

Las Cruces, New Mexico Chapter – American Guild of Organists



Virtual Recital – Fall 2020 – Program Notes

Ramón Noble (1925-1999), one of the most prolific Mexican composers of the 20th century, was born in the Mexican state of Hidalgo and received an engineering degree from the University of Hidalgo before attending the National Conservatory in Mexico City, where he studied organ and guitar performance and composition. He achieved international renown as a choral conductor, composer, and arranger, and he is credited with some one thousand choral compositions and arrangements. He toured throughout North America and Europe as a performer and conductor, conducted hundreds of choirs during their tours of Mexico, and founded a number of Mexico's most important choral groups, societies, and organizations.

Karen Billings, a resident of Las Cruces since 2007, was an engineer and mathematician with AT&T Bell Laboratories for 20 years. Earning degrees in Mathematics from Hendrix College (Conway, Arkansas) and Oklahoma State University, she studied organ while at Hendrix and continued her studies at Westminster Choir College in Princeton, New Jersey. She is certified as a Colleague of the American Guild of Organists and regularly attends Peace Lutheran Church.

Dan Locklair (b. 1949), is composer-in-residence and professor of music at Wake Forest University in North Carolina. *Rubrics* was composed in 1998 for the Organ Artists Series of Pittsburgh, PA. *Rubrics* (instructions to the services for the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer*) is a five-movement suite.

Rick Garven, a third-generation El Pasoan, has been organist-choirmaster at the Church of St. Clement in El Paso since 1982. He holds the B.A. degree from Pasadena College (CA) and the M.Mus. degree from the University of North Texas. He also earned the Colleague and Associate certificates from the American Guild of Organists.

John S. Dixon (b. 1957) is a graduate of Oxford University with a degree in engineering science and economics. He came to the US to get an MBA from Harvard in 1980 and has had an international business career. He is organist of his Presbyterian church in Virginia Beach and a national officer of the American Guild of Organists.

Laurel Benson Brown is a retired Lutheran Church Musician, living north of Deming. She earned a Bachelor of Music degree from Colorado State University and a Master of Sacred Music from Wittenberg University. She enjoys subbing, singing in the choir, accompanying, and learning the ukulele when COVID safe practices allow.

William Kroeger (1914-1984), **Newman Powell** (1919-2004), **David Schack** (b. 1947), **Chester Alwes** (b. 1947), and **Philip Gehring** (b. 1925). Steve explains, "The pieces I have chosen for the potpourri are all pieces by people I have known personally. Most of them have a connection to my alma mater, Valparaiso University. William Kroeger and Newman Powell were my piano teachers. Neither of them is known as a composer, but they did write these two short pieces for the Concordia Publishing House *Parish Organist* series. David Schack, a fairly well-known Lutheran organist and composer, was a classmate of mine. Chet Alwes was a grad student at the University of Illinois when I was there as a grad student in linguistics. He conducted the Lutheran church choir I sang in. Finally, Philip Gehring, FAGO, was my organ teacher for almost all the four years I was at Valparaiso."

Stephen Helmreich studied organ at Valparaiso University under Philip Gehring. He was the organist at Peace Lutheran church in Las Cruces from 1990 to 2019. He retired from the Computing Research Laboratory at NMSU in 2009.

Floyd J. St. Clair (1871-1942) was born in Johnstown, PA and died in Cleveland, OH. He was organist at Calvary Presbyterian Church in Braddock, PA, and, in addition, was a cornet player and band director who wrote and arranged much martial music.

Henry B. Kihlken (1939-2017) was born in Sandusky, Ohio to farming parents who encouraged their children to develop their artistic gifts. He was educated in Connecticut and at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music. Kihlken served numerous churches in the Connecticut and Ohio areas as organist and music director, and published several hundred works, mostly in a traditional style suitable for worship services.

Howard Smolleck is a Professor Emeritus of Electrical and Computer Engineering at NMSU. He also taught at Old Dominion University (Norfolk, VA) and was the founding sponsor of Alpha Chi National Honor Scholarship Society chapters at these two schools. He held organist positions at University Presbyterian Church (Las Cruces), First Christian Church (Norfolk, VA), Inglewood Methodist Church (Grand Prairie, TX) and St. John Presbyterian Church (Dallas, TX), and since 1998 has been organist at First Presbyterian Church in Las Cruces.

Johann Kasper Ferdinand Fischer (1656-1746) may have been born in Bohemia and became Kapellmeister to Ludwig Wilhelm of Baden in 1695. One of the early masters of the organ, his music is rarely heard or published now even though he was considered one of the best composers of organ music of his time. Influenced by the French Baroque style, he was known by Bach and Handel, who also borrowed from his works.

Monte Coleman, currently retired as a mathematician at the U.S. Army Ballistic Research Laboratory, now part of the Army Research Laboratory, is an itinerant organist and has served as a substitute and interim organist at various churches in the Las Cruces area.

Dietrich Buxtehude (1637/39-1701) was a Danish-German organist and composer of the Baroque period. This prelude in C major, BuxWV 137, was preserved in a collection of works copied by Johann Christoph Bach. The prelude features an extended pedal solo at the opening, and a chaconne section after the customary fugue.

Jieun Kim Newland is an organist and harpsichordist, currently serving as Music Minister/Organist at Peace Lutheran Church in Las Cruces. Jieun obtained a master's degree in organ performance from Yale University. She has been an active musician, serving as a church organist, collaborating with early music ensembles and choral ensembles in Honolulu, Kona, Seattle, and Fort Collins before recently relocating to El Paso.

J. S. Bach (1685-1750), the acknowledged master of organ literature, composed 1,128 musical works for orchestra, choir, and organ and is the most prolific composer of chorale preludes for organ. Hailed as the father of the Baroque era, he demonstrates a mastery of the melodic line and contrapuntal harmony. In "Nun komm', der heiden Heiland," BWV 659, written for the first week in Advent, Bach presents an ornamented soprano line while hinting at the melody in the alto and tenor accompaniment over a continuously "walking" bass line.

Adele Giusto, a retired elementary school music teacher, serves at the Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd in Silver City, New Mexico as its music director. In this capacity, she serves as organist/pianist, choir director, bell choir director, music librarian, and instrument maintenance overseer.

William Albright (1944-1998) was born in Gary, Indiana, studied at the University of Michigan and at the Paris Conservatoire, attending Olivier Messiaen's classes. His music combined tonal and non-tonal classical music elements with American popular music and non-Western music. A virtuoso organist, pianist, and composer, he was an enthusiast for ragtime, composed hymns, and was named Composer of the Year by the American Guild of Organists in 1993.

Eugène Gigout (1844-1925), a French organist who studied with Camille Saint-Saëns, served as organist for 62 years at the Saint-Augustin Church in Paris. He succeeded Alexandre Guilmant as Professor of Organ at the Paris Conservatoire and was renowned as an expert improviser, founding his own music school. Known for his virtuoso organ playing, his composing style embraced several elements, from the lean manner of Bach to the late-Romantic movement.

Lynn Moorer is an organist, singer, radio show host ("All About Books" on KTAL-LP, 101.5 FM, Las Cruces), and attorney. She studied organ with Charles W. Tritt at Nebraska Wesleyan University and earned a Bachelor of Music degree in sacred music and applied voice from that institution.