Title: Saving the great Cornell baroque organ from the ravages of the environment: a problem for architects, planners, engineers, acousticians and music lovers.

Hosts: Annette Richards, David Yearsley, Zellman Warhaft, Todd Cowen

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Abstract: Cornell's great baroque organ in Anabel Taylor Chapel is the world's first organ with multiple historic wind systems. Conceived by Annette Richards and David Yearsley (Music) and designed in consultation with designer Munetaka Yokota, it is a synthesis of two of the greatest examples of the north European organ art from around 1700. The organ was dedicated in 2011. The instrument's exterior beauty is paralleled by superb interior workings.

Alas, upstate New York is a region of climatic extremes. With sultry summers and arctic winters, the air is either thick with moisture (towards 90%) or almost completely depleted of it (down to 20%); temperatures vary wildly across the year. Imagine the ravages visited on the organ by such climactic conditions: the wood becomes parched if it is dry and saturated if it is wet; delicate tuning is compromised as the metal pipes expand and contract with changing temperatures. Music theorists have often described the organ as if it were a living organism: its wind systems are lungs; the pipes themselves are given the human attributes of toes, feet, and mouth. In Anabel Taylor chapel, this sensitive instrument is exposed to an uncertain fate, at best.

The priceless organ, representing a two million dollar investment and countless hours of research is in jeopardy. Anabel Taylor Chapel is a porous, inefficient building, with no proper air treatment. Much work is needed to make the environment safe for the instrument. In this topical lunch we will describe the chapel and the organ and its environmental problems. We wish to draw on expertise from the Cornell community to find creative ways to protect, and save, the instrument. This is a problem of energy and the environment. It involves architecture, engineering, planning and music. What better topic could you think of for an ACSF topical lunch?