

JANUARY 2012



# THE PIPELINE

Happy New Year Issue!

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**Coming Attractions:**

- 16 January—Choir workshop and Mory's

What a great turn-out on a beautiful October day of record-setting warmth for our Litchfield County Organ Crawl. We began at Trinity Episcopal Church in Torrington where Dr. Jerry Davidson presented the interesting history of this impressive 57-rank, 3-manual pipe organ, built by William Geddes in 1970 incorporating pipes from the original 1929 M. P. Moller instrument. In 1983 Austin Organs built a new console and the organ received extensive revoicing. Davidson followed with an inspired improvisation thoroughly demonstrating the many capabilities of this largest and most comprehensive pipe organ in Northwestern Connecticut. "Crawlers" were then invited to take their turns at the console.

The Crawl then headed down Route 8 to visit St. Peters-Trinity Episcopal Church on Main Street in Thomaston. Robert Hall welcomed us with the history of the unique 1879 E. & G. G. Hook & Hastings Opus #957 tracker organ. The instrument was rebuilt in 1975 with *no alterations*. It contains 12 ranks across a 2-manual (58-note compass), and 27-note non-radiating flat pedalboard. Hall adeptly demonstrated some portions of literature including a hymn on this well-maintained instrument. Many participants also enjoyed some time at the console, including Adrienne Weik who played "Come, ye thankful people, come" (with manuals coupled and pedal stop included) AFTER the power was cut, and Hall had climbed into the chamber and "hand pumped" the organ. It sounded beautifully! The small organ is a perfect match to this charming small-town 1869 church nearby the Housatonic River - which has had occasion to flood the organ chamber!

The crawl then made a short walk to the nearby Thomaston Opera House where we were welcomed by members of the Connecticut Valley Theater Organ Society. Juan Cardona, Jr., current President of CVTOS, and House Organist for 18 years at the Opera House, presented a most enjoyable concert of his "favorites" demonstrating the capabilities of the 3-manual, 15-ranks (unified) Marr & Colton Theatre Pipe Organ (including second-touch, and "Butch the Ghost" magically playing the nearby Yamaha piano). Cardona then invited some of our somewhat hesitant "church organists" to climb up to the imposing console and take the Marr & Colton for a spin! Davidson spontaneously played a lush rendition (as Cardona worked the registration) of "Somewhere Over The Rainbow" to the delight of all.

We then made our way next door to the Black Rock Tavern where all enjoyed a pleasing evening of dining and conviviality helping to build a new bridge between our Waterbury AGO Chapter and the CVTOS.

The Chapter extends our sincere thanks to Dr. Jerry Davidson, Subdean, and Robert Hall, Board Member, for their diligent work and preparation to make this day a great joy and success!



## Dean's Message

Dear Colleagues,

I hope that you all found a way in the midst of the 'too much' of Christmas to appreciate the real beauty in the best music of the season.

I had the unusual experience to lead Wesleyan Singers in a presentation of Messiah part 1 and three choruses from part 2. Of 28 singers, many were from various countries in Asia with no singing experience and awkward English. Of course, English was Handel's third language and his singers were Italian so the original presentation was perhaps similarly 'foreign.' In a way, although I had conducted many performances of this piece with church choirs in my 45 year career in church music, this was more interesting because so many of the singers were discovering the work. Their enthusiasm was palpable. And, we had a huge audience!


I relate this as a little material to give all of you a boost as you reflect on your work. In contemporary American society classical music is a 'foreign' commodity. We must meet this challenge by making our work vital, especially the rhythm. Rhythm is the key element in popular music styles, usually just an ostinato. We have to counter this by making our rhythm sharp, and when speaking about our work emphasize that the rhythm of classical music is more varied and interesting.

Our upcoming choir workshop will bring us together with the expert leadership of Richard Gard. Richard earned his doctorate at Yale and is chair of the arts department at NVCC, where he conducts the large college/community choir. He is also choral director at Saint Thomas More Chapel at Yale. We will meet there and after his workshop, make the short trek down York street to Morys. I will send-out the menu for your selections next week, but do let us know now about your plans to attend this event so that we can give them a count.

