

An Interview with Organ Scholar Abe Ross

By Ruth Nelligan

It is with a great deal of pleasure that I recently had the opportunity to interview Abe Ross about his new life as a college student, and to discuss with him the path that led to this point.

Abe is an Organ Scholar at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts under the direction of Dr. James David Christie. He began studying organ with Dr. Kevin Birch at the age of thirteen after playing piano for eight years. He was organist at Grace United Methodist Church in Bangor, Maine from 2008 to 2012.

Can you remember when you first sat down at the piano?

I was about two years old.

Who was your teacher?

I studied with Sarah Pendleton for ten years from the age of five to fifteen.

Did you enjoy practicing?

Not particularly during the summer, but I saw the necessity of it.

Did either of your parents have any musical ability?

No, they didn't play any instrument, although they did enjoy music.



Abraham Ross - at the console of the Taylor & Boody Pipe Organ at the College of the Holy Cross.

What does a day in your college life consist of?

Courses are generally earlier in the day which means I must practice later on.

How many hours a day do you practice?

About two hours.

Where do you practice?

I practice on Taylor and Boody's Opus 9, which is located in the St. Joseph

Memorial Chapel at Holy Cross. It was built in 1985 and donated by former Holy Cross President, Father John E. Brooks, S.J. It is a four manual, fifty stop, mechanical action organ, modeled after German Baroque organs of Bach's time.

Are there other students studying organ?

There are thirty-five music majors, but only one other organ student.

Have you visited or played on other organs in Worcester?

I have visited All Souls in Worcester. I also play for weekly Masses in the chapel. I accompany our Schola Cantorum, and I was invited to play Mahler's 2nd Symphony with the Boston Philharmonic Youth Orchestra at Symphony Hall in Boston.

What is the end goal you hope to achieve?

I hope to get a solid foundation in musicology, keyboard, and liturgy with a final goal of being a successful church organist.

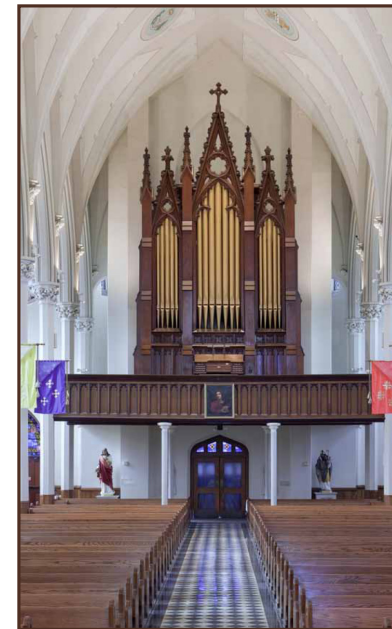
I take this opportunity to thank Abe, this talented musician, for his graciousness and to wish him the very best on his journey to realizing his ambitions.

ST. JOHN'S ORGAN SOCIETY

Annual Newsletter

JUNE 2013

ST. JOHN'S CATHOLIC CHURCH | 207 YORK STREET, BANGOR, MAINE 04401 | WWW.HOOKOPUS288.ORG



E. & G. G. Hook, Opus 288 (1860)

Greetings!

Welcome to the pages of our second annual St. John's Organ Society Newsletter.

Since our founding - more than twenty years ago - St. John's Organ Society has worked to share the beauties of E. & G. G. Hook's celebrated Opus 288 through public concerts, education and community outreach.

Our efforts during the last year included a series of well-attended Summer Organ Concerts, an International Organ Concert featuring distinguished organist Matthias Jacob (Potsdam, Germany), our first annual SJOS Newsletter and the establishment of a new Annual Giving Program. Thank you to all who made these projects so successful!

We also had the pleasure of collaborating with the Penobscot Valley Senior College in a five-week course "An Introduction to the King of Instruments" which took place in March and April 2013. With a wonderful class of nearly fifty students, and Opus 288 as the primary teaching instrument, we explored the history of the pipe organ from antiquity to modern times and heard related organ music including the earliest keyboard music to works of Sweelinck, Frescobaldi, Buxtehude, Bach, Mendelssohn, Thayer, Buck, Franck and Vierne. Our last class included a field trip to three historic organs in the region.

Read on to discover more about our 2013 Summer Organ Concerts (our twenty-first year!) and enjoy the excellent articles prepared by our board members Ruth Nelligan, and Carlton T. Russell. You will also see an invitation to participate in our Annual Giving Program. It would be a pleasure to see you at the Summer Organ Concerts and I sincerely hope that you will consider supporting our ongoing efforts with a contribution.

