



VOX OCEANA

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

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www.riago.org

www.agonewengland.blogspot.com

FROM THE DEAN

BLACK HISTORY MONTH: A LOOK AT SPIRITUALS

Most of us recognize that litanies, responsorial psalms, responsive readings, and antiphonal chanting are modern vestiges of call and response in the early church, but if one searches further back there are any number of earlier examples. In Old Testament times God often called his people by name, and they answered. The reverse was also true. The High Priest of the Temple was often sent up to call to God, and the people would await a response. This practice was prevalent in other cultures as well, and such a dramatic contest involving call and response is recorded in Mendelssohn's great oratorio *Elijah*, taken from the various scriptures. This also explains the origin of call and response in African cultures, where musicians imitated the sounds of the jungle with their voices and their "talking drums", as a response to the "call" they heard from the animate life around them, which in many cultures was deified.

From such ancient roots comes the "call and response" of African tribal music that was transplanted to the cotton fields of the south and the coffee plantations of the Caribbean. When this culture was forbidden them in the colonies, slaves adopted their own musical style to the songs of Jesus, which were the only songs they were allowed to sing. Thus, from the fields would come the responsive chants such as "I know the [I know the...] Lord laid His hand on me."

Leader: Swing low, sweet chariot

Chorus: Coming for to carry me home

Leader: Swing low, sweet chariot

Chorus: Coming for to carry me home

Leader: If you get there before I do

Chorus: Coming for to carry me home

Leader: Tell all my friends, I'm coming too

Chorus: Coming for to carry me home

It is for this reason that noted choral conductor and educator Anton Armstrong advocates that the best arrangements of spirituals are polyphonic in nature, preserving both that sense of response and the richness of polyphony that is inherent in the African cultures. Anyone who listens to the field recordings of African tribal music will recognize that while the actual "call and response" of leader and people is quite simple, even primitive, the percussive accompaniment of such chants is a complex symphony of polyphonic rhythmic textures woven into a giant tapestry alive with the sounds of life inherent in those cultures.

While that complexity was taken away in the New World, a new element was added, namely those folk melodies from Ireland and the British isles that became the great hymns and folk songs of both black and white America. The American musicologist and one of the most significant early specialists in the field of the American spiritual, George Pullen Jackson, noted that the earliest Welsh melodies had both minor and major variants of the same tune, and that there was also a "grey-tone" which was between the minor and the major. It was this element that particularly resonated with persons of color in the New World, and it was also this element that gave way to the blues-gospel style of music, with its dual elements of major/minor - specifically the minor melodic third over the major triad - called the "blue note". *(continued on page 2)*

EVENTS

Saturday, January 29, 2:00 pm: Paul Cienniwa will be playing with French recorder player Heloise Degrugillier at Melrose Unitarian Church, 70 W. Emerson St., Melrose, MA.

Saturday, February 5, starting at 1:00 pm: RIAGO Chapter Event at The First Baptist Church in America, 75 North Main Street, Providence: "Explore the Organ: A Hands on Experience for young pianists" with **Nancy Nicholson** and **Stephen Martorella**. Three one-hour sessions from 1 to 2 pm, 2:15 to 3:15 pm, and 3:30 to 4:30 pm. Each session will include 4 students (or not more than 5 students), so that each student will have about 10-15 minutes at the organ. Anyone is welcome to observe; to participate, contact Nancy Nicholson at nlnpianist@cox.net

Friday, February 4, 8:00 pm: Schola Cantorum of Boston, Frederick Jodry, director, Schütz *Musicalische Exequien* and Purcell *Funeral Sentences*. Church of St. John the Evangelist, 35 Bowdoin Street, Boston.

Saturday, February 5, 8:00 pm: Repeat of Feb 4 concert. St. Joseph's Church, 86 Hope Street, Providence.

Sunday, February 6, 4:00 pm: Repeat of Feb 4 concert. St. Paul's Church, 15 St. Paul Street, Brookline, MA. Tickets available only at the door: General \$25, Senior \$20, Student \$8 Web: ScholaCantorumBoston.com or phone: 401- 274-5073.

June 12–18: Yale Organ Week, a unique musical experience for select undergraduate organ students presented by Yale Institute of Sacred Music. A small number of gifted undergraduate students will work with some of the nation's top artist/teachers, receiving daily lessons, participating in workshops, and playing notable instruments in and around New Haven as well as New York City. Most evenings feature performances by faculty or students and are open to the public. The Yale Organ Week gives organ students the opportunity to meet their peers from organ departments across the country. **The newly-extended deadline for application is February 15.** 2011 faculty include: Martin Jean, Thomas Murray, Bruce Neswick, Carole Terry, and Todd Wilson. Website: yale.edu/ism/events/organweek2011.html

DEAN *(continued from front page)*

Ironically, most spirituals come down to us today in their last form, as a solo-song with piano accompaniment. This was an attempt by noted composers such as Jester Hairston and Harry T. Burleigh to "gentrify" the Black Spiritual in order to present it as "art-song" in the belief that it would gain acceptance across a then white America. Thankfully, amazingly talented singers and composers such as Mahalia Jackson, Aretha Franklin (before she went pop), Tommy Dorsey ("Precious Lord, Take My Hand") and others were able to put back some of the original musical and improvisational traits of early spiritual and gospel music. Modern choral arranger-composers such as Anton Armstrong, Albert McNeil and Adolphus Hailstork give us new insights into older styles combined with modern and innovative musical styles of the highest caliber.