Happy New Year to all of you, and I look forward to our full tables down at Morys's!

best regards

*ron*



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## "A Musical Method for Recruiting and Nourishing a Church Choir"

### Monday, January 16, 2012, 5:00 PM

Presenter: Richard Gard <http://richardgard.com/bio.aspx>  
<http://richardgard.com/next.aspx>

Where: Saint Thomas More Chapel, 268 Park Street, New Haven  
<http://stm.yale.edu/>

Following the workshop, we will proceed to Dinner at Mory's at 6:30 PM, with the Wiffenpoofs. Dinner includes a glass of wine and coffee or tea. The cost for the dinner is \$40 per person. Payable by check (to "AGO Waterbury Chapter") or cash to the Chapter Treasurer, George Giblin, on the evening of the event. If you decide to have other liquor, please settle with your server in cash. There is no cost to Waterbury AGO members to attend only the workshop, but please RSVP so we will know the numbers to expect.

Information on Mory's: <http://morysclub.org/>

Information on the Wiffenpoofs: <http://www.whiffenpoofs.com/>

A separate communication on this event with a New Year's message from our Dean, Ron Ebrecht, is also being emailed to you. We hope that many AGO Chapter Members will attend this first event of 2012.

RSVP by reply to this email, or by calling Lee Giblin at 203-879-3709. Car pooling may be arranged from the Waterbury area to New Haven, so please indicate if you would like to take part in transportation arrangements. Also, please let us know if you would like to attend but transportation is a problem for you. If so, we will attempt to arrange a ride for you as

*My husband and I divorced over religious differences. He thought he was God and I didn't.*

## CD Review: SYMPHONIE 3 AVEC ORGUE CAMILLE ST-SAENS

Lives there an organist or organ aficionado who has not thrilled to the mighty C major organ chord that introduces the final movement of this perennial favorite? Well, the C chord is *supposed* to be mighty, but considering the inadequacies of some of the "instruments" used in recordings of this piece much is often left to be desired. Fortunately, this is no longer the case!

A new recording has been released, available through JAV, that takes advantage of a real "dream team" :

Monsieurs Roth, pere et fils, the grand orgue de St. Sulpice, and the orchestra Les Siecles. Francois Xavier Roth, one of Europe's most charismatic conductors, conducts this outstanding ensemble, which he created, in the superb acoustic of St. Sulpice in Paris, the better to take full advantage of the mighty Cavaille-Coll masterpiece and the virtuosity of his father, Daniel Roth. The performance is superb, and the technical aspects of the recording are outstanding — the engineers manage to combine perfectly the organ and the vast acoustic with a more intimate treatment of the orchestra, creating in the process a perfect blend and a much better integration of an organ with an orchestra than I have ever heard before on the many recordings of this symphony in my collection. If I ever need to downsize my CD collection, this will be the version of this piece that I keep!



## Steve Roberts' Germany - part 4

On Saturday morning, January 8 we boarded a "Regionalbahn", one of the little local trains that stop in small towns and villages, and got off in Boehlen. Our destination was Roetha, where there are two small Silbermann organs. I was a bit worried about the arrangements for the day, for there is no train to Roetha, and we had to take the 144 bus to Roetha. As it turned out, this part of the travel went like clockwork: there was a bus stop right outside the train station, and the 144 bus was waiting. I asked the bus driver to tell me when we should get off, and in a few minutes we were there. We were dropped off at a bus stop right in the center of Roetha, which is a very small but charming town.



It is not known whether J.S. Bach ever played these two organs, but it is quite likely that he did. While he was Kantor in Leipzig, Bach traveled to Altenburg, our next destination, to play the Trost organ in the castle chapel, where his student, Johann Ludwig Krebs, was organist. Since Bach would have been traveling in a coach or on horseback, it seems quite logical that he might have stopped in Roetha, since it is on the way to Altenburg. Bach was a great friend of Silbermann's, so it would seem very odd if he did not stop to try out these organs. We do know that Felix Mendelssohn played them 100 years later, however.

