

ST. JOHN'S ORGAN SOCIETY

Annual Newsletter

JUNE 2020

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

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



Kevin Birch, Executive Director

Dear Friends,

As you may have already read on our website, in light of the public health concerns surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, and out of an abundance of caution and concern for the health and safety of our supporters, St. John's Organ Society has made the difficult decision to cancel our 2020 Summer Organ Concerts. We hope to engage the same artists for the 2021 Summer Organ Concerts and will, according to public health guidance, schedule an

International Concert as soon as possible. We will certainly miss your presence at the weekly concerts and we look forward to future opportunities to gather around this magnificent historic organ. Please follow us on Facebook and on our website - www.hookopus288.org - for details.

In place of our usual concert schedule, we will focus this summer on the organization of our archives and begin an exciting new project to document E. & G. G. Hook's Opus 288. Archival work will be done by a team of volunteers and the documentation work will be carried out by organ builders Nick Wallace of David E. Wallace & Co., Gorham, Maine, and Nami Hamada of The Noack Organ Company, Georgetown, Massachusetts. This project is an important step forward to document, through precise measurements, photographs, and observations, the physical and tonal details of this remarkable pipe organ.

Your support is as important as ever and much appreciated. Enclosed you will find information on our Annual Giving Program. Please do consider making a financial contribution to St. John's Organ Society!

My thanks to members of St. John's Organ Society Board of Directors for their work throughout the year, to all who



contributed to this newsletter, especially Monique Bouchard for her design and layout. Thanks also to Fr. Frank J. Murray, pastor of St. Paul the Apostle Parish, for his enduring support of our work on behalf of Opus 288, and to organ builders George Bozeman, Robert Newton, Don Glover, David and Nick Wallace, and those who have worked with them over these many years, for their expertise in caring so well for this cultural treasure.

Sincerely,

Kevin Birch
Executive Director

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 – OCTOBER 2019: AN OVERVIEW

by Carlton T. Russell

Concerts by the Choeur d'Enfants d'Ile-de-France at St. John's have always been memorable, but the July 18, 2019 one was especially so. Parishioner Mike Dowd writes: "A power outage occurred 10 minutes before the concert began. It was quickly determined that the historic pipe organ could be pumped manually and the show would go on. As it grew darker, candles were lit and cellphones were used to illuminate the sheet music and conductor Francis Bardot. The singing was timeless and haunting, the program ending in near darkness with 'America the Beautiful' followed by 'Amazing Grace.' As the choir filed out to a standing ovation from the near capacity audience, power was restored and everyone was bathed in light, drawing gasps, then cheers. Amazing grace, indeed."



Andrew Scanlon

Andrew Scanlon, FAGO, from East Carolina University in Greenville, NC, performed on August 1. High points were Bach's 4th trio sonata – a challenge at St. John's, but one well met by Mr. Scanlon – and Böhm's *Vater unser im Himmelreich*, a piece young Bach may have known. Harrison Oxley's "A Clarinet Tune for Organ" featured that stop; and the extensive Postlude in D by Henry Smart (d. 1879) fit Hook Op. 288 like a glove.

Having heard French organist Laurent Jochum playing works of Clérambault and Mendelssohