

ST. JOHN'S ORGAN SOCIETY

Annual Newsletter

JUNE 2019

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



Kevin Birch, Executive Director

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Dear Friends,

I am delighted to welcome you to the pages of our 2019 Annual Newsletter which will bring you up to date on the many programs and activities accomplished during the past year and the exciting season just ahead!

Thanks to the dedicated work of the Andover Organ Company, particularly the masterful tuning and regulation skills of Don Glover, our venerable E. & G. G. Hook, Opus 288 (1860) is in wonderful shape and ready for a new season.

Like our beloved perennial gardens that are awaking after a long winter and rainy spring, Opus 288 is responding in her wonderful way to the gradual

increase of humidity and temperature -- a phenomenon that I have personally enjoyed for nearly three decades!

Read on and enjoy Carlton T. Russell's wonderful account of the past year's programs, an interview of International Artist Tjeerd van der Ploeg by Ruth Nelligan, and details of the upcoming Summer Concert Series which begins on Thursday, July 18 at 7:30pm.

You'll also find information about our Annual Giving Program - an opportunity to assist St. John's Organ Society in making possible our ambitious program of concerts, education and community outreach. If you are a regular contributor, many thanks! If not, please consider a tax-deductible donation in support of our work. We rely on your generosity.

My deep thanks to Fr. Frank J. Murray, Pastor of St. Paul the Apostle Parish, for his enduring support of St. John's Organ Society. Thanks also to our Board of Directors and all who so generously support our work by their presence at our concerts and by their contributions.

I hope to see you soon!

Kevin Birch
Executive Director

St. John's Organ Society
Summer Organ Concerts 2019
27th Annual Series
Thursday Evenings at 7:30

July 18
Choeur d'Enfants d'Ile de France
- Francis Bardot, Director
(Levallois, France)

July 25
Daniel Pyle
(Bar Harbor, Maine)

August 1
Andrew Scanlon
(Greenville, North Carolina)

August 8
Laurent Jochum
(Paris, France)

August 15
Sarah Johnson
(Rochester, New York)

August 22
Abraham Ross
(Durham, North Carolina)

August 29
Kevin Birch
(Bangor, Maine)

E. & G. G. Hook Organ, Opus 288 (1860)
St. John's Catholic Church
207 York Street, Bangor, Maine 04401

With appreciation to our host hotel
The Charles Inn
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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, concerts, and more by searching and liking
HOOKOPUS288 or ST. JOHN'S ORGAN SOCIETY.

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

St. John's Organ Society is a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation and appreciation of E. & G. G. Hook's Opus 288 (1860) built for St. John's Roman Catholic Church in Bangor, Maine.

RECITALS, JULY 2018 – MAY 2019: AN OVERVIEW

by Carlton T. Russell

The St. John's Organ Society summer concerts for 2018 began impressively on July 19 with a recital by Vienna organist Wolfgang Reisinger, beautifully assisted by his wife, soprano Ksenia Reisinger. We heard music of Bach, Muffat, Mozart, Franz Schmidt, and Nils Lindberg. Dr. Reisinger ended his program with an exciting improvisation on a submitted theme, the chant melody *Ave Maris Stella* and – as an encore – a quieter, free improvisation.



Wolfgang Reisinger

piano. Sarah's excellent program notes not only described the music but also pointed out some of her registrations on Hook Op. 288.

August 23 saw a unique type of recital, consisting – after an opening sonata by Mendelssohn -- entirely of improvisation, presented by William Porter, an organist internationally acclaimed, especially for improvisation, which he has taught at Yale, New England Conservatory, Oberlin, McGill, and the Eastman School of Music. Dr. Porter began with a demonstration of the tonal resources of the organ (with a written guide), and proceeded to improvisations on melodies also helpfully printed in the program: the Genevan Psalter tune "O Gladsome Light" and the chants *Ave Maria* and *Salve Regina*, the last performed in alternation with a treble-voice schola.



William Porter



Francien Janse-Balzer

Dutch organist Francien Janse-Balzer began her July 26 program with a theme and variations by her teacher – also Kevin Birch's ten years later – Klaas Bolt, followed by transcriptions of music of Mozart and Bach played as organ duets with Dr. Birch. Her other three pieces were by Dutch composers: Albert de Klerk and Jan Zwart, and organist/pianist Jacques van Oortmerssen.