We spied a small sign that pointed to the Georgenkirche, which appropriately enough is located on Silbermannstrasse. Barry Jordan had kindly arranged with the organist for us to play these two organs, but it wasn't clear exactly how we were supposed to meet her. There were some parishioners working outside the church, and a friendly gentleman approached us. As it turned out, he was the church Pastor. He asked us what we wanted, and we explained that we were there to see the organ. He told us that the organist was out of town, but there was another group that was supposed to visit the organs in the afternoon. Luckily he gladly let us in to play the organ in the Georgenkirche, and told us we could visit the Marienkirche afterward.

The organ in the Georgenkirche is a 23 stop, two manual and pedal organ, built in 1718 by Gottfried Silbermann. Those of you who have never had the opportunity to visit an old organ like this should know that no organ of this age is in its pristine original state. Organs are complicated machines, and over time things wear out, break, or are altered to fit current fashions or needs. The facade of both of these organs are typical for Silbermann, in that they are all in one case without a Rueckpositiv. In this region the Rueckpositiv was out of fashion by the 18th century. The organ in the Georgenkirche has a case painted ivory with elaborate carved and gilded pipeshades. It has two flat towers on the side, with a double central tower and lats in between. Both organs in Roetha are well documented; a search for "Rotha orgel" will yield both photos and recorded examples. Peter Williams in his classic book <The European Organ: 1450-1850 is rather critical of the architecture of this church and writes that the interior is broken up by some heavy arches. I expected something like the complex interior of the church in Norden from that description, but instead found the church to be far more open than Williams' description had led me to believe. I had never seen either of these organs, so I did not know exactly what to expect. According to what we read on the case the



Georgenkirche organ was last restored in 1937 by Hermann Eule of Bautzen, a firm that is highly regarded for its restoration work. The organ was just as I expected for a Silbermann: beautiful, clear, singing Principals with vocal speech but no noticeable transients, and really lovely, limpid Flutes. In accordance with J.S. Bach's preference for "gravity" in organ sound, there was a very solid bass. The full plenum was bright, but the mixtures were not overbearing. One could see why Bach so admired Silbermann's work.



We knocked on the door of the Rectory, and the Pastor told us to walk to the Marienkirche at the top of the hill, and he would meet us there in a few minutes. We walked along the winding cobblestone streets to the Marienkirche, where people were just leaving from a funeral that had taken place a short time before. The funeral directors were picking up the flowers and a sexton was just putting the last spades of dirt on the grave. We had a chance to look around until the Pastor arrived. I noticed a memorial, which turned out to be a memorial to the soldiers from Roetha who had died in the First World War. It is always sobering to see these memorials in small towns in Germany and Austria, because one realizes that many small towns lost a majority of their young men. The Pastor came and let us in, and we made the necessary financial arrangements.

A word about that: many places in Europe that have old organs charge a fee for the privilege of playing them. I never mind this, because people must take their time to let visitors in, show them how to turn on the organ, and give them general instructions for playing the instrument, locking up, shutting off lights, and the like. It's only fair that they be paid for these things, especially in places like Roetha that don't have a lot of money, and where groups are always showing up to play the organs.

The Marienkirche organ consists of 11 stops on one manual and pedal. Small Baroque organs of this size hardly ever had two manuals, as it was considered most important to have a full plenum for accompanying congregational song. I have



more information about this organ: it is tuned sharp (464Hz) as most old organs in that region are. It was built by Gottfried Silbermann in 1721-22, and had repairs or changes in 1752, 1760, 1833-34, 1847, 1897, 1935, 1960, and within the past ten years. Like most other organs in Germany, it lost its tin facade pipes to the war effort in 1917. During WWII it was dismantled and stored in the Georgenkirche. In 1950 it was set up in the Altes Rathaus in Leipzig, but in 1960 the Hermann Eule firm repaired it and returned it to its original location in the rear gallery of the Marienkirche. The organ has an especially ovely sound--many people prefer it to the larger organ in the Georgenkirche. When we were there, however, the organ was suffering from the extreme cold, and some of the keys were binding on the pins, which did not allow the keys to return after they were released. As a result, we only stayed a few minutes, which was a real shame.

