



Greenville Chapter of the American Guild of Organists  
Powell Scholarship Competition  
John Polo, Program Director/Treasurer  
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[www.greenvilleago.org](http://www.greenvilleago.org)

## *Robert & Nancy Powell Scholarship*

### **\$7,000 Competition Award for 2026**

February 2026

**Re: 2026 Annual "Robert & Nancy" Powell Scholarship Competition – Deadline June 1, 2026**

Dear Organ Chair and Fellow Organ Instructors,

I would like to introduce you and your organ students to the Greenville, South Carolina Chapter of the AGO's annual Powell Scholarship Competition for 2026.

In 2022, the Greenville South Carolina Chapter of The American Guild of Organists created the Powell Scholarship Fund and Competition. [Robert Powell](#) (1932-2025), FAGO, organist and composer of hundreds of choral and organ service pieces of published music, along with his wife, Nancy Powell, AAGO, also a consummate organist, have served the Greenville community for decades as leaders and role models for the organists and church musicians of this community. The Powell Scholarship Fund seeks to honor Powell's legacy by promoting the study of the organ and by encouraging today's organ students to pursue a career as an organist.

A \$5,000\* scholarship will be awarded in June 2026 to an undergraduate student studying organ at an American college, conservatory, or university, in pursuit of a career in organ performance, church music or music education. The winner, to be announced in July 2026, will also be offered an opportunity to travel to Greenville and perform an honorarium recital (additional \$2,000 award) at Christ Church Episcopal Greenville for chapter members and the public at a mutually acceptable scheduled date.

The application process includes writing a short essay and submitting a recording of two standard organ pieces (Bach and Romantic/Contemporary). The application can be done online, and the deadline is June 1, 2026. The same materials attached are also available at Greenville AGO website [www.greenvilleago.org](http://www.greenvilleago.org).

Previous winners of the scholarship include James Jeffrey, Eastman School of Music, Abigail Wood, Syracuse University, and Jacob Gruss, Juilliard School in New York City.

Please pass along this competition opportunity to your students. Questions can be directed to me, John Polo, at [powellscholarshipcompetition@gmail.com](mailto:powellscholarshipcompetition@gmail.com).

\*I am also very pleased to inform you that your organ students can use exactly the same application process, deliverables and timeline with the Greater Bridgeport, Connecticut Chapter of the AGO's annual M. Louise Miller – Paul E. Knox \$5,000 Scholarship Competition for 2026. I am the Program Director for each scholarship having lived in Connecticut first and modelling the Powell Scholarship after the Miller-Knox scholarship. Each chapter has its own judges, but we wanted this to be more incentive for organ students to win up to \$14,000 submitting to both competitions. That application is a link <https://greaterbridgeportago.org/welcome/m-louise-miller-paul-e-knox-scholarship/>

Kind regards,

*John Polo*

Program Director/Treasurer

#### **Powell Scholarship Judges:**

Dr. Will Thomas Cleveland (Director of Music Immanuel Lutheran, Greenwood, SC)  
Dr. Ed Dunbar (Retired Professor Organ, Bob Jones University, Greenville, SC)  
Donald Duncan (Christ Episcopal Church, Greenville, SC)  
Robert Glick (Retired Professor Organ, Erskine University/First Presbyterian Church, Greenwood, SC)  
Vance Jenkins (Buncombe Street Methodist Church, Greenville, SC)  
Dr. Brennan Szafron (Holy Cross Episcopal Church, Tryon, NC)



The Greenville South Carolina, Chapter ~ American Guild of Organists

~ *Powell Scholarship Competition for 2026* ~

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***Eligibility***

The Powell Scholarship Award is open to any undergraduate student who is, or will be, studying organ at a college, conservatory, or university within the United States of America.

Required Application Materials

Digital recordings can be provided via a private YouTube link, along with all other applications documents in standard email. Our goal is to make this submission paperless.

***Digital recording:*** Prepare a high-quality digital video recording illustrating where possible the performance at the console on a pipe organ to include the following repertoire in the order listed. Separate movements may be recorded in separate takes; however, there is to be no splicing or editing within movements or compositions. The Bach selection and the Romantic/Contemporary selection may be recorded on different instruments (please provide specifications for both instruments). Total playing time must not exceed 30 minutes. YouTube links are fine and can be made UNLISTED, so that the .urls can be shared with various judges but not searchable on the Internet.

**Repertoire Guidelines:** One complete piece (or movement) from each category:

- a. **Baroque** ~ any Prelude/Toccatina/Fantasia and its appropriate Fugue by J. S. Bach (including the "8 Little Preludes and Fugues" often attributed to Bach) or two movements (slow and fast) from one of the six Trio Sonatas by Bach.
- b. **Romantic/Contemporary** ~ one complete movement (or one complete shorter piece) from symphonies, sonatas, chorale-based pieces, etc., by composers whose works are representative of the 19th- and early 20th-century idiom.
- c. **Hymn** ~ An introduction and two (2) verses of a hymn of your choosing, as you would play it to accompany congregational singing. Photocopy of the hymn as printed. Do not include more than two verses in your submitted recording.

