

John D. Schwandt is Associate Professor of Organ and Director of the American Organ Institute (AOI) at the University of Oklahoma School of Music. He is a nationally acclaimed performer and is in demand as a clinician, recitalist, leader of hymn festivals, silent film accompanist and as an organ consultant. Dr. Schwandt has been a featured performer for the American Guild of Organists (AGO), the American Theatre Organ Society (ATOS) and the Organ Historical Society (OHS). He has been featured numerous times on American Public Media's Pipedreams broadcasts. Equally at home on a classical or theatrical pipe organ, he is known for his musical versatility and ability to excite and engage audiences of every kind.

Prior to Dr. Schwandt's 2006 OU appointment, he was Assistant Professor of Organ and Curator of Organs at Indiana University. In 2006, he founded the American Organ Institute (AOI) to preserve the unique American characteristics of the pipe organ. The program includes not only the established classical repertoire, but emphasizes skills such as improvisation, liturgical organ playing and broad musical flexibility, particularly as it is applied to the accompaniment of silent films and the performance of theatrical organ music. The AOI is also the only program in America which possesses a fully-equipped pipe organ workshop capable of building, maintaining and restoring instruments. It functions in part as a laboratory for a new curriculum of organ technology courses. Thus, at the AOI it is possible to major not only in performance, but in Church Music or Organ Technology. The addition of an emphasis in Theatrical Organ is currently in development. Students of Dr. Schwandt have recently won the Poister, Rodland, Schweitzer, and Manz Competitions and the AGO's National Competition in Organ Improvisation.

John Schwandt has served churches in Wisconsin, Minnesota and Indiana as a parish musician. Most recently, he served as Artist-in-Residence at McFarlin United Methodist Church in Norman, and is currently Artist-in-Residence at East Lake United Methodist Church in Birmingham, Alabama. He is often engaged to lead hymn festivals across the nation for churches of all denominations. He has recorded for the Calcante and GIA labels, as well as independent producers, and is featured on a recent album by the rock band Shiny Toy Guns. In addition to hymn festivals, he is also frequently asked to perform silent film accompaniments or to play more traditional organ concerts. He is known for programs that are musical and accessible, drawing enthusiastic and young audiences. Dr. Schwandt is under management with Mercury Artists.

John Schwandt began his formal organ study with George Damp at the Lawrence Conservatory of Music. His undergraduate studies were at St. Olaf College under the tutelage of John Ferguson. His graduate degrees, as well as the prestigious Performer's Certificate, were earned at Indiana University, having studied organ with Larry Smith. Among the numerous notable organ competitions in which Schwandt has participated and won, he placed first by a unanimous jury decision in the 1998 National Competition in Organ Improvisation held in Denver, Colorado in conjunction with the American Guild of Organists' National Convention.