

IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH ORGAN PROGRAM

Evanston, IL

Immanuel Lutheran has supported organ students through an annual scholarship award since 2002. The organ scholar program is supported through the Music Outreach Endowment Fund of Immanuel Congregation that was created to reach out into the community and invest in the vocational lives of musicians that will benefit the whole Church.

Here are some of their testimonies.



Joy-Leilani Garbutt-2004

February, 2024

The Immanuel Lutheran Church organ award opened up a world of possibility to me, and set in motion my musical future. Thanks to this award, I decided to pursue organ study in Europe instead of attending medical school, and my time there revealed to me a new passion for French organ literature, which became the subject of my doctoral research. I cannot overstate how pivotal this award was in the early stages of my musical career, and how grateful I am for the community that supported the creation of this wonderful opportunity.

Joy-Leilani Garbutt

Director of Music, St. Luke's Episcopal Church,
San Francisco, CA; Co-Founder Boulanger Initiative



Nathan LeMahieu-2005

February, 2024

Believe it or not, I do still think back with some regularity to 2005 and my winner's recital at Immanuel Lutheran, especially since I associate several pieces in my repertoire with that experience. As a (car-less) college student, I was thrilled to play a recital so close to where I was living, and the prize money was perfectly timed in terms of getting me moved and setup to begin my master's program. As I've entered later stages in my own life and career, I've made a priority of teaching and giving public performance opportunities to younger organists - values that were reinforced by the vision of the ILC Evanston Organ Scholar Competition. It's such a critical time in one's life to receive a jolt of experience and confidence - encouraging young organists in what can sometimes seem like a lonely pursuit. I walked away from my Immanuel Lutheran experience with a renewed sense of excitement and hopefulness about committing myself to church music for the long run.

Nathan LeMahieu
Organist and Co-music Director,
St. John's Lutheran Church, Wheaton, IL
Adjunct Professor of New Testament,
Wheaton College Teaching Faculty, Clapham School, Wheaton, IL



Paula Maust-2008

March, 2024

Participating in and winning the Immanuel Organ Scholar competition in 2008 was particularly impactful to me, because at the time, I was just on the cusp of beginning my professional career. Having the opportunity to perform in a venue outside of my university while I was still a student gave me a sense of confidence and inspired me to continue working hard to achieve my musical goals. I also greatly appreciated that the program evaluated both the performance of concert repertoire and of hymn playing, making it more broadly focused than most other competitions at the time.

Best,
Paula

Dr. Paula Maust
www.paulamaust.com
Assistant Professor of Music Theory
Peabody Conservatory—Johns Hopkins University



Priscilla Gabriel-2013

March, 2024

The Immanuel Lutheran Organ Scholar competition is unique in being perhaps the only organ scholarship not tied to a specific institution of higher learning that combines both a live organ playing competition as well as a vocational interview and academic considerations. Most competitions are solely decided on organ performance alone--even if it may (rarely) include a hymn performance--and most scholarships that may look at a student's potential for a church music vocation are tied to one school rather than offered broadly. I am more comfortable as a church music director than as a concert organist (though I have obviously spent many years learning and giving recitals!), and receiving this award was a significant boost when I sometimes felt eclipsed by the future concertists around me. I strongly feel that this program is important to continue and the legacy of past winners that I personally know is further testament to that.

Sincerely,
Priscilla Gabriel
Music Director
Faith Lutheran Church, Bloomington, Indiana



Hannah Koby-2017

March, 2024

Being a church musician is a holy vocation, but it is not always easy. The pressures of high performance standards along with working with people and organizing a church music program can be intense - not to mention balancing all of that with continued studies! Being a winner of the Immanuel Organ Scholar competition has been a source of encouragement at times when the job got hard. When I wondered if I could live up to the expectations and responsibilities of church music, I can look at the medal hanging on my wall and be reminded that there are people who feel strongly that I am the right person for the job of being a church musician - so strongly, in fact, that they supported my development as a church musician and organist. For me, winning the 2017 competition was also my first step into the world of performing organ recitals beyond campus and gave me confidence to step into any new challenges as an organist. Thank you for the work you do to support young organists entering the vocation of church music!

Hannah Koby
Organist, Interim CO-Director, Youth Choirs
St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Cleveland Heights, OH



Matthew Wachtman-2020

March, 2024

ILC's Organ Scholar Competition has had a great impact on my development as an artist and church musician. I recall between 2018-2021, I competed in several organ competitions, but ILC was the only one centered around church music, which was and remains my emphasis. After playing my program of chosen works, I was invited to chat with the committee (a first and last in my competition experiences) and was immediately impressed by their thoughtful questions and dialogue centered around my educational path and my career goals. I felt not only that the committee was truly interested in my journey and future, but also that they were committed to furthering the field of church music broadly by supporting aspiring organists.

I was delighted to learn I had won the 2020 competition, and since then, the award has aided my acceptance into further studies and my current full-time position at St. Martin's Lutheran. It also serves as my reminder to continue to grow and challenge myself to better serve in this uniquely wonderful way.

Matthew Wachtman
Organist, St. Martin's Lutheran Church,
Defiance, OH



Dale Nickell-2020

February 28, 2024

It was my distinct pleasure to participate in the 2020 Organ Scholar Competition in Organ Playing at Immanuel Lutheran Church. At the time of the competition, I was in the final semester of my Masters of Music degree at the Eastman School of Music. The competition was a great opportunity to experience the church and organ in Evanston while focusing on the organ repertoire and hymn-playing that I prepared.