On August 2, we welcomed back Abraham Ross, a former Kevin Birch student with a fresh master of music degree in historical performance from Oberlin. Abe's masterfully-played program began with Brahms and continued with women composers: Amy Beach, Elisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre, Lili Boulanger, Jeanne Joulain, Ethel Smyth, and Johanna Senfter.



Abraham Ross



Anna Maria Baez, Kevin Birch, Anatole Wieck, and Joachim Woitun



Susan Ferré

Susan Ferré returned to St. John's for an August 9 recital comprising music of Joseph Jongen (Belgian), Josef Rheinberger (Liechtenstein-born German), Bach (German) and two French composers, Jean Langlais and Charles Tournemire. Dr. Ferré's personal and winsomely-written program notes, associating the music with (often tragic) societal events, were also appreciated.

Another student of Kevin Birch, Sarah Johnson, performed on August 16. Along with standard works of Bruhns and Bach, Sarah gifted us with less well-known music, by the contemporary Dutch composer Ad Wammes, the "Tango Toccatà" (2010) by American composer Pamela Decker, and a Schumann etude in canonic form for pedal



Sarah Johnson

The summer season finale on August 30 was an exciting combined effort of Kevin Birch, clarinetist Anna Maria Baeza, violinist Anatole Wieck, and 'cellist Joachim Woitun. Opening with Rheinberger's majestic organ piece, *Ernste Feier* (Solemn Festival), the concert continued with music of Saint-Saëns and contemporary Canadian composer Peter Matthews, and ended gloriously with a masterpiece among chamber works with organ, Rheinberger's Suite for Organ, Violin, and 'Cello, Op. 149, which we had first heard in the season finale of the 2011 series.

Artist for the International Concert on May 7, 2019 was Dutch organist and scholar Tjeerd van der Ploeg. His recital included German and English Romantic repertory not often heard in the St. John's recitals, and displayed an "at-homeness" with the instrument that I have associated with Dr. Birch. My organist wife Lorna enjoyed watching Tjeerd's deft manipulation of the stops during the grand, seamless free improvisation which crowned this memorable musical evening.



Tjeerd van der Ploeg

TJEERD VAN DER PLOEG

By Ruth Nelligan



Tjeerd and Marja van der Ploeg at Opus 288

May 7, 2019, brought to Bangor, Maine on behest of St. John's Organ Society the internationally acclaimed Dutch organist Tjeerd van der Ploeg. Tjeerd is a renowned musician, recitalist, improviser and recording artist. His many CD recordings, articles on noted composers, as well as writings on Gregorian Chant have been widely acclaimed.

As a child, Tjeerd first started lessons on the harmonium from his mother who was a teacher of that instrument. From there he transitioned to the organ, bypassing the piano. He stated that from the moment he sat on the organ bench and placed his feet on the pedals, he knew that playing the organ was going to be his life's vocation as well as an avocation.

Tjeerd completed his organ studies in 1985 at the Conservatory of Amsterdam, Netherlands. He was awarded the silver medal by the Societe Academique Arts, Sciences and Letters for his service to French organ music.

Presently, Tjeerd is organist at St. Christoforuskerk Church in Schagen, Netherlands. His wife is also an organist and choir director in a different church.

Before leaving Maine, Tjeerd played a benefit concert for the restoration of the Casavant organ at the Basilica of Sts. Peter and Paul in Lewiston. This concert was held at the Bates College Chapel in Lewiston.



ST. JOHN'S ORGAN SOCIETY ANNUAL FUND 2019

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 an annual 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:

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For a donation of \$250, Concert Sponsors (business or individual) will be recognized in one of the weekly summer concert programs. Please note with your donation if you wish to be a concert sponsor.

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!

ST. JOHN'S ORGAN SOCIETY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Kevin Birch - Executive Director

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OPUS 288 AND FRIENDS



Francien Janse-Balzer



William Porter



Tjeerd and Marja van der Ploeg prepare for International Concert



Tjeerd and Marja van der Ploeg excursion to Belfast, Maine



Sarah Johnson



(Schola) Elizabeth Flanagan, Janet Weber, Vanessa Rehmeyer, and Catherine Gels-Birch, with William Porter