

# ST. JOHN'S ORGAN SOCIETY

## Annual Newsletter

JUNE 2016

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



Kevin Birch, Executive Director

From the Executive Director

Welcome to the 2016 Newsletter of the St. John's Organ Society.

Nearly twenty-five years ago, St. John's Organ Society was established to advance the stewardship and appreciation of E. & G. G. Hook's celebrated Opus 288, built in 1860 for St. John's Catholic Church in Bangor.

I am happy to report that our treasured instrument is in great shape and, especially in this spring season of warmer temperatures and higher humidity, sounding absolutely glorious! With more than 155 years of service behind her, Opus 288 is ready for another season of beautiful music!

As we anticipate a new program year I'd like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all who contribute to our success. My thanks to Fr. Timothy Nadeau, Pastor, and members of St. Paul the Apostle Parish, for their encouragement and support of our work and for supporting the maintenance and care of Opus 288. Thanks to our outstanding performers who bring such imaginative programming to our concerts. Thanks to our generous donors and volunteers who make possible an ambitious program of concerts and educational outreach. Thanks to music educators Scott Burditt (Bangor High School) and Fred Ravan (Brewer High School) for collaborating in educational outreach activities during this past school year. Special thanks to our host hotel, The Charles Inn, for providing lovely accommodations for our visiting artists in downtown Bangor.

I am particularly grateful to our amazing Board of Directors for their sustained support behind the scenes throughout the year. Their combined expertise and shared love for Opus 288 are critical to the success of St. John's Organ Society.

In the following pages you will read about the 2016 Summer Organ Concert Series, a review of the 2015 Summer Organ Concert Series, our 2016 International Concert featuring Spanish organist Loreto Aramendi, our Annual Giving Program, and more! I look forward to an exciting collaboration between St. John's Organ Society and Blue Hill Bach which will serve as a festive prelude to the weekly organ concerts on Tuesday, July 26.

It is a great honor to serve as Executive Director of St. John's Organ Society. I hope to see you at the Summer Organ Concerts and thank you for your continued support!

Kevin Birch

### St. John's Organ Society Summer Organ Concerts 2016

24th Annual Series  
Thursday Evenings at 7:30

July 28

**Zehn Piao**

*(Champaign, Illinois and Shenyang, China)*

August 4

**Gayle h. Martin with**

**Linda Pearse,**

**bass trombone & sackbut**

*(Sackville, New Brunswick, Canada)*

August 11

**Jacques Boucher with  
Sophie Poulin de Courval,  
saxophone**

*(Montreal, Canada)*

August 18

**Douglas Beck**

*(Bangor, Maine)*

August 25

**Kevin Birch with  
Scott Burditt, horn**

*(Bangor, Maine)*

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

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

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.*

# RECITALS, JUNE 2015-MAY 2016: AN OVERVIEW

by Carlton T. Russell

**George Bozeman**, who knows Op. 288 mechanically as well as musically, opened the 2015 summer series on July 23 with music from the 17th Century (Frescobaldi and Sweelinck) to the 21st (Carson Cooman, 2013), framed by large works of J. S. Bach and including those of Franck (the elegiac Prelude, Fugue and Variation, a favorite of the composer) and Hindemith (his Sonata III on folk tunes), all enhanced by engaging program notes about the music and the people who wrote it.



*George Bozeman*

ideally suited to Opus 288; however, Sarah gave a thoroughly convincing performance of Sonata No. 1 in E-flat Major, underscoring the often surprising versatility of the St. John's instrument.

Since my wife and I heard a recital by **Susan Ingrid Ferré** in Paris in March of 1969, during her days as a Fulbright scholar and student of Jean Langlais, she has had a distinguished career as a concert organist, recording artist, and conductor. She holds a D.M.A. from the University of North Texas (which is also



*Nicole and Chris Pelonzi*

Next came the only true concert of the season, i.e., a performance involving more than one player. On July 30 **Chris Pelonzi**, organist and music director for the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Portland, joined with flutist **Nicole Pelonzi** in a program balanced between standard repertory such as Franck's

Chorale in A Minor and less well-known works, including a fantasia by Albert Doppler (d. 1883) and the performers' own transcription of Ernest Bloch's *Suite Modale* for flute and strings or flute and piano.

