



THE BELLOWS

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From the Dean ...

Dear Members and Friends of the Greater Lansing AGO Chapter,

Fall is here with cloudy skies, rain and falling temperatures. They say that we will also have a snowy winter. Aside from the weather, we have started school, rehearsals and a number of school and church activities. It is a great time to be involved in music and in our AGO Chapter.

In this issue of the newsletter, there are a number of concerts listed from around our community. I encourage you to attend these events. It is a wonderful opportunity to hear some fine music and support these young and not so young musicians. One will find at least one piece that you can use at your own church and school. It also gives one a chance to listen, sing and enjoy the music (and not be in charge).

During this time of the year year, there are many beloved hymns that we sing and one of my favorites has always been "Now Thank We All Our God" (nun danket alle Gott). When I study the words of a hymn, I often wonder what prompted the writer to say what he or she said and how they said it. This hymn is no exception. Knowing the historical context of the composing of this hymn gives new meaning to the text. I have included in this newsletter an article by Pam Griffin on the history of the man who wrote this text: Pastor Rinkart.

We would do well to sing this more often and not just at Thanksgiving. All of us have faced, are facing or will be facing, challenges of mind, body and spirit. Our country is facing them as well. I pray that you will find peace and rest during this busy season.

Enjoy the gift of music and use it to help and serve others.

John Horak

Upcoming Worship and Concerts at Our Savior, Lansing 7910 E. St. Joe Highway (corner of St. Joe Highway and Broadbent)

Sunday	November 10	3 p.m.	Sam Shuler Organ Recital
Wednesday	December 4	7 p.m.	Special Advent Worship – "Advent Hymns"
Sunday	December 8	4 p.m.	Christmas Program Early Childhood and Kindergarten
Wednesday	December 11	7 p.m.	Christmas Concert Grades 5 – 8 Bands / Chimes / Choirs / Handbells
Sunday	December 15	3 p.m.	Delta Community Choir Christmas Concert
Wednesday	December 18	7 p.m.	Christmas Concert Grades 1 – 4
Tuesday	December 24	7 p.m.	Christmas Eve Worship Choir / Handbells / Strings / Woodwinds

Pastor Gives Praise and Thanks During the Darkest of Times

Pam Griffin

*Now thank we all our God
With hearts and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things has done,
In whom His world rejoices;
Who from our mother's arms
Has blest us on our way
With countless gifts of love
And still is ours today.*

From 1618 to 1648, Europe, and especially Germany, was devastated by famine, disease and destruction during the Thirty Years' War. In 1636 Martin Rinkart, a Lutheran pastor in Eilenburg, Germany, wrote the hymn "Now Thank We All Our God" (Nun danket alle Gott), a hymn of thanksgiving still sung today.

The son of a poor coppersmith, Rinkart was born April 23, 1586, in Eilenberg, Saxony, Germany. As a child he was a member of the choir in the famous St. Thomas Church of Leipzig, Germany, where J.S. Bach later served as musical director.

After attending the Latin School at Eilenburg, Rinkart became a foundation scholar and chorister of the St. Thomas School in Leipzig in November 1601. This scholarship also let him proceed to the University of Leipzig, where he enrolled for the summer session of 1602 as a theology student. He made his way at the university through the efforts of industry and his musical gifts, and was ordained to the Lutheran Church ministry and became a precentor, director of choral services, at the church at Eisleben.

After completing his studies, Rinkart stayed in Leipzig where he applied for the position of deacon at Eilenburg. However, he was refused by the superintendent, supposedly because Rinkart was a better musician than theologian, but really because the superintendent was unwilling to have a strong-willed colleague who was a native of Eilenburg.

Instead, Rinkart took a position at the Eisleben Gymnasium in June 1610 and also served as cantor at St. Nicholas Church. A few months later, he became deacon of St. Ann's Church in Neustadt of Eisleben, and in 1613 became pastor at Erdeborn and Lütjendorf, near Eisleben.

In 1617, at the age of 31, Rinkart became Archdeacon in his native town of Eilenburg, just as the Thirty Years' War broke out. The residents of this walled town endured many horrors during this time, and Rinkart stood by his flock while he himself endured the hardship of quartering soldiers in his home and frequent plunderings of his meager stock of grain and household goods. He was a faithful, caring pastor who attended to the needs of the sick and the hungry during extreme circumstances.

*"O may this bounteous God
Through all our life be near us,
With ever joyful hearts
And blessed peace to cheer us;
And keep us in his grace,
And guide us when perplexed,
And free us from all ills
In this world and the next."*

Eilenburg became an overcrowded refuge for those from the country districts where the Swedes had spread devastation and destruction. A steady stream of refugees poured into the city as the Swedish army surrounded it. In 1637 the plague claimed 8,000 people including the vast majority of the town council, an exorbitant number of children, clergymen from a neighboring parish, and Rinkart's wife.