It is a special joy to serve as Executive Director of St. John's Organ Society. I am grateful to our excellent Board of Directors, to our many volunteers, to the many organists and instrumentalists for their beautiful performances, and, of course, to organ builders George Bozeman, David Wallace, and Robert Newton of the Andover Organ Company, and those who have worked with them for their expertise in caring so well for this cultural treasure.

Kevin Birch
Executive Director - St. John's Organ Society

ST. JOHN'S ORGAN SOCIETY
WWW.HOOKOPUS288.ORG

A nonprofit organization committed to the preservation and appreciation of the historic E. & G. G. Hook pipe organ, opus #288 located at St. John's Catholic Church, 207 York Street, Bangor, Maine.

St. John's Organ Society Annual Fund 2013

It is through the generous support of our donors that we are able to share the beauties of E. & G. G. Hook's Opus 288 through public concerts (Summer Organ Concert Series and a mid-winter International Artist Concert), education, and community outreach.

Your tax-deductible donation will enable us to continue and expand our efforts, and maintain the historic Opus 288. Donors will be listed by category in all concert programs.

Giving levels are: Supporter (\$20.00-\$49.00); Friend (\$50.00-\$99.00); Contributor (\$100.00-\$149.00); Sponsor (\$150.00-\$249.00); Patron (\$250.00-\$499.00) or Benefactor (\$500.00+). Gifts may be sent to: St. John's Organ Society, 207 York Street, Bangor, Maine 04401. Please include your name, address, and email address if you have one.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, thank you for considering a donation to St. John's Organ Society!

Did you know that you can find the St. John's Organ Society on Facebook? Stay on top of all that's going on with the Hook Opus 288 and music by visiting <https://www.facebook.com/hookopus288> and giving it a "like!" and "share" it with others who might enjoy!

St. John's Organ Society Board of Directors

Kevin Birch - Executive Director
Catherine Bruno - Secretary
Karen Kydd - Treasurer
Ruth Nelligan - Director
Carlton Russell - Director
Bonnie FitzPatrick - Director

St. John's Organ Society
Summer Organ Concerts 2013
21st Annual Series
Thursday Evenings at 7:30

July 11
Matthias Schmelmer
(Berlin, Germany)

July 18
Ray Cornils (Portland, Maine)

July 25
Le Choeur d'Enfants d'Ile de France
(Paris, France)
choral music with works for solo organ
conducted by Francis Bardot

August 1
Rosalind Mohnsen
(Boston, Massachusetts)

August 8
Lubbert Gnodde
(Woodstock, Vermont)

August 15
Michael Menne
(Davidsonville, Maryland)

August 22
Kevin Birch (Bangor, Maine)
with Anatole Wieck, violin
Abraham Ross, cello

With appreciation to our host hotel
The Charles Inn
20 Broad Street, Bangor
207-992-2820
www.thecharlesinn.com

Recitals, July 2012-May 2013: An Overview

by Carlton T. Russell

From the summer 2012 series through the international artist recital in May 2013, our faithful audiences heard St. John's "national treasure" – as the late organ historian Alan Laufman called the Hook brothers' Op. 288 – in a wide variety of repertory and playing styles. Large and small works from the standard literature (Baroque, Romantic, and Modern) were interspersed with less-often-programmed pieces: a balanced listening experience of familiar and new.

Michael Kraft opened his July 26 recital with the exuberant Prelude and Fugue in D Major by the young J. S. Bach, and continued with music of Reger, Distler, Brahms, Vaughan Williams, Franck (the final chorale in A Minor), and Dupré (three pieces from his *Vêpres du Commun*, known to American organists as "Fifteen Pieces for Organ Founded on Antiphons").

Scott Vaillancourt, Music Director at the Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul in Lewiston, was assisted by his wife, violist Linda Vaillancourt, in an unusual program on August 2. The concert included two French "carillon" toccatas (by Vierne and Mulet), two movements from Bach's first suite for unaccompanied 'cello, and

works by Milhaud and Arvo Pärt – the latter's minimalist "Mirrors in the Mirror", consisting of a continuous arpeggio, like an image reflected back and forth by parallel plane mirrors. A surprise ending was



International Artist Concert - May 7, 2013 (front row) Matthias Jacob, Bettina Jacob, Cathy Bruno, George Bozeman (back row) Jacob Gould, Johan Halvorsen, Kevin Birch.

