

A Peek Into the Special Projects Committee Archives

By Douglas Franks

Chair, SFAGO Special Projects Committee

In last month's newsletter, you were introduced to or became reacquainted with SFAGO's Special Projects Committee. In this article, we'll describe some of the "special projects" the Committee has funded. Over \$50,000 in grants [\$70,000 by 2014] have been awarded since the SPC's inception in 1988, so we can barely scratch the surface here. And any jubilation over the success stories must be tempered by the many times the Committee has inevitably had to decline a request.

Most recently, we awarded a grant to San Diego AGO for a Pipe Organ Encounter they're organizing. The San Diego Chapter has a track record of several successful POEs, so we were pleased to ensure the continuation of their valuable work training a new generation of organists.

Another recent project we helped fund is the compilation and publication of a book on hymn-accompanying. The author saw a pressing need to provide organists with a comprehensive guidebook on organ hymn-accompanying as practiced in different liturgical traditions, based on research into existing sources and on interviews of established masters of this art. We agreed, and the book is on its way to being published by a university press.

SPC assistance enabled a prominent Bay Area university organist to travel and conduct research on the life and work of Richard Purvis, an outstanding figure in the world of 20th-century American organ music. The memory and music of Purvis will be kept alive, thanks to this advocate of his and partly to our modest financial support.

Another organist/scholar requested—and received—funds to help her record and release a CD of music played on an historic Schulke organ in Milwaukee, one of very few instruments by that builder still existing. The recording preserves Schulke's unique legacy in this country.

With partial SPC underwriting, a church in Florida launched a music series designed to promote organ to the wider public.

Regional AGO conventions have benefited from SPC support, for example, the 2009 Region IX convention in Phoenix and the 2011 Region IX convention in San Francisco. SPC funds made it possible to present a convention workshop on San Francisco's historic Panama-Pacific Exposition Organ. The workshop led to formation of a committee that seeks to find a new home for this instrument, currently dismantled and in storage.

The SPC helped an AGO chapter celebrate its 75th anniversary with a grant to pay for a dedicatory recital on a new organ at a local church. The celebrity recitalist led a workshop as well. Both events were co-sponsored by the church and were part of a larger organ-recital series the chapter oversees.

Thanks in part to an SPC grant, 20th-century Parisian organist, composer, and pedagogue Rolande Falcinelli's *Mausolée à la gloire de Marcel Dupré* for organ and orchestra was premiered at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Rochester, New York as part of the annual Eastman School of Music "Women-in-Music" Festival. Madame Falcinelli was the first woman to hold the prestigious post of liturgical organist at *Basilique du Sacré-Cœur* in Paris.

An SPC grant enabled an organ historian to have his book of essays honoring Peter Williams, eminent English musicologist and organist, published by the Organ Historical Society Press.

In Missouri, an intensive, curriculum-rich organ academy was launched under Office-of-Worship Diocesan auspices to “discover, recruit, and train” organists throughout the area. The SPC was there!

Clearly, we could go on at great length with examples of how the Special Projects Committee has striven to enrich the world we organists and organ enthusiasts inhabit. Our grant recipients have poured heart and soul into an impressive array of projects that most likely would not have come to fruition without their determined efforts. Evident, too, is the inestimable “ripple effect” their achievements create.

Those who serve on the Committee and administer the Special Projects Fund can take pride in SFAGO’s laudable tradition of helping others do what needs doing to enhance our profession in so many different and unique ways. Our chapter colleagues a quarter century ago made this possible by setting up the Fund. It is up to us to keep such an important resource alive and functioning.

(May 2012 SFAGO Newsletter)