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Educators open to new alert options

System used in Georgia school shooting shows how new tech can help in Connecticut, elsewhere

By Sean Krofssik
Hartford Courant

The recent shooting at Apalachee High School in Georgia that took four lives, as well as the growing number of threats of violence across Connecticut, have reignited the discussion around

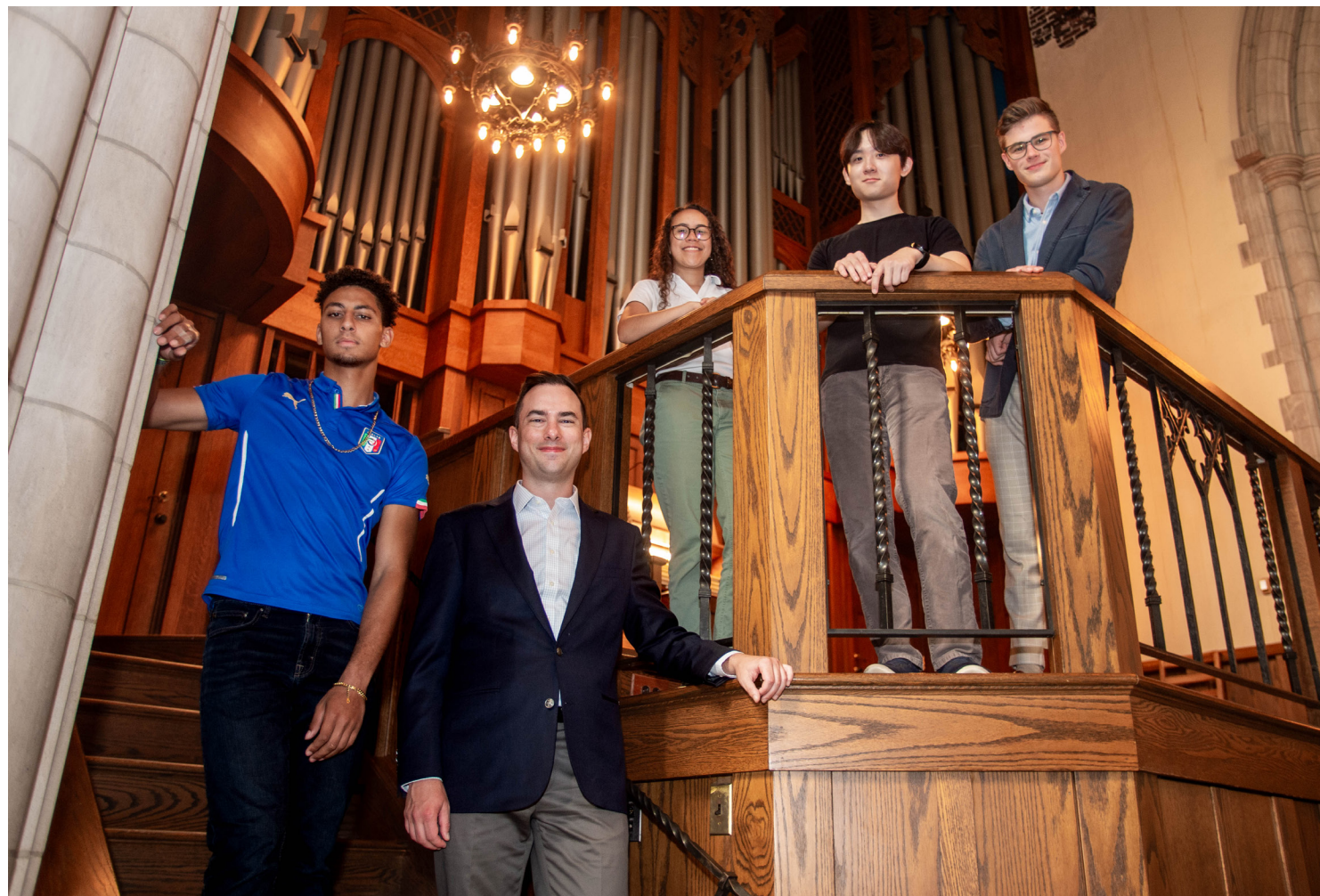
alert systems and added security in schools throughout the state. In Georgia, the school's panic button system, CENTEGIX, is credited for saving lives as authorities had the suspect in custody just seven minutes after the initial emergency call. Using the technology for the first

time, teachers and staff were able to alert authorities to the emergency quickly using buttons on badges they were wearing. The technology used by CENTEGIX can find the exact floor and room level of the location of the alert. It works outside of the building in parking lots and on sports fields as well, and they have direct access to 911 and local public safety, according to the company's website.

