

## **SFAGO Special Projects Committee: Advancing the Cause**

By Douglas Franks

Chair, SFAGO Special Projects Committee

As SFAGO begins a new fall season, the Special Projects Committee likewise begins its work anew for the three upcoming funding cycles over the next twelve months. We have a couple of exciting projects of national importance in the hopper in need of financial support from our chapter through its Special Projects Fund. These funding requests will be evaluated at our next SPC meeting.

For now, we can proudly report on three grants our committee awarded last May. In one, we helped fund organ workshops and an organ concerto concert, including a world premiere of an organ concerto written for youth orchestra, taking place in November of this year as part of a year-long centennial celebration of the founding Tennessee AGO Chapter. The overall program is billed as “a comprehensive year of education, concerts, and community awareness of the pipe organ.” Emphasis throughout will be on the pipe organ, its literature, its role within an orchestral context, and on involving young organists, other young musicians, and new audiences in this educational process.

Secondly, we awarded funds to the 2013 AGO Region V Convention (Southwest Michigan AGO Chapter) to underwrite five education-oriented convention workshops: “Training the Young Organist,” “Service Playing and Improvisation,” “Putting on a Pipe Organ Encounter,” “Children’s Choral Techniques,” and “AGO Education and Certification.”

Thirdly, we supported a Pipe Organ Encounters Advanced (POEA) organized by the Rochester, New York AGO Chapter. It featured high-caliber faculty from the Eastman School of Music and other notable institutions around the country and worked with gifted high-school organists, likewise from around the country. The POEA offered a wide-ranging curriculum and was a stellar success. In the report we received, notes of appreciation from the organ students were included. Their words were a heartfelt outpouring of gratitude to the Special Projects Fund for making this exceptional educational opportunity possible for them. To excerpt just a few:

“Thank you for the generous contribution that allowed me to be in Rochester this week for a truly amazing experience. I am certain that my experiences at Eastman will remain in my memory for the rest of my life.”

“I’ve been having such a great time at this Pipe Organ Encounter in Rochester! The Eastman School of Music is such an icon in the organ world and to be in the midst of all of these amazing organs and teachers is such a thrilling experience. Thank you so much for your support of this POEA.”

“Thank you for the gift made by the San Francisco Chapter of the AGO. I came to Rochester expecting to learn as much as I could, and I have learned more than I could have hoped. Being around other organists my own age is one of the highlights of my year. Thank you again for your generous gift that made this experience possible.”

There could be no more eloquent a tribute to the value of the Special Projects Fund than the words of appreciation written by these POEA organ students. Through the Fund and the committee that administers it, the San Francisco AGO has clearly had and will continue to have a positive impact on our profession.

A quick word of special thanks to all the SFAGO members who chipped in an additional donation to the Special Projects Fund when they renewed their membership dues over the summer months. Their gifts provide us with additional resources for maintaining a higher level of giving to individuals and organizations who come to our committee earnestly seeking financial aid for their organ-related projects. These gifts are truly an investment in the future of our profession. An article thanking donors by name will appear in a later newsletter.

Let me close with yet another expression of thanks to the SPC from an individual whose book on organ hymn-accompanying our committee helped fund was recently published:

“[My book] has just been released by the publisher. MorningStar Music Publishers have published it as *Hymn Playing: A Modern Colloquium*. I am very pleased with it and very excited that it can now be shared. It is my sincere hope that it will be used widely by schools to teach organists to engage even more musically with their congregations . . . . Thank you again for your generosity, for your faith in my work, and for your investment in organists’ education.”

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