Now he had to do the work of three men, and buried 40 to 50 people a day — a total of 4,480 — but through it all he remained well. Finally, it became necessary to bury the refugees in trenches without service.

After the plague, the town was hit by a famine so extreme that “30 or 40 people might be seen fighting in the streets for a dead cat or crow.” Rinkart did his best to help and gave away everything, keeping only the barest rations for his own family. In time, he was forced to mortgage his future income to buy bread and clothes for his children.

As if that suffering were not enough, the Swedes returned and imposed a ransom of 30,000 thalers on the town. Rinkart left the safety of the city to meet with the Swedish general to plead for mercy. He was refused and returned to the town saying, “Come my children, we can find no hearing, no mercy with men, let us take refuge with God.” He fell to his knees, praying with such earnestness that the Swedish general relented and lowered his demand to 2,000 florins.

Through grief, and loss, suffering and death, Rinkart always looked to his Savior, and could thank God for the blessings he still had. “Now Thank We All Our God” began as a family prayer before meals, and later was sung as a national thanksgiving at a celebration service when the Thirty Years’ War ended. With the exception of “A Mighty Fortress is Our God,” it is the most widely sung hymn in Germany, sung on numerous occasions of national rejoicing.

Rinkart wrote seven dramas on the Reformation for the centenary in 1617 and of the more than 60 hymns he wrote, “Now Thank We All Our God” is his best known. It is a testament to his faith that, after such misery, he was able to write a hymn of abiding trust and gratitude toward God. He died in December 1649 in the place he loved most — Eilenburg.

*“All praise and thanks to God
The Father now be given,
The Son, and him who reigns,
With them in highest heaven,
The one eternal God,
Whom earth and heaven adore; ✠
For thus it was, is now,
And shall be evermore.”*

Chaplain's Meditation ...

As I write this meditation, Reformation Sunday (celebrated as a festival/feast day in our congregation) is two days away. We're also celebrating the 500th anniversary of the publication of the first Lutheran hymnal, known as the *Achtliederbuch* ("eight song book"), which contained (you guessed it) eight hymns. As such, I'm reminded of Martin Luther's (1483 to 1546) love of music, his talent as a hymnwriter, and his encouragement of the robust use of music in Christian worship (the Divine Service). Luther had a rather direct and blunt way of speaking at times, and so with that (warning), I'd like to share with you some of his words on music, which were originally written as a foreword for a musical publication of composer Georg Rhau (1488-1548). Even with our diversity of denominational background, etc., I think most will enjoy Luther's commentary. The Lord's blessing to you all as we make use of this marvelous gift of God in our various contexts!

PAX,

Rev. Lance Klamer+

"I, Doctor Martin Luther, wish all lovers of the unshackled art of music grace and peace from God the Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ!

I truly desire that all Christians would love and regard as worthy the lovely gift of music, which is a precious, worthy, and costly treasure given to mankind by God.

The riches of music are so excellent and so precious that words fail me whenever I attempt to discuss and describe them.... In summa, next to the Word of God, the noble art of music is the greatest treasure in the world. It controls our thoughts, minds, hearts, and spirits...

Our dear fathers and prophets did not desire without reason that music be always used in the churches. Hence, we have so many songs and psalms.

This precious gift has been given to man alone that he might thereby remind himself that God has created man for the express purpose of praising and extolling God.

However, when man's natural musical ability is whetted and polished to the extent that it becomes an art, then do we note with great surprise the great and perfect wisdom of God in music, which is, after all, His product and His gift; we marvel when we hear music in which one voice sings a simple melody, while three, four, or five other voices play and trip lustily around the voice that sings its simple melody and adorn this simple melody wonderfully with artistic musical effects, thus reminding us of a heavenly dance, where all meet in a spirit of friendliness, caress and embrace.

A person who gives this some thought and yet does not regard music as a marvelous creation of God, must be a clodhopper indeed and does not deserve to be called a human being; he should be permitted to hear nothing but the braying of asses and the grunting of hogs."

- Martin Luther

French Masters of the Organ by Michael Murray

A book review by Robert D. Miller

Michael Murray has, for a long time, been one of my favorite organ recording artists. Many of his recordings are what I consider the gold standard of performances. In addition, Murray is a scholar and writer about French Romantic-era music, its history and the musicians who created so much of what we enjoy now.

This book is mainly about music and organists of the Romantic period, considered as the period from 1789 through 1914, an interval between the end of the French Revolution to the first World War. To say there was one French school of music is not proper; there were several. The emphases and practices of the school of Saint-Saëns and Franck were different from those of Widor and later the more modern styles of Dupre, Langlais and Messiaen. The earlier teaching emphasized improvisation and Widor was critical of improvisation being more important than execution, for example.