This type of technology has caught the eye of some education leaders and educators in the state. "I had not heard of this technology before the shooting in Georgia when every teacher had a panic button. This is the evolution of where we are at. It allowed for a faster response time and that is something for us to look at. We will have to look at cost and how we manage it," said Kate Dias, president of the Connecticut Education

Association teachers' union. "In Connecticut, a number of protocols have been focused on entrances and exits. That's because it showed our vulnerabilities after Sandy Hook," said Dias, a math teacher at Manchester High School for the last 23 years. Dias said that includes visitor controls such as guests being buzzed into the school and

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Trinity College organ professor Christopher Houlihan, second from left, stands with some of his students, James Maciel, from left, Madison Thompson, Christopher Yi and Elijah Morris, at the Trinity College Chapel on Sept. 4. **AARON FLAUM/HARTFORD COURANT**

A small college features a big musical instrument

Pipe organ program is bringing in more students to Trinity College

By Ed Stannard | Hartford Courant

The college students have different goals and plans as they learn to play what Mozart called the "King of the Instruments." One Trinity College student wants to become a full-time organist, playing in France. Another sees playing the organ as a weekend gig at a church. Still another is learning just as a hobby. They are among those professor Chris Houlihan sees as part of a rising interest in the pipe organ at Trinity.

Trinity may not be the first college people think of when it comes to organ music, but lovers of classical music will have a chance to experience Trinity's organ at the 27th annual Albert Schweitzer Organ Festival, which will be held Saturday and Sunday in the Trinity College Chapel. Houlihan will be playing in a concert each day with the Hartford Symphony Orchestra. "The organ is amazing on its own, but combined with the whole orchestra it's out of this world,"

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Thompson plays the organ as Morris, left, Yi, Maciel and Houlihan look on at the Trinity College Chapel on Sept. 4.

Shooting reportedly seen in video call

18-year-old allegedly wounded girlfriend after argument

By Justin Muszynski
Hartford Courant

An 18-year-old charged with attempted murder in the shooting of his teenage girlfriend in Hartford Tuesday had an argument with her that reportedly turned physical, then returned minutes later and allegedly shot her in the head as her friend watched on a FaceTime call. Jayzon Gunter of Hartford appeared Wednesday in Hartford Superior Court to answer to domestic violence charges of criminal attempt to commit murder, criminal attempt to commit third-degree strangulation, unlawful discharge of a firearm and carrying a pistol without a permit.

A judge continued the case until Oct. 30 and left Gunter's bail at \$2 million, which he did not immediately post. Gunter did not enter a plea during the hearing, records show. According to the warrant affidavit in the case, witnesses to the shooting told authorities that a man known to them as "Ricch" and the victim had been "talking" since the beginning of summer. After finding an Instagram account under the name "Ricch Rackzz," authorities said they were able to identify the man as Gunter.

In the days leading up to the shooting, the victim had been staying with friends on Lenox Street where Gunter visited her on Monday, the warrant affidavit said. While there late into the evening, those in the residence, which included a juvenile and an adult who reported being friends with the victim, said the man later identified as Gunter and the teen allegedly argued. During the dispute, witnesses told police that the teen contacted Gunter's ex-girlfriend, described as his "babies mama," and that he

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Goodwin plans \$85M tech academy

Before the school year begins late next summer, Goodwin University plans to build a 90,000-square-foot NextTech Academy to serve freshmen high school students interested in industry and technology. The facility will include an astronaut training center. **Connecticut, Page 1**

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Lapses detailed in guarding Trump at rally

Secret Service report lists communication failures at July event

By Rebecca Santana,
Eric Tucker and
Alanna Durkin Richer
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Communication breakdowns with local law enforcement hampered the Secret Service's performance ahead of a July assassination attempt on former President Donald Trump, according to a new report that lays out a litany

of missed opportunities to stop a gunman who opened fire from an unsecured roof. A five-page document summarizing the Secret Service report's key conclusions finds fault with both local and federal law enforcement, underscoring the cascading and wide-ranging failings that preceded the July 13 shooting at a Butler, Pennsylvania, campaign rally where Trump was wounded in the ear by gunfire. Lawmakers have been scrambling to ensure the Secret Service has enough money and resources to keep the nation's presiden-

tial candidates safe. It's unclear, though, how much they can do with only weeks before the election, or if additional dollars would make an immediate difference. The House on Friday overwhelmingly passed bipartisan legislation 405-0 to require the agency use the same standards when assigning candidates as they do presidents and vice presidents. The agency has told Congress that it has already boosted Trump's security, but House lawmakers want it put into law. Though the failed response on July 13 has been well-docu-

mented through congressional testimony, news media investigations and other public statements, the report issued Friday marks the Secret Service's most formal attempt to catalog the errors of the day and is being released amid fresh scrutiny following Sunday's arrest in Florida of a man who authorities say wanted to kill Trump. "It's important that we hold ourselves to account for the failures of July 13th and that we use the lessons learned to make sure that we do not have another

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Houlihan said.

There will also be a young professional competition on Sept. 21, with recitals starting at 10 a.m. Three finalists will vie for \$28,000 in prize money.

The festival has been at Trinity since 2016 “and it is another way that the Hartford area and Trinity College are on the map nationally for organ music,” Houlihan said.

A major organ program

All this for a college not well known for its organ program, Houlihan said.

“I’ve steadily seen that there’s more and more interest among my students to study the organ, and one of the things that I think makes Trinity unique is that we’re certainly not a music school,” he said. “We’re a small liberal arts college, but we have a long history of organ music because of our chapel and the pipe organ here at the chapel for almost 100 years.”

Houlihan, the John Rose distinguished college organist, director of chapel music and artist-in-residence at Trinity, received his undergraduate degree at the college in 2009. “And then I went to New York to do my master’s at Juilliard and spent about 10 years in New York working as a concert organist,” he said.

“I played concerts all over the country and in Europe and about seven years ago I returned to Trinity to become the organist and artist in residence here,” he said.

Houlihan has eight organ students, not a huge number, but that’s double the enrollment from last year.

“The numbers go up and down, but there’s been an increase,” he said. “And it’s also infectious. One student starts playing, and their friends see them, see what they’re doing, and it piques their interest. And think that maybe next semester, I’ll take some organ lessons.”

A variety of reasons

Houlihan said he has both advanced organ students and others who play piano and want to learn a new instrument.

“My students are interested in the organ for a variety of reasons, and some come to Trinity having had played organs in churches in high school, and they come and they’re quite advanced, and some have gone on to graduate studies in organ performance, and others are students who play piano growing up and come to Trinity and see a pipe organ for the very first time and realize that they can study that,” Houlihan said.

The school’s 4,416-pipe organ, built by Austin Organs of Hartford in 1971, has inspired others who hear it in Trinity’s chapel, Houlihan said.

“They might come to a concert here and be inspired by just the music and the sound of the organ in the space, in some ways separate from the organ’s role in church services,” he said.

His students may inspire others who come to the chapel for services, Houlihan said. “The organists not only get to take lessons in the organ, but when they have a piece that’s ready to play, whether it’s a prelude or a postlude, they can play that at our chapel service, and their peers get to hear the work that they’ve been doing.”

More advanced students also get jobs playing at churches in Hartford or surrounding towns.

While Trinity competes with schools that focus more on music, such as the Yale Institute of Sacred Music, Houlihan said it has a reputation for organ.

More than a century of organists

“It has a local reputation and somewhat national,” he said. “We’ve had distinguished organists here for almost 100 years, since this building was built in the 1930s. And even before that we had students in the 19th century who were taking organ lessons and playing at local churches in Hartford. The college just celebrated its bicentennial and so we’ve had organ music here for almost 200 years.”

Houlihan was drawn to Trinity as an undergrad in order to study organ, he said. “I grew up in Somers, Conn., so not too far from here, up in the northeast corner, and I was taking piano lessons, and I saw a pipe organ in a church, and I heard it being played, and I saw all of the buttons and keyboards and I just got hooked,” he said. “I said, the piano is too boring. I want to learn to play the organ.”

Houlihan said Trinity was attractive because it offers more than music.

