Playing the King of Instruments

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PLAYING THE KING OF INSTRUMENTS

The Dordt College music department hosted the Pipe Organ Encounter this summer, an annual week-long event sponsored by the American Guild of Organists (AGO) to promote organ playing and music.

Students ages 13-18 came to campus to play Dordt’s pipe organ and learn from professional AGO organists, including Dordt faculty. They visited and heard local pipe organs, visited museums, and heard from organ builders.

Dordt’s Pipe Organ Encounter was a long time in the making. It began when a generous donor suggested that Dordt apply to AGO to host the event. Dordt faculty knew they had the resources to do so.

“We have a history of a strong organ program, with three organists on the music faculty and a significant number of graduates who have become professional organists,” says Dr. Karen De Mol, a member of the planning committee. The department also hoped the event would draw young musicians to Dordt College at a time when many churches are looking for organists.

Dordt faculty organists MaryLou Wielenga, Dr. John MacInnis, and Matthew Geerlings, along with De Mol, planned and chose teaching faculty and guest performers for the event—some of whom were Dordt College graduates.

“It’s a credit to Dordt’s music faculty that they keep such a unique instrument alive.”

— Allison Wordes, Pipe Organ Encounter participant

Allison Wordes studies piano at Dordt and also takes pipe organ lessons. Wordes had never played a pipe organ before the Pipe Organ Encounter, but she attended because she wanted to serve others.

“I think it’s cool that Dordt has its own organ, and I think a lot of students take that for granted,” says Wordes. “It’s a credit to Dordt’s music faculty that they keep such a unique instrument alive. If students want to learn music, this is the place to be.”

To those who argue about whether to use an organ or a praise team, Wordes says, “The Pipe Organ Encounter showed me how the two can be merged together. All instruments have the same potential in worship.”

ABOUT AGO

The AGO is a national association that began in 1896 to educate and serve the public. Its goal was to “maintain high musical standards and to promote understanding and appreciation of all aspects of organ and choral music.” AGO has several chapters throughout the United States.