The third and fourth recitals featured former students of Kevin Birch: **Abraham Ross and Sarah Johnson**. On August 6, Abe, the Class of 2016 Organ Scholar at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Mass., presented a masterful program of works by Bach, Vierne, Brahms, Langlais, and Messiaen, opening with what is arguably Bach's most virtuosic organ piece, the Prelude and Fugue in E Minor, BWV 548, nicknamed "The Wedge" because



*Abraham Ross*

of its unusual, expanding fugue subject. Abe provided extensive and informative program notes which also reflected his thoughtful and imaginative relationship with the music he plays so excitingly.

Sarah Johnson, another outstanding former student of Dr. Birch and currently of Gail Archer at Vassar College, performed on August 13, playing with solid competence music of Mendelssohn, Bach, Nadia Boulanger, Sweelinck, and Kevin Birch's teacher, Klaas Bolt. One might not include Bach's six trio sonatas in a list of music



*Sarah Johnson*

George Bozeman's *alma mater*). On August 20 she played a program "designed for summer listening": a dozen short pieces, each five minutes or less in length and the majority of them from France, including two by Langlais.



*Susan Ingrid Ferré*

The next week the St. John's audience were privileged to hear the church's *titulaire*, **Kevin Birch**, in the rôle of solo performer, as he has so often been heard in Europe. As one might expect from the player who knows Op. 288 most intimately, the recital was superb in every way. Opening with Bach, Kevin went on to perform all four of the delightful pedal piano Sketches of Schumann and a piece by the Blue Hill-connected Horatio Parker. This musical feast ended with a typically flawless performance of Dudley Buck's technically challenging Variations on "The Last Rose of Summer".

Where could the series go after such a grand summer finale? Spanish organist **Loreto Aramendi** maintained the sense of climax by doing something strikingly different: an evening mostly of transcriptions of music composed for orchestra or piano. We heard Wagner, Liszt, Saint-Saëns, Rachmaninoff, and Fauré as they would have been heard by many music lovers in the late 19th and early 20th

Centuries, before recordings became widely available, played by organists in concert halls and churches, on organs designed to approximate the orchestra. Loreto's transcendent technique and compelling musicality were supported by an equally remarkable registrant, Dr. Birch: she said, "he worked harder than I did!"



*Loreto Aramendi*

Indeed, we continue to be—for nearly a quarter-century now—remarkably and repeatedly blessed by the faith-based and joyous dedication, the impeccable performances, the gracious hosting of guests, and the deep knowledge of organs and organists worldwide that Kevin Birch so generously brings to St. John's and to the greater Bangor area.

## OPUS 288 - OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

Outreach and Education is central to the mission of St. John's Organ Society. In December and March we enjoyed visits by music students from Bangor High School. The visits included a tour and demonstration of Opus 288, performances of organ compositions by J. S. Bach, and music for organ and horn performed by Bangor High School Music Instructor Scott Burditt and St. John's Organ Society Director Kevin Birch. In May our guest artist Loreto Aramendi and her husband Dominique Pérarnaud visited music and Spanish classes at Brewer High School for presentations on the Spanish culture and the connections between 19th century organ building in Spain and the United States. Several of the Brewer High School students and their teacher, Mr. Fred Ravan, attended the International Concert on May 3.



## ST. JOHN'S ORGAN SOCIETY ANNUAL FUND 2016

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.