1. **Organ Information Sheet:** Please include the location, stop list, number of manuals and stops/ranks, and builder of the pipe organ used for your recording.
2. **Confirmation of Recorded Performance:** Complete the Confirmation of Recorded Performance Page. It must be signed by the performer and a witness to the performance. If two different organs are used, complete a separate form for both recording sessions. This document with signatures can be scanned and sent with other required materials via email.
3. **Written Essay:** Write a brief essay (100-300 words) in which you address the following topic:  
  
The Robert and Nancy Powell Scholarship was inaugurated in 2022 to promote and support organ students as they pursue the vocation of organist and to honor Robert and Nancy Powell's decades of gracious and accomplished leadership and achievement in organ performance, church music and composition. Upon completion of your studies, how do you envision yourself contributing to the vocation of organist and the community of organists? Include in this essay a brief description of your current participation in this field.
4. **References:** Two reference letters/emails from current or recent organ teachers. **If not part of the original filing, they can be sent to John Polo at [powellscholarshipcompetition@gmail.com](mailto:powellscholarshipcompetition@gmail.com)**

**Application Checklist:**

- Digital Recording YouTube private links
- Organ Information Sheet
- Hymn photocopy
- Application Form (two pages)
- Confirmation of Recorded Performance
- Written Essay
- Reference Letters/Email

*PLEASE DO NOT SUBMIT MORE THAN THE REQUESTED MATERIALS/DOCUMENTATION*

**Deadline:**

All materials MUST be received at the address above by June 1, 2026. Incomplete/late applications will not be considered. All application materials, including recordings, become property of the Scholarship Award Committee.

**Judging:**

All materials will be reviewed by the Powell Scholarship Competition judges. A winner decision will be made by early July 2026. If, in the opinion of the Committee, no applicant meets the criteria and standards for this award, no award will be given. All applicants will be notified by email of the results of this award, including comments by the judges on performance pieces. The judgment of the Committee is final.

**Award:**

One scholarship award of \$5,000, paid directly to the applicant's school, will be given to the person who demonstrates the strongest skills as an organist and musician. Consideration will be given to musicality, playing style, appropriate registration, and potential for future growth and development. The Scholarship Award winner will be asked to submit a photo and short biography for publicity (local and for The American Guild of Organist magazine) purposes and will be invited to perform a recital as part of a future Greenville Chapter AGO's program year where that can be mutually scheduled (the Chapter will cover travel expenses and an honorarium – minimum of \$2,000).

**Electronic Submission/Questions:**

Contact John Polo, Scholarship Competition Program Director/Treasurer, through the email address [powellscholarshipcompetition@gmail.com](mailto:powellscholarshipcompetition@gmail.com) if you have any questions on uploading your digital video to YouTube and/or making it an **Unlisted** link. The email address can also be used for any questions you have with the submission process.

~ Powell Scholarship Competition Application for 2026 ~

APPLICATION FORM

*Primary Contact Information*

Name:	
Date:	
Address1:	
Address2:	
City/State/Zip:	
Primary Phone:	
Email:	

*Student Status (check one and complete)*

<p><input type="radio"/> I am a high school student and have been accepted to attend _____ in the fall of 2026. My intended major is _____. I expect to graduate in (year) _____ with a (degree) _____.</p>
<p><input type="radio"/> I am enrolled (as of fall 2026) as an undergraduate at _____. My major program is _____. I expect to graduate in (year) _____ with a (degree) _____.</p>
<p><input type="radio"/> Other pertinent information or clarification: _____</p>

*School History (list schools attended, with dates, and names of organ teachers with whom you studied during that time)*

High School/end date/teachers:
Undergraduate 1/end date/teachers:
Undergraduate 2/Graduate 1/end-date/teachers:

*Repertoire Submitted*

Bach: Complete title/BWV/Edition Used –
Romantic/20 <sup>th</sup> Century: Title/Composer/Dates/Edition Used –
Hymn: Title/Composer/Dates/Edition Used –

*Personal/Professional References (these can be the two emails/letters)*

Reference #1: Name/Relationship to you/Address/Email/Phone –

Reference #2: Name/Relationship to you/Address/Email/Phone –

~ Powell Scholarship Competition Application for 2026 ~

CONFIRMATION OF RECORDED PERFORMANCE

This is to confirm that the submitted recording of the two required organ pieces being sent to the Powell Scholarship Fund Scholarship Award Committee is an unaltered, representative performance made on

(date) \_\_\_\_\_ at (location) \_\_\_\_\_.

APPLICANT

I, \_\_\_\_\_

(print name of applicant), hereby declare and confirm that the submitted recording is an unaltered recording of my own performance that is continuous, and that is unedited within each piece.

\_\_\_\_\_

Applicant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

WITNESS

I, \_\_\_\_\_

(print name of witness), hereby declare and confirm that the submitted recording is an unaltered recording of each piece, the performance that is continuous, and that I was present during the recording session.

\_\_\_\_\_

Witness Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

~ Powell Scholarship Competition Application for 2026 ~

WRITTEN ESSAY (100-300 Words)