she enjoyed and cherished the friendship and fellowship of the Guild members.



## James Busby Farewell Interview by Stephen Martorella

I had the pleasure of sitting down and talking with James Busby on the occasion of his retirement after nearly 30 years of service as Organist and Choirmaster of S. Stephen's Church, an Anglo-Catholic parish in Providence, Rhode Island, which sits on the edge of ivy-league Brown University's campus quadrangle. The church held a special service and luncheon on May 22 in honor of James, of whom The Reverend Benjamin Straley, Rector of S. Stephen's, remarked, "Everything that the Church does...flows out of our worship of the Living God -- a God who comes to us in the Mass in the beauty of holiness. James has selflessly offered himself to this cause. The great drama of the Mass has been accompanied by his stirring improvisations and sensitive timing. The choir has been shaped in countless ways by his leadership, and he is a devoted and fierce advocate for our parish."

The music for that day's service consisted of Juan Gutiérrez Padilla (1590-1644) *Missa Ego flos campi*, Psalm 67—*Deus misereatur* by Bertram Luard-Selby (1853-1918), and the anthem by John E. West (1863-1929) *The woods and every sweet-smelling tree*. Dr. Busby played as voluntaries "La Cour de Lys" from *Le Martyre de Saint-Sébastien* (Claude Debussy 1862-1918) and the Choral and Toccata Op. 104 (Joseph Jongen 1873-1953).

**SM:** So, James, you are lauded not only for your beautiful music but also for who you are as a mentor and an inspiration for so many people.

**JB:** I love it; it's all I know how to do, and I'm still learning how. That's the sad part of deciding to do something else, because I'm not done with the job yet. Maybe that's a good thing.

**SM:** So, what's the something else that you are envisioning?

**JB:** Learning how to play the organ (?) [Laughter]. I think I might like a little more down time. My alarm goes off at 4:00 AM on Sundays and I make the trek down from where I live in Boston. I have names for the potholes along the way. The commute doesn't bother me; I am usually here by 7:00 and ready for people to start coming in. I love being on time, and to do what we do, the singers have to be here on time, too, knowing their notes, and smiling.

**SM:** Well, with COVID and the challenges it has brought, so many people in our profession are choosing to call it quits. Is this a good time to retire?

**JB:** I am not so sure about that. I do plan on taking a little breather, but I will continue playing, but without the commute, and without all the details of administration. I have 18 paid singers, and now it is hard to fill those chairs. I have always given preference to Rhode Islanders, but they must read the notes and be up and at it by 8 o'clock. Maybe, now it is time for a fresh vision. And I do so love the chant and compline, so I might do some of this with a group I had quit twice before, to do this. I will be able to do polyphony and chant, which is a passion. The repertoire has some precious jewels that the church may want to take back again and again.

**SM:** And you've been doing this for...**JB:** 29 years. And where did it all go? How did you manage during COVID?

**JB:** We did Zoom but it was a bit clunky. The mystery is lost on Zoom. We started out with just a few singers. We were tested on our creativity to come up with new repertoire for smaller forces. That worked for about a month; then we gradually moved back to a larger group again.

**SM:** Will you miss the historic and beautiful Austin organ here? [More on the organ can be found by sifting through the “The Fiske Years” and “Post-War Developments” in the Short History of S. Stephen’s Church]

**JB:** Well, let’s say that I’ve made my peace with it. It fills the room and is larger than they really need, but I am grateful they maintain it, but in answer to your question, no, I can be just as happy playing on a tabletop. I am more interested in the message than the medium. I’ve loved this organ and found it a great tool, but I’ll find another instrument to play on and be just as happy. I love practicing the piano.

**SM:** Piano or organ?

**JB:** Both. Of course, I don’t play piano for people, only for singers. I love the Schubert lieder.

**SM:** Regrets?

**JB:** In some ways, I could have done more if I lived here rather than Boston, but then, again, much of the draw was that I was from there rather than here, and that I could recruit from there as well as here.

**SM:** One thing you brought to this institution is a stability it hadn’t had.

**JB:** Hollis Grant, my well-respected predecessor [who founded St. Dunstan’s Academy – a summer learning program for organists which ran for many years in Rhode Island, with some of the best teachers, but polyphony was really our specialty, especially the music of Palestrina. The Berliner had a beastly difficult accompaniment but was very effective, with the tintinnabulum, and bell-like effect, and one of my beloved mentors (Edith Ho) said, “You really like that?” and I said I rather did.

**SM:** Don’t we love our mentors, more than mere professors, who take the time to assess our whole person and feed us what we most need?

**JB:** Truly, truly, and Edith became an amazing colleague who helped me so much when I got this job.

[We discussed some of our beloved teachers and mentors, and how even though they are no longer with us how we remember them when we are at the organ.]

**JB:** George Faxon was also someone who had a great influence here. I play some of his transcriptions as a way of remembering him. [That included the morning’s transcription of the Debussy, gifted by Faxon.] We are also going to do a hymn by Tom Neal, who was here a while ago.

**SM:** Tell us about the musical vision you brought to S. Stephen’s.

**JB:** It was simply to enhance the Mass as best as I could. I tried to select the very best from every period. So, for Carter Brown’s memorial service, I did the Stravinsky Mass. Carter Brown had changed the way we look at art, and I thought it fitting, since Stravinsky changed the way we listen to music. For the church to put their trust in what we do is a lovely thing, and very important, and I have no reason to think it won’t continue. We are in a good place, too, with Brown University. Our new rector, F. Benjamin Straley, is attracting attention, and he is also a musician, having been organist at the National Cathedral before becoming a priest.

**SM:** That must be rewarding.

**JB:** ...or a bit daunting, but he has that ethos that will help as they search for a new candidate.

**SM:** Will you give them any advice?

**JB:** No, even though that might be difficult. They do have a search committee, who will make recommendations to the rector, but it will be his call. They are in a good place with that, as the committee members have experience as professional singers.

**SM:** Well, whoever comes in will have big shoes to fill.

**JB:** Actually, mine are about 8-½ - 9. [Laughter]

**SM:** I think part of the reason for your success here is that you are more than a musician, you have a vision of ministry.

**JB:** Well, we do try to get it right.

**SM:** ...and you have had good relations with the clergy here?

**JB:** Extraordinary...or I wouldn't have stayed.

**SM:** You can speak their language and they can speak yours, and doesn't that make such a difference?

**JB:** Sure, but the whole of it started out just as a love relationship, I just loved the piano, so for a while I thought I would give up the organ and just be a vocal coach, but gradually came back to the organ, and to church, and consequently to S. Stephen's.

**SM:** Hopes and dreams for S. Stephen's? Where would you like them to be, say, 10 or 20 years from now?

**JB:** As involved as they are now in the community, if not more so. Demographics are constantly shifting, but I would love to see greater involvement in the churches. That takes reaching out to people.

**SM:** Highlights of your career?

**JB:** I don't know. The fact that I get up on Sunday morning. I have had so much fun over the years. The highlights of my years were lessons with two piano teachers who wouldn't take 'no' for an answer – my studies with Julius Chaloff, and Kyriena Siloti who was my last teacher. She made it out of St. Petersburg in 1918 and believed she could do anything, and pretty much did.

**SM:** Any musical accomplishments or specific pieces that have given you great joy?

**JB:** I probably sound like a bore, but I truly love it all. There were a few ego trips early on, doing my first opera (*La Bohème*) at the Hatch Shell when I was young and cheeky. That was great fun, kid stuff. I just love playing.

**SM:** And for that, we are thankful. You have devotedly served here the music you so love, and that music is a blessing to us all.

**JB:** Truly it is.