*Brewer High School Students with present and former faculty members Fred Ravan, Claudette O'Connell and Andrea Jordan*



*Bangor High School Student Group with Mr. Scott Burditt*



*Loreto Aramendi meets Music Students at Brewer High School (May 3, 2016)*



*Students from Bangor High School*

### Giving levels are:

- Benefactor (\$500+)
- Patron (\$250-\$499)
- Sponsor (\$150-\$249)
- Contributor (\$100-\$149)
- Friend (\$50-\$99)
- Supporter (\$20-\$49)

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
- Catherine Bruno - Secretary
- Karen Kydd - Treasurer
- Ruth Nelligan - Director
- Carlton Russell - Director
- Bonnie FitzPatrick - Director
- Winnie Murray-Higgins - Director



*St. John's Organ Society*

**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.*

# LORETO ARAMENDI – INTERNATIONAL CONCERT 2016

by Ruth Nelligan

Loreto Aramendi was born in the village of Orio in the north of Spain. This small coastal village is a place where many fishermen once traveled to Canada in hopes of catching whales. This part of the Basque Country is a place of unique culture and language.

During her early childhood, along with her grandmother, Loreto attended Mass celebrated by the Dominicans. Even at this early age, she was deeply moved by the sound of the organ and choral singing which was of such significance in the Basque Country. It was at this time she decided to dedicate herself to becoming a professional musician. Since she did not come from a musical family, she had to convince her parents of her interest and desire to fulfill this wish.

She began her studies at the Conservatoire of San Sebastian, Spain where she was awarded degrees in piano, harpsichord, and chamber music. At the age of twenty-three she began her career of teaching piano and harpsichord.

Loreto furthered her studies over a period of five years at the National Regional Superior Conservatoire in Paris, receiving the First Prize upon finalizing her Advanced Studies Diploma. At the same time, she worked on piano specialization.

Along with teaching and concert performances, Loreto entered the National Higher Conservatoire of Lyon where she earned her National Diploma of Advanced Studies with specialization in organ.

Upon returning from France, she focused on organ concerts. She became titular organist of the unrestored Cavaille-Coll organ of

Santa Maria del Coro (1863) which is similar to the organ originally played by Cesar Franck at Sainte Clotilde, France. At this time she created an association to preserve this organ and to allow for visits and concerts. On one of her pipe organ tours to the Basque Country, she met Joe Vitacco and discovered the story of the restoration of the pipe organ at Our Lady of Refuge.



*Loreto Aramendi prepares for International Concert (May 2016)*

She has collaborated with the Basque Symphony orchestra for many years with whom she has recorded two discs. She is currently involved in the production of a recording made on the organ at Santa Maria del Coro. This may well be the last recording before its restoration. To prepare for this restoration work, she is learning organ tuning and maintenance in a French organ factory.

Loreto is the mother of two young girls and is married to a Frenchman who shares her passion. She also has a degree in Psychology from the University of the Basque Country.

As a soloist, as well as part of different groups, she gives concerts on the piano, organ, and harpsichord, embracing all periods and styles into her repertoire.

Currently, Loreto is main organist of the Cavaille-Col organ of the Santa Maria Basilica, San Sebastian, Spain. Her concert agenda for 2016 includes recitals in France, Spain, Italy, Argentina, and the United States. Loreto looks at music as a journey, needing time to understand how the pieces were created and interpreted during their own lifetime. Her recitals and concerts are an invitation to share other views and travel together along this journey.



## CHISPA AND SJOS

CHISPA, a local group dedicated to promoting the Hispanic Community and those who identify with it, welcome Loreto Aramendi and her husband Dominique Pérarnaud to Sunday brunch. We were pleased that many CHISPA members could also attend the International Concert on May 3. Thank you to Maria Rave for coordinating this opportunity for cultural exchange!

St. John's Organ Society Summer Series 2016  
presents a special pre-season opportunity...

***Magnificat!* Tuesday, July 26—7:30 pm**

Weckmann: Dialogue—The Angel

Gabriel Appears to Mary

Bach: *Erschallet, ihr Lieder, erklinget, ihr Saiten!* BWV 172

Bach/Ernst: Concerto for Organ in G Major, BWV 592

Bach: *Magnificat* in Eb, BWV 243a

Suggested donation \$10 - students and under 18 free  
Presented by Blue Hill Bach and St. John's Organ Society