

# ORGAN AND CHURCH MUSIC STUDY AT ST. OLAF COLLEGE

**The Music Department at St. Olaf College provides aspiring musicians with a variety of training and performing opportunities that prepare them for the challenges of this rich artistic pursuit. Private lessons, course work, and ensemble participation are designed to nurture the growth of young performers in an environment of artistry, creativity, cooperation, support and respect.**

The Organ department at St. Olaf College is one of the largest undergraduate organ departments in the country. The program has maintained a stable enrollment over the past quarter-century. Students who wish to major in music with organ as their primary instrument have two degree options.

## **THE BACHELOR OF MUSIC DEGREE**

### **PERFORMANCE MAJOR**

The organ performance major offers a comprehensive and in-depth study of the performance practices of the organ. This program is structured as a typical performance major to include the core music curriculum (music theory, aural skills, music history), private lessons, pedagogy, and recital requirements. The organ performance major differs from the church music major primarily in that it does not require the church music practicum or conducting courses.

### **CHURCH MUSIC MAJOR**

Church music study at St. Olaf attempts to balance an examination of the history of music in the church with an exposure to techniques for the practicing church musician. In this context, the student is encouraged to develop a clear understanding of the role of music in the life of the local congregation. In addition to core music coursework and weekly private lessons, all Church Music majors participate in the church music practicum, and take a three-course sequence of choral conducting in which the final semester requires the student to work with their own lab choir. Church Music majors participate in one of the five auditioned choirs on campus, and have the option to participate in a variety of other ensembles, including orchestra, band, and handbell ensembles, and present the required recitals as all Bachelor of Music majors.

#### **CHURCH MUSIC: ORGAN EMPHASIS**

The Church Music Organ curriculum includes courses which explore vocational and practical dimensions of being a church musician while pursuing a rigorous course of organ studies. The organ major focuses upon the special skills an organist needs to learn in order to lead worship from the organ (such as improvisation) and as a conductor. The daily chapel services and Sunday worship services serve as a laboratory for St. Olaf organ and church music students, giving organists the opportunity to play regularly in daily chapel and observe and evaluate their peers.

#### **CHURCH MUSIC: CHORAL EMPHASIS**

In addition to the core music and Church Music curriculum, this major requires the student to declare voice as the principal performing medium, and allows for extra development of skills in conducting and supporting coursework (i.e., diction and choral literature classes).

## **THE BACHELOR OF ARTS DEGREE**

Students interested in organ may choose the Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in music. This degree option provides a solid foundation in core music courses, combined with a broad-based general education curriculum, central to the philosophies of a liberal arts education. The Bachelor of Arts in music also allows for the possibility of completing a double major within four years.

## **LESSONS**

Private study in organ is open to all qualified St. Olaf students as studio space permits. No prior organ study is required, but an intermediate level of piano proficiency is required. A brief interview and audition are required to help to determine if a student is ready for organ study. A weekly studio class for all organ students is led jointly by Dr. John Ferguson and Dr. Catherine Rodland. There are also many opportunities to travel to the Twin Cities where organ students participate in master classes and hear recitals on the many fine instruments found in Minneapolis and St. Paul.

## FACILITIES & INSTRUMENTS

St. Olaf offers students one of the most beautiful campuses in the country, and the buildings which house the music department are no exception. Christiansen Hall of Music houses the Urness Recital Hall, an excellent music library, three large rehearsal halls, faculty studios, keyboard/computer lab, practice rooms and classrooms.

In the fall of 2006 a new Holtkamp organ was installed in Boe Memorial Chapel, one of the final steps in a complete renovation of this significant space on the St. Olaf campus. With stunning acoustics and a fine organ (chancel organ 75 ranks; gallery organ 15 ranks, each playable from either of two three-manual consoles), the chapel serves as a “laboratory” for church music majors as well as a locus for organ study and performance.