Since I was unable to present a live recital, the competition jury arranged to have my program professionally recorded with high quality audio and video. Coming back to Evanston in 2021 to play the virtual recital was also a valuable experience, and I am grateful for everyone that made the extra effort to arrange it.

In the months following the competition, as I was approaching my graduation, I was applying for church music positions across the country. I took my first full-time position in the fall of 2020. The support that I received from the Organ Scholar program, both financial support and professional encouragement, was immensely helpful during that key moment in my career.

The Organ Scholar program allowed me to achieve success in organ playing and church music. This success has continued to motivate me to pursue my goals. In 2022, I strived to achieve a higher level post and am proud to have started at my current position as the Organist & Associate Director of Music Ministries at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Nashville. In 2023 and 2024, I have submitted applications for other organ playing competitions and have enjoyed playing as an organ recitalist at various churches as I strive to develop my career in organ performance.

One aspect of the Immanuel Lutheran Church competition that makes it unique is the inclusion of hymn-playing. Despite the importance of hymn-playing as a skill for working organ professionals, its development can be overlooked in the education of young organists. My experience at Immanuel Lutheran was one factor that guided me to focus my own organ practice on hymn-playing in the past few years.

The pursuit of the organ in one's life starts with passion and a love for the instrument, the music, and its role in the church. The next step of finding a path with a career and a lifestyle that involves organ playing can be challenging. I am proud of my accomplishments as a young organist and church musician and am optimistic about my future, and the Organ Scholar program played an important role in helping me get to where I am today.

Sincerely,

Dale Nickell

Organist & Associate Director of Music Ministries, Westminster Presbyterian Church, Nashville



Kelsey Berg-2023

March, 2024

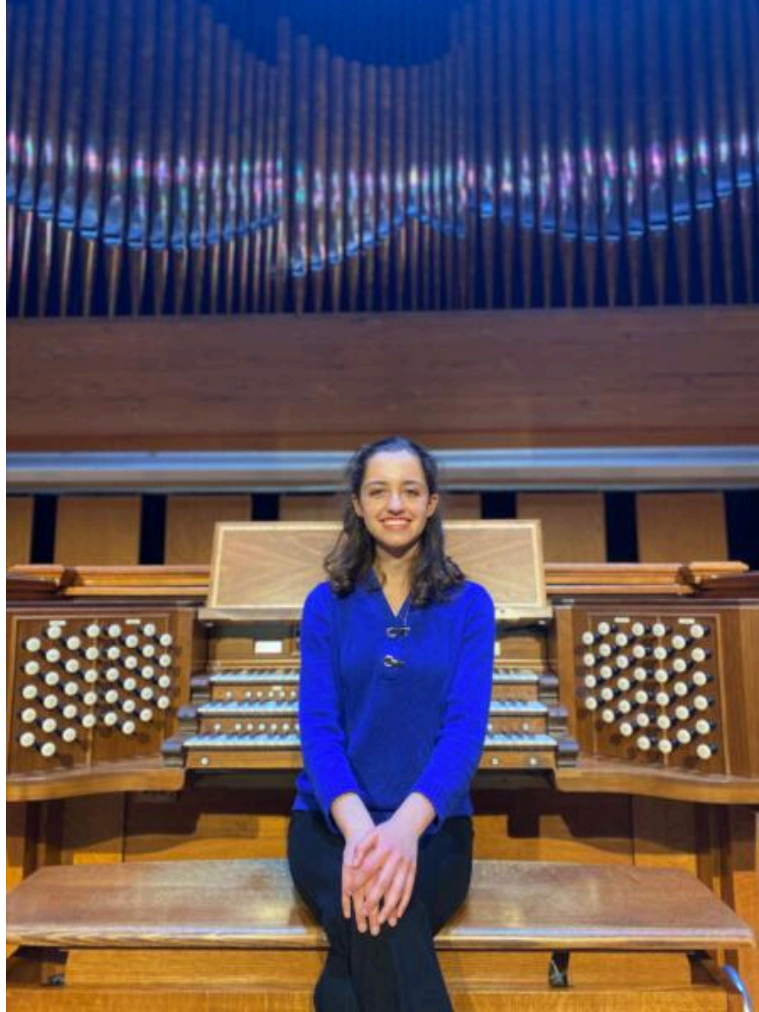
The Immanuel competition is one of the very few that is entirely sponsored by a church and focuses on furthering the education of future church musicians. This emphasis is extremely important as not enough organists acknowledge that our profession is built on, as Johann Sebastian Bach said, "to create a well-regulated church music program to the greater glory of God." Immanuel helps facilitate this for future generations. Thank you for offering this wonderful gift to both organists and the community!

In my case, Immanuel's award contributed to a great portion of the tuition for the third year of my doctorate. With this award, and salary from my church job, I was able to pay for this year debt free. In an ever more equitable world, Immanuel's dedication to diversity of programming is heartening and points the way forward for sacred music.

Kelsey Berg

Assistant Organist

St. Paul's Episcopal Church Akron, OH



JoEllen West-2023

March, 2024

I thoroughly enjoyed participating in the Immanuel Lutheran Organ Scholar Competition. I appreciated the judging panel, who not only encouraged me to pursue church music but also asked insightful questions that have inspired me to make my musicianship more inclusive, current and well-rounded. Performing a recital for the Evanston community taught me how to learn and adapt repertoire to another organ quickly and showed me just how much I enjoy performing. I am putting the winning funds toward tuition for summer programs, both domestic and abroad. I am forever grateful to my teachers, the Immanuel Lutheran community, and to all those who made this wonderful opportunity possible.

JoEllen West

Organ Scholar, Trinity Cathedral Episcopal Church, Cleveland, OH