The main biographical sketches of the organists of the period included Césair Franck, (1822-1890), Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921), Charles-Marie Widor (1844-1937), Louis Vierne (1870-1937), Marcel Dupré, (1866-1971), Jean Langlais (1907-1991) and Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992). In the biographical expositions about these organists, their compositions and styles, many other organists are also discussed, such as Guilmant and the Belgian Jacques-Nicholas Lemmens. Lemmens was a highly regarded performer and teacher, therefore he had a strong influence on these organists and was, in many ways, connected to the development and evolution of the French style.

The book begins, not with these organists, but with the organ builders. They were skilled and imaginative designers who produced outstanding and well-crafted instruments. These new instruments could support many new idioms and ideas in the music by these composers. There were several well-known builders such as Ducroquet, who built the instrument at Saint Eustache which Franck helped inaugurate in 1854, and Merklin, among others. It was the Cavaillé-Coll family of organ builders who contributed so much to the art of organ building. Aristide Cavaillé-Coll's brother, father and grandfather were organ builders, but it was Aristide (1811-1899) who, at a very early age, mastered mathematics, engineering, metallurgy and management skills that solidified the company's reputation.

By the age of 18, Aristide was responsible for construction of significant organs without supervision. He made significant improvements in stabilizing winding and in console design. Even though the family was located in Toulouse, it was Gioacchio Rossini who encouraged their move to Paris, where Aristide was quickly introduced to many of leading artists and scientists of the day. At the age of 22, he heard of bids being taken for an organ for Saint Denis, with bidding to close in three days. Foregoing sleep and meals, he visited the church, made measurements, proposed a list of 84 stops, estimated cost and drew renderings. His work and detailed construction plans won the bid. In the early 1900's when organs became electrified, larger organs were built and higher wind pressures enabled far more expressive power than was available to previous generations of organists.

Even though Franck was older, the story begins with Saint-Saëns who had a very long career and ideas from the previous century that younger organists did not possess. By the age of ten, he had performed works by Handel, Bach, Beethoven and Mozart from memory. Early in his career, Aristide Cavallé-Coll included him in many inaugurations and performances. These performances, compositions, and travel brought widespread acclaim.

While Saint-Saëns and Widor were urbane and sophisticated, Franck was considered laughable in his manners, slovenly dress and unexceptional education. He became an outstanding pianist and for a while, had an independent piano studio. Eventually in 1872, not without controversy, Franck was appointed professor of organ at the Conservatory and he educated a number of fine composers, including Tournemire and Vierne.

The most fascinating aspect of this book is the story of the connections between organists and their professors, students, and many musicians outside the organ world. Often these connections were originated from or assisted by the Cavallé-Coll family.

Later chapters give insight into the intricate lives and works of Widor, Vierne, Langlais and Messiaen. Michael Murray lived in France and was a student of both Marcel Dupré, and Jean Langlais, so he was well-qualified to write this edifying section of the book.

For anyone interested in learning more about the French ideas of this period, both students and experienced organists will benefit significantly in their understanding of the organs built, organists' training and practices, as well as the evolution of French composition and musical form. This book was superbly crafted and was a delight to read. I would highly recommend it for anyone who has even a latent interest in the French organ music that we hear frequently in today's concerts. An extensive bibliography is also a valuable part of this book.

French Masters of the Organ was published by Yale University Press in 1998. Murray is also the author of *Marcel Dupré: The Work of a Master Organist* and *Albert Schweitzer, Musician*.

November/December/January Events

Theatre Organ Society Recital, Sunday November 24th, 3 pm, Grand Ledge Opera House, 121 S. Bridge Street

Christmas Music at Bob Miller's Home, Sunday December 8th, 3 pm, 2247 Burcham Drive, East Lansing

Lessons and Carols, Friday December 13th, 7 pm, St. John Church and Student Center, 327 MAC Avenue, East Lansing

Emanuel Lutheran Senior Choir Advent and Christmas Concert with Organ, Sunday December 22nd, 2 pm, 1001 N. Capitol Avenue, Lansing. Free. Accessible parking in 1000 block of Seymour Avenue. For information contact Mary Junttonen at 517-331-1023.

Brunch at MSU Brody Hall, Sunday January 12th, 1 pm, \$12. Please email jhorak@oursaviorlansing.org with your reservation(s). Brody Hall is near the Kellogg Center at 241 Brody Service Road, East Lansing.

Lansing Matinee Musicale/Lansing American Guild of Organists Autumn Organ Walk



Photos by Barbara Hiranpradist

The difference between a terrorist and a church organist is that you can negotiate with a terrorist.



"Due to our failure to secure a holiday-relief organist, the next hymn will also be sung to the tune, *Chopsticks*."



The 5th Wave By Rich Tennant