“When I came to Trinity, I didn’t think I was ready for a music conservatory,” he said. “I wanted to come to a place like Trinity, where



Trinity College organist instructor Christopher Houlihan, left, stands with some of his students, from left, James Maciel, Madison Thompson, Christopher Yi and Elijah Morris, at the Trinity College Chapel on Sept. 4. AARON FLAUM/HARTFORD COURANT PHOTOS



Student Will Bannon practices at the Trinity College Chapel on Sept. 4.

I could study organ seriously but also take classes in a lot of other subjects, meet a lot of people who had other interests and other skills. And for me, that was the right choice.”

Hands, feet, keyboards, pedals

Just watching an organist play is impressive, Houlihan said.

“They’re using their hands and their feet. They’re playing on multiple keyboards,” he said. “They’re moving the stops of the organ, which change the sounds. And the organ has a huge variety of sounds, some that imitate the instruments of the orchestra, so you could hear flutes or oboes or trumpets or violins and cellos, and you see one person doing all of this in this sort of extreme way. It’s quite engaging.”

Trinity’s organ console is visible to the audience, so they can watch the organist play, Houlihan said. “So students see what’s going on, and I think are often captivated by it, and want to want to know more about it, or want to learn to play it themselves,” he said.

Besides its complexity and size, there’s another thing that makes the organ unique, Houlihan said.

“When you’re listening to live organ music, you are vibrating with the instrument, because the room is the sounding board for the organ,” he said. “The organ is designed to sound in a particular space. Each one is custom built for that space, and the room is what makes the organ sound its best.”

The audience can feel the vibrations of the music, “especially of the lowest pipes, and the sound echoes throughout the space,” Houlihan said. “So you’re truly inside the instrument when you hear live organ music.”

Making the organ breathe

He said the hardest part about playing the organ “is making it sound musical. Stravinsky said that it’s the monster that doesn’t breathe and, in many ways, the organ is a complicated machine, and so the hardest part about playing the organ is making it sound like it’s breathing like all other

instruments.”

Madison Thompson, a senior from Derby, is one of Houlihan’s advanced students, as senior assistant chapel organist at Trinity. She also plays at St. Patrick-St. Anthony Church in Hartford. A double major in French, she spent last spring semester studying with Jean-Baptiste Robin, organist of the Royal Chapel at the Palace of Versailles.

“I had my final lesson at the chateau, and we studied the music of Francois Couperin for the semester,” she said. “He was organist at the chateau in the 18th century so it was a really moving experience to play his works on his organ, and to hear what he probably heard, and to get a better and deeper understanding of that style of music, which I’ve really fallen in love with now.”

‘Sort of just by chance’

While she’s deeply enmeshed with the organ now, Thompson said she came to the instrument “sort of just by chance.”

“I was teaching myself piano a few years earlier, just because I thought I might be a rock star,” she said. “But then my parents joined a new church at one point, and I just really fell in love with the instrument at first sight, so I decided to teach myself the organ. Little did I know that that would be very difficult.”

After a year of teaching herself, Thompson finally got lessons, and earned a scholarship in high school. “So I really fell into it in a, I guess, maybe non-traditional way.”

She hopes for a full-time career as an organist. “If I could choose, I’d say I’d love to end up back in France and make a career there and just enjoy the instruments there and their culture,” she said. “They have great appreciation of organ music, but I also love the United States, so I guess either is fine.

“Playing in churches definitely interests me, but I’m also looking to branch out more and work with other musicians and possibly in Baroque ensembles,” Thompson said. “And I also play with choirs, and that’s something else I enjoy. So there’s a lot of other paths other than just playing at church and playing hymns.”

A variety of sounds

Christopher Yi, a junior from Farmington, is working on a double major in music and computer science. He plays at services at South Congregational Church in Hartford. He fell in love with the organ while attending the Kent School.

“They had an organ in the chapel, an old Hook and Hastings organ, one of America’s great historic builders from the past from the late Romantic era,” he said. He wanted to take lessons but couldn’t during his sophomore and junior years because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Finally, in his senior year, Yi began to learn the instrument.

“I fell in love with the way it makes sound, using different stops and all the different possibilities in terms of sound quality,” he said. “You can make, using different combinations of stops, reed pipes that make a very nasal sound and the standard organ sound, and all those clean flute sounds. And I thought that is very fascinating.”