Schubert's beloved *Ave Maria*.

Retired organ builder, scholar, and active concert organist George Bozeman returned to the instrument he restored in 1981, presenting on August 9 a virtuosic program that included large works by Hindemith (his massive Sonata I), Franck (the second great chorale, in B Minor), and another monumental passacaglia, Bach's in C Minor. Among these great blocks of music were shorter works by Flor Peeters and Schumann, and Maurice Duruflé's Scherzo, Op. 2.

On August 16, Dr. Abbey Hallberg Siegfried played a historically varied recital of music by Böhm, Alain, Clérambault, Hovhaness, Stephen Paulus ("King David's Dance"), and Bach. Floating in the reverberant acoustic of St. John's was Alain's impressionistic chaconne, *Le Jardin suspendu*, published in 1939 with the young composer's note: "The suspended Garden is the artist's perpetually-pursued and fleeting ideal, the inaccessible and inviolable refuge".

Jay Harold Zoller's August 23rd program was extraordinary, beginning with the entire set of Schumann's Six Fugues on the Name

of Bach, something rarely heard in recitals. There followed "Emotion and Fugue *per augmentation et diminutionem*" by Mr. Zoller's teacher Heinz Wunderlich. The recital concluded with a chaconne by Johann Nepomuk David (d. 1977). This recital surely broadened the listening horizons of an audience accustomed to standard repertory.

The summer series ended on August 30 with a recital by Nancy Granert, Organist in Residence at Harvard – her playing heard in five recordings of the Harvard University Choir -- and organist at Boston's Emmanuel Church -- a well-rounded program, including lesser-known pieces by American composers George Chadwick (d. 1931) and Carson Cooman (b. 1982).

The climax of this seven-recital series was the May 7 program by Matthias Jacob, musician of the Peace Church in Potsdam-Sanssouci. This international artist graced us with a balanced, accessible, and meticulously-played recital ending with Reger (a specialty of Herr Jacob), and also including music of Frescobaldi (1635 – the earliest music heard in this series), Buxtehude, Bach, Boëllmann, Mendelssohn, and Liszt (on Wagner): a fine finish to another remarkable series on the superb E. and G. G. Hook organ at St. John's Catholic Church.



Herr Matthias Jacob with Bettina Jacob May 7, 2013



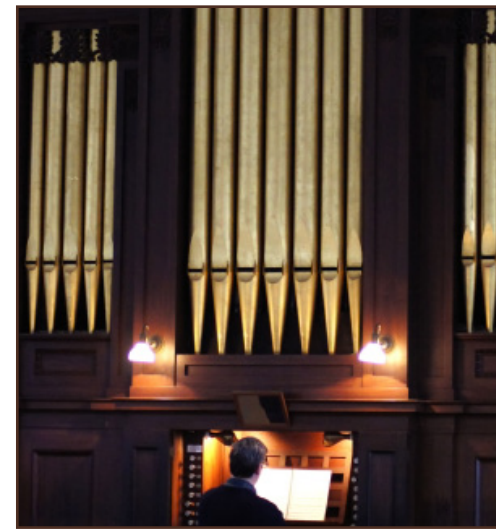
Above - Below - Jacob Gould at the 1848 George Stevens Organ, First Church in Belfast; Below - Kevin Birch with students Jacob Gould and Johan Halvorsen



"An Introduction to the King of Instruments" March - April 2013

"An Introduction to the The King of Instruments" was attended in March and April 2013 by members of the Penobscot Valley Senior College. On excursion day the group visited historic organs in Belfast, Stockton Springs, and Bucksport.

Right - Kevin Birch at the 1848 George Stevens Organ at First Church in Belfast
Below - Members of the PVSC class at the 1863 E. & G. G. Hook Organ, Elm Street Congregational Church in Bucksport



Young Organists and Opus 288 from composer assignment for Matthias Jacob Concert - May 2013.



Written by Johan Halvorsen, age 12, organ pupil and choirster

Max Reger

Max Reger was a German composer born March 19th 1873 who died on May 11th 1916. He taught at several different conservatories in his life. He was also a conductor and wrote music for many different instruments. He was a skilled organist and he wrote some respectable organ music with contrapuntal structure.

Once Max played Schubert's Trout quintet. Someone sent him a fresh trout. He then sent a note stating the time of his next concert to be Haydn's *ox mirvet*.



Nancy Granert - August 30, 2012