

**CFAMC 25TH ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE
JACKSON, MS AREA
OCT. 17-19, 2019**

Twenty-five years of CFAMC - imagine that! The annual national conference was held this year at two neighboring colleges in the greater Jackson area: Mississippi College (Thursday evening and Friday), and Belhaven University (Saturday). Both have over 5000 students, and both are both charming, historic, postcard institutions that reflect the beauty and traditions of the Deep South. Some attendees visited Civil War sites and antebellum mansions - as well as the musical venues of New Orleans - before and after the conference. We are very grateful for the hard work of Andy Sauerwein and Ben Williams, co-chairs.

The programs began with a Thursday evening solo concert by Walter Saul, performing his own *Alpha and Omega* collection of 24 piano preludes and fugues in 95-year-old Aven Hall. Following the format of the famous *Well Tempered Clavier* by Bach, the piece displayed that work's influence, but included jazz and other modern elements. Especially impressive was one set "for left hand alone," preceded by an apology for the need to rest the right hand - an explanation that no one took seriously.

Early risers spent the first hour on Friday in a devotional led by Bill Vollinger. This was followed by a series of interesting presentations on topics ranging from the pitfalls of creating a successful work for choir and wind ensemble, to techniques on mentoring today's music undergraduates, to a close look at recent recorded compositions by other members.

At midafternoon the group reconvened at another historic building - Provine Chapel, a large, ornate, balconied, pre-Civil War church now used primarily for concerts and weddings. The concert that it housed consisted of two parts - works featuring organ (including a duet with saxophone) and works for choir and chamber choir, some accompanied.

CFAMC members have a tendency to seek out the best nearby restaurants for dinner, and descend on them en masse. This year's choice was located in the heart of the historic district, and after a delicious repast of Southern cooking and Southern hospitality the diners emerged to find a street jazz concert in full swing. However, they came to hear their own music, so the second concert of the day was held back in Aven Hall and featured pieces for piano, or piano with electronics. The concert concluded with a stunning, virtuosic performance of a 5-movement solo piano work - performed by a musician who had played a violin solo in the choral concert earlier the same day!

Saturday began once again with an early morning prayer session - "targeted" this time. Then we heard two paper presentations.

The first, given by Josh Rodriguez, was "What can evangelicalism uniquely contribute to contemporary art music?" A discussion about evangelicalism as theological fuel for creativity in the arts followed. He brought in many factors relating to relationships, multiculturalism, biblical authority, biblical literacy, evangelism, and our relationship with God. It was quite thought provoking.

Glenn Pickett presented the next paper: "Finding Your Voice". We were exhorted to remember who we are: Eph 2:10, and if we are called to be composers isn't that the good work that God prepared for us to walk in? We were challenged to "Do The Work!" I think we all know what that is. Then we were encouraged to find our voice, not by comparing ourselves to others, or by seeking success, but by listening for the leading of the Holy Spirit and seeking to let God's voice be heard in our music.

We had a wonderful lunch together where many shared what CFAMC meant to them. It was a blessing to hear words from Mark Hijleh, the founder.

The fourth concert was an exploration and demonstration of how dance can work with music. Three dancers improvised on Jason Palamara's music providing us with a very impressive sample of how collaboration can work.

The last concert featured chamber music, beginning with a string quartet by Heather N. Savage. We only heard the first two movements, which left us all wanting to hear the last movements. We heard a lovely piece for violin and piano by Jack Ballard, a setting of a poem by Bill Vollinger for voice and piano, and two pieces for piano trio. The first by Benjamin Williams, and closing with a piece by John Akins.

There followed a lovely reception where we had time for many visits and some wonderful food before we headed home.