

# thewave

The Northland's Weekly Guide to Fun, Oct. 22 - 29



Internationally  
renowned organist  
Marie-Louise Langlais  
performs Sunday at  
Pilgrim Congregational  
Church

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Marie-Louise Langlais, from Paris, performs a recital at 4 p.m. Sunday at Pilgrim Congregational Church in Duluth.

By Chris Casey  
News-Tribune staff writer

When Marie-Louise Langlais discovered her life's calling, it struck with the suddenness of a lightning bolt out of the French sky. Perhaps there was a touch of divine intervention at work when Marie-Louise, age 20 at the time, first sat before the heavenly church pipe organ.

"I was asked to replace an organist during the summer for accompanying chant," recalled Marie-Louise in a phone interview from her Paris home. "The first time I just put my hands on the organ manual I was absolutely fascinated and decided immediately to be an organist. It seems crazy, but you know, it is that."

Now in her mid-50s, Marie-Louise brings her mastery of the organ to Duluth for a recital and workshop this weekend at Pilgrim Congregational Church.

The subject of her workshop is the other love of her life, her late husband Jean Langlais, one of the great French organists and com-

posers of this century. Marie-Louise earned her doctorate of musicology degree from the Paris Sorbonne in 1992. She wrote about the life and complete works of her husband for her dissertation, which has been published in France and is now drawing the interest of American publishers.

Jean died in 1991 at the age of 84 after producing 254 opus pieces, including vocal and instrumental sacred pieces and secular music. Blind from the age of 2, Jean first studied organ at the National Institute for the Young Blind in Paris. He later became a professor at that institute as well as at the Paris Schola Cantorum, where Marie-Louise was one of his students.

She received a virtuosity diploma for organ and improvisation in 1969 and, 10 years later, married Jean and became his assistant at the Basilica of Sainte Clotilde in Paris.

"He was from a very poor family from Brittany," Marie-Louise said of her husband. "He was very much influenced by these folk songs of his country in Brittany. And also he was extremely Catholic. The Britton people are the most strongly Catholic persons in France. So the Gregorian chants influenced him a lot."

Besides folklore and chant, another

characteristic of her husband's music was the training he received from some of the great French composers, such as Paul Dukas. But he was also influenced by his blindness.

"He was extremely sensitive to rhythm and even colors," Marie-Louise said. "It was by ear, not by sight."

She said her performance in Duluth "will be a mixture of styles of French music," ranging from the Renaissance period to compositions by her husband. Marie-Louise noted that French organists through the ages had a penchant for flourishes.

She describes the French style as having "color in the organ, as much as possible, and very clear sonority. That is constant through the centuries. And it's funny because the Renaissance type is very much more like the 20th century style — clear and rhythmic."

"And between those two poles you have the 19th century, the romantic period, which is a little different, with quite dark chorales and everything centered on the harmonies."

Preceding Jean's tenure in what has become known as the prestigious organ school of Sainte Clotilde were Cesar Franck and Charles Tournemine.

"Cesar Franck was from German descent and he admired very much Beethoven. So, I guess, he brought to French music a little serious idea that was lacking a bit," Marie-Louise said. "Our temperament is a country from the German temperament. We are totally different."

"The United States also was a major inspiration to Jean. From 1952 to 1961, he played 300 recitals and

loved the United States."

Like her husband, Marie-Louise loves to teach. She became a professor of organ at the Marseille Conservatory in 1973 and, since 1988, has served as professor of organ and improvisation at the Paris Superior Conservatory.

An internationally renowned organist in her own right, Marie-Louise is successor to her husband

punch on this one."

On Oct. 28-30, Marie-Louise will perform a recital and conduct a workshop at Saint Louis King of France Church in St. Paul.

Vanella studied under Jean in the 1950s and first met Marie-Louise in 1992, when he returned to Europe on a recital tour. Marie-Louise and Vanella renewed their acquaintance last summer at the American Guild

of Organists convention in Denver.