Skifter Hall, adjacent to Christiansen Hall, serves as the home of the organ and church music faculty, and includes six practice instruments (three mechanical, three electro-pneumatic) by Dobson, Wilhelm, Holtkamp, and Schlicker). Each room has been acoustically engineered to provide a satisfying practice experience for every student. In addition, Skifter Hall houses the Tormodsgaard-Bakken Recital Hall (commonly known as “Studio A”), a small hall designed expressly for organ teaching, practice and recitals. Its mechanical action Dobson organ is three manuals and 42 ranks.

Two portable “continuo” organs by Charles Hendrickson are available for use by small and early music ensembles. The college also owns a large Allen digital organ used for major concerts such as the Christmas Festival, held in Skoglund Center Auditorium. When not in use at Skoglund, this three-manual organ is also available for practice in Skifter Hall.

## FACULTY

**JOHN FERGUSON**, *Elliot and Klara Stockdal Johnson Professor of Organ and Church Music and Cantor to the Student Congregation*, B.M., Oberlin; M.M. Kent State; D.M.A., Eastman School of Music. Dr. Ferguson is one of America's most respected church musicians and teachers. His doctoral study in organ was with Russell Saunders. His work as an improviser and leader of congregational song has received national acclaim. He is the author or co-author of three books, numerous articles and has a large number of published organ and choral compositions. At St. Olaf he also conducts the St. Olaf Cantorei.

**CATHERINE RODLAND**, *Artist in Residence: Organ and Theory*. B.M., St. Olaf College; M.M. and D.M.A., Eastman School of Music. While at Eastman Dr. Rodland studied with Russell Saunders and earned the prestigious Performer's Certificate and the Ann Anway award for excellence in organ performance. She has received awards in many competitions, including prizes in both the 1994 and 1998 American Guild of Organists Young Artist's Competition. She has concertized in many locations across the country, including Woolsey Hall at Yale University, and the Crystal Cathedral in Garden Grove, California.

**PAUL WESTERMEYER**, *Visiting Professor of Church Music (Interim only)* B.A., Elmhurst College; B.D. Lancaster Theological Seminary; S.M.M. and Ph.D. Union Theological Seminary, New York. Westermeyer is Professor of Church Music at Luther Theological Seminary in St. Paul, and has held teaching positions at Yale University Institute of Sacred Music and Elmhurst College, Elmhurst, Illinois. Dr. Westermeyer is one of America's leading authorities on the history, theology and practice of church music with many books and numerous articles in print.

**ANTON ARMSTRONG**, *Harry R. and Thora H. Tosdal Professor of Music: Voice and Conducting* B.M., St. Olaf College; M.M., University of Illinois, D.M.A., Michigan State University. Armstrong is conductor of the acclaimed St. Olaf Choir and teaches advanced conducting for Church Music students. Armstrong is widely recognized for his work in the area of youth and children's choral music and teaches a course in this area for Church Music majors. He served for more than twenty years on the summer faculty of the American Boychoir School, Princeton and serves on its board of directors. In 1998, he began his tenure as founding conductor of the Oregon Bach Festival Stangeland Family Youth Choral Academy.

**CHRISTOPHER ASPAAS**, *Assistant Professor of Music: Voice and Conducting* B.M., St. Olaf College; M.M., Michigan State University; Ph.D, Florida State University. Aspass is conductor of the first year men's Viking Chorus, the St. Olaf Chapel Choir and teaches choral repertoire and methods for the Church Music program. Aspass has held positions at Central Washington University, Mount Holyoke College and has sung as a soloist with the Oregon Bach Festival. Aspass remains active as an adjudicator, clinician and researcher.

**JILL MAHR**, *Instructor in Music: Handbells*. B.M., University of Minnesota-Duluth; M.M., Northwestern University. Mahr directs the St. Olaf Handbell Choir, the St. Olaf Chapel Ringers, and oversees the direction of the Manitou Handbell Choir, a student-directed ensemble. She teaches a unit on the pedagogy of handbells in the Church Music Practicum.