Why not take a moment during this Black History month to listen to something old and something new from the intriguing world of the American Spiritual?

PLACEMENT LISTING

Contact Brian Larkin (272-8318) for more details or changes.

Evangelical Covenant Church 9/10
841 N Main St, Attleboro, MA 02703
Susan Manlove
O/D 35-40K Kinzey-Angerstein

Dunn's Corners Community Church 10/10
Westerly, RI
Contact Brian Larkin for details
Tanya Smith: 401-377-4234
Organist/ PT \$9000 Allen

Find the Substitute List at WWW.RIAGO.ORG.

SUBMISSIONS

Deadline: 20th of each month
Submissions: Send Word or Text files to aallard@ccri.edu or to Althea Allard, 166 Suffolk Ave., Pawtucket, RI 02861.
Advertising: Word doc, PDF (print ready), JPG (high resolution), TIFF, or EPS. All files should be grayscale at 300 dpi resolution.
Email to camacphee@gmail.com.

ADVERTISING RATES

1/4-page ad (3.5"W x 5"H): \$18
1/8-page ad (3.5"W x 2.5"H): \$10
Flyers you provide (for RIAGO members): \$10
Make checks out to RIAGO and mail to Althea Allard by the 20th.

MINI CONVENTION

Saturday, February 26: Mini-convention XIII Sponsored by THE MERRIMACK VALLEY CHAPTER, A.G.O. Mini-Convention No. 13 is coming soon, and this will be lucky 13th! We look forward to seeing a lot of familiar faces and some new ones too, so invite a friend, student, or the new organist in town. We have another interesting and varied lineup for you again this year, based on suggestions by former attendees and our chapter members. Spectrum Music will be back with a large selection of organ and choral scores. Attendees are welcome to also bring “pre-owned” music, books and CDs for our Scholarship Fund flea market table. The Party Connection of Methuen will be providing a delicious catered lunch, and there will be time for socializing and browsing. Here’s the schedule (bring it with you!):

- 8:30 – 9:00** Coffee and Registration
- 9:00 – 9:45** Anthem Reading led by MVAGO members.
- 10:00 – 10:45** Lee Leach: “Carillons: A Carillonneur’s Perspective on Playing Church Bells”
- 11:00 – 11:45** Andrew Shenton: “The Organ Music of Liszt, Large and Small”
- 12:00 Noon** Lunch, Conversation and Browsing
- 1:30 – 2:15** David Carrier: “Spicing up Your Choral Rehearsals”
- 2:30 – 3:15** Nelson and Beverly Pease: “An Introduction to Reed Organs”

The 2011 Mini-Convention will again be held at First Calvary Baptist Church, at the intersection of Route 125 and Massachusetts Ave. in North Andover (same location as last year). From I-495 take Exit 43 (Massachusetts Ave. – North Andover); follow Mass. Ave. south about two miles, past one traffic light, until you see another traffic light ahead (Rte. 125). The church is a modern building on the left, just before the intersection, and entrance to the large parking lot is just before you get to the church.

Mindful of the present recession and its possible effects on many of you, we are still keeping the cost the same as in the past few years. Full day is still \$48.00, and either a morning or afternoon half-day session is \$32.00. Lunch is included in all registrations, whether full-day or half-day. Students with appropriate i.d. may take \$10.00 off the cost. PRE-REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED. To register, cut and complete the form below, enclose a check or money order payable to MVAGO Mini-Convention and mail to Ruth Bowers, Registrar, 25 Pine Road, Beverly, MA 01915-3729, by February 21, 2011.

Membership in the American Guild of Organists is not required for attendance at this Mini-Convention. Please photocopy and pass this flyer around to your colleagues, friends, and especially students. If you have any questions, please call or e-mail Barbara Owen (978-465-2068; owenbar@juno.com) or Ruth Bowers (978-922-8137; Ruth.Bowers@comcast.net).

MINI-CONVENTION REGISTRATION

Name _____

Street _____

City, State, Zip _____ E-Mail _____

All Day _____ Morning only _____ Afternoon only _____ Amount enclosed _____

Detach and mail this form with your registration fee to Ruth H. Bowers, 25 Pine Road, Beverly, MA 01915-3729 before February 21, 2011.