"John Vanella invited me to come (to Duluth)," said Marie-Louise, whose local appearance is being underwritten by the Arrowhead Chapter of the AGO. "I accepted, of course, because I think it was interesting to be able to make a conference on my husband and on what we call the school of Sainte Clotilde ... This is a very beautiful school that I

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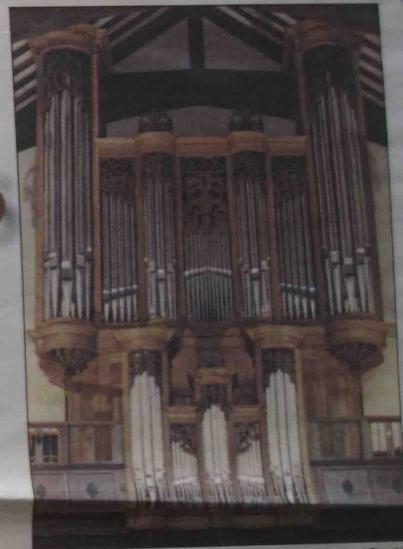
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# dreams

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Famed French organist will fill Duluth church with heavenly sounds



Langlais will also conduct a workshop this weekend on Pilgrim Congregational Church's pipe organ. The organ, built in 1968 by Jaeckel Inc., of Duluth, features three keyboards, a pedal keyboard and 3,210 pipes.

## If you go

**What:** Marie-Louise Langlais, organist from the Basilica of Sainte Clotilde in Paris.

**When:** 4 p.m. Sunday.

**Where:** Pilgrim Congregational Church, 2310 E. Fourth St.

**How much:** \$10 for adults and \$8 for students for general seating; reserved seating is \$20 (front

chancel, facing organ) and \$30 (balcony, rear organ console).

**Call:** 624-3140 or 722-2224.

**Etc.:** From 10 a.m. to noon Saturday, Langlais will conduct a workshop titled "Jean Langlais and the Sainte Clotilde Tradition" at Pilgrim

Registration is from 9:30 to 10 a.m. Tickets, available at the door, are \$10.

Chris Casey covers arts and entertainment. He can be reached weekdays at (218) 720-4109 or by e-mail at casey@duluthnews.com



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taught countless master classes in this country. Jean was awarded honorary doctorate degrees from three American universities and was made an honorary member of the American Guild of Organists.

"He has a lot of pupils and he was near to teaching (full time) in the United States, but he couldn't leave Paris and his organ of Sainte Clotilde," Marie-Louise said. "But he

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# Pipe dreams

## Organist

*Famed French organist will fill Duluth church with heavenly sounds*

United States." Her husband, Marie-Louise Langlais, became a professional organist at the Marseille Conservatory in 1973 and, since 1968, has been a professor of organ and chamber music at the Paris Superior Conservatory.

Langlais is internationally renowned and has performed in her own right, Marie-Louise's successor to her husband

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Marie-Louise Langlais

Basilica of Sainte Clotilde. "I typically make two-week peripatetic trips to the United States and I'm sort of lucky," said John Vanella, director of music and organ at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Rosary in Duluth. "Normally the Glines get (international organists) first and we always get them afterward. Well, we beat them to the

Organists convention in Denver. "John Vanella invited me to come (to Duluth)," said Marie-Louise, whose local appearance is being underwritten by the Arrowhead Chapter of the AGO. "I accepted, of course, because I think it was interesting to be able to make a conference on my husband and on what we call the school of Sainte Clotilde ... This is a very beautiful school that I

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like very much to teach about."

In Duluth, she will play Pilgrim's Jaeckel pipe organ, which has three keyboards, a pedal keyboard and 3,210 pipes. It was built by Jaeckel Inc. of Duluth in 1988.

While the organ will likely please Marie-Louise, she, like any organist, prefers a venue with bare floors. Most of Pilgrim's flooring is carpeted.

"I feel your problem in the United States is very much that you have a lot of carpet in your churches. In fact, I guess, you are too rich," she said with a laugh. "So that is very bad for your acoustics."

Her favorite venue in the United States is the non-carpeted Newark Cathedral in Newark, N.J.

"In Europe, we have nothing in churches and so the acoustic is fabulous with the reverberation, which helps greatly the sounds of the organ."

And to Marie-Louise, the sounds of the organ are the sounds of her husband.

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