“Also I learned all the traditional organ music, starting from the ancient ages, and the Baroque era, like Bach, Buxtehude and also Couperin,” he said. He also fell in love with Romantic era composers, including “my favorite, Max Reger.”

Yi said that, down the road, “in addition to pursuing my career in computer science, I do feel like playing the organ every Sunday in ... a church,” he said. “And, in addition to playing church music, playing preludes and postludes and learning all the beautiful repertoire.”

‘A little bit more casual’

James Maciel, a senior from New Haven, is a political science major, president of the Chapel Singers and is on the track and field team. During his campus tour, “the chapel organ was immediately one of the first things I saw,” he said.

“I think I’m a little bit more casual than the others in the way that I don’t want to pursue organ as a career, but I am still wanting to pursue that opportunity to play as many different instruments as I can,” he said.

“I grew up in bands my whole life. I’ve been singing since I was in second grade. And I was raised Roman Catholic, so I’ve been in and around a lot of choral music, specifically Anglican music such as this,” he said.

“And so I think learning to actually play the organ is kind of a full-circle moment for me, from just singing in my local choir to conducting some members of my choir to actually being able to learn to play the organ,” he said.

Maciel, who plans to go into the Air Force after graduation and then hopes for a career at the United Nations, said one of the things he likes about Trinity’s organ is how the console and organist are visible to the audience.

“You can see everything that’s going on,” he said. “You can see the organist changing the sheets. You can see their feet moving, their hands moving. And I think that was something that enraptured me when I saw professor Houlihan and Madison play as well, is the idea that everyone can watch what you’re doing, and so it makes it really accessible for everyone.”

Bored with the piano

Elijah Morris of Newtown is a first-year student, assistant chapel organist and plays at Trinity Epis-

copal Church in Newtown.

“I was taking piano lessons from our organist at our church” where his father was pastor, he said. “And I was probably about 11, and I was frankly getting a little bit bored with piano, and suggested that I try organ instead, because it had a lot more to do. It was a lot louder, I could do stuff with my hands and my feet. And I really did enjoy that.”

Morris had his first experience at Trinity in summer 2022, when he attended a “Pipe Organ Encounter” presented by the Greater Hartford chapter of the American Guild of Organists.

“It kind of clicked there, and I learned to love the instrument,” he said. “That’s when I knew that I wanted to do this for the rest of my life.” That’s also where he met Houlihan.

“I knew I wanted to study with him and the organ program here that he leads is also a lot more formidable than other colleges, even if they also have really talented professors,” Morris said. “I knew that the combination of professor Houlihan and the church music program here would serve me well.”

He said he’d like to play organ full time.

“I’m planning to declare pretty soon as a dual major in music and classics,” Morris said. “And the classics is with an eye towards a law degree somewhere down the road. So I would enjoy being a lawyer. But if I can make full-time organ playing work, if I can make that a feasible job, that is definitely my dream.”

One of the things that drew Morris to the organ was the instrument itself.

“Since I was quite small, I was really fascinated with anything mechanical and anything engineering related,” he said, especially cars. “I think that love of anything mechanical really drove me to be fascinated with the inner workings of the organ, because they’re incredibly complicated. And so that was a big interest for me.

Complexity and grandeur

“That sort of complexity and just the grandeur of the instrument appeals to me, because it really is, in essence, a very, very grand instrument,” Morris said. “And I think that as an 11-year-old, when I first started it, the simple volume of it enticed me, the same way a lot of kids play electric guitar.”

The mechanics of the instrument also drew Yi to it, he said.

“It’s certainly an aspect of the instrument that amazes me,” Yi said. “Some people say that ... along with the watches made by the craftsmen in Switzerland, the pipe organ is one of the most complex (examples of) machinery made by people before the dawn of the Industrial Revolution.”

Morris said that, for him, the organ has a deeper meaning.

“The organ is really integral to my spiritual life as well,” he said. He said he has a tattoo that says “Deo Gloria,” “which means all to the glory of God. I think that for me and for some other organists, that’s really why we do this in the first place, not just because it’s fun, but because we want to glorify God.”

The Hartford Symphony concerts, with Houlihan at the organ, will take place at 8 p.m. Sept. 21 and 3 p.m. Sept. 22 in the Trinity chapel. There will be a talk given one hour before each performance.

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