We walked back down the road past some pleasant houses to the small square, where the bus stop was located. After a few minutes wait, we boarded a bus for the bus plaza in the

small town of Kitzscher. There were no more trains running that afternoon from Boehlen to Altenburg, so we had to take the bus instead. I was a bit worried about this, and my fears proved to be well founded. Little did we know that some serendipity awaited us.... Stay tuned!

*Stephen Roberts*

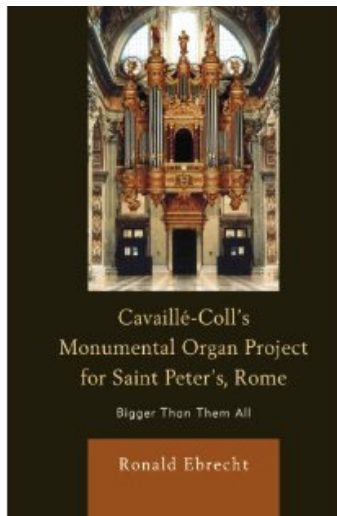
## Waterbury Chapter AGO

Registrar  
33 Averyll Avenue  
Wolcott, CT 06716

Phone: 203-879-3709  
Email: [pipeline@waterburyago.org](mailto:pipeline@waterburyago.org)



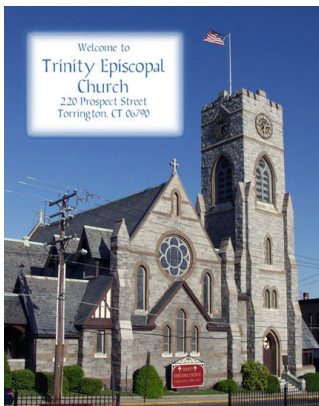
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**Book Review:** Ron Ebrecht's Latest—*Cavaillé Coll's Monumental Organ Project for St. Peter's, Rome*  
If there is one place in Europe that I have spent more time in than Paris it is the Eternal City. Often have I wandered the incredible expanse of the world's largest church, and on occasion I have been there when the organ is playing. This has always been an elusive pleasure, since the organ in St. Peter's, although no doubt large by most standards, is painfully inadequate for the task it faces; that is, filling the world's largest liturgical volume with sound. In fact, although the effect can sometimes be ethereal, it sounds like a walkman playing in a concert hall! If only Cavaillé-Coll had been given a shot at St. Peter's!

Much to my surprise, that had almost happened! It was some years ago when I discovered that C-C had actually drawn up plans for what would, at the time, have been the world's largest organ. The fascinating story of that most monumental "woulda-soulda-shoulda beens" is told here by our own Ron Ebrecht. Ron weaves history, culture, and even politics (yes, strange as it may seem, this story is rife with politics and the 19th century political correctness!) into a well crafted narrative that is difficult to put down once you start. You will meet the many and fascinating personalities involved in the story, and you will wonder, as I have, at "what might have been" had this potential masterpiece actually come to fruition. More's the pity that it did not, but by all means let Ron tell the story — he writes as well as he plays. Don't miss it!

## Special Opportunity!



Trinity Episcopal Church in Torrington is seeking an **Organ Scholar**, to begin as soon as possible. Duties to include Sunday morning rehearsal time with the choir (currently 9 am through the service at 10:15) playing hymns, accompaniments and solo literature as assigned. The O/C has over 30 years experience working with an organ scholar and has served on the faculties of three universities as organ prof. The organ is a very complete 3-manual instrument and will be available for practice during the week, if desired. Small stipend available. Will consider a seventh grader with good piano background and up. For more information contact Dr. Jerry Davidson, [jfd112@gmail.com](mailto:jfd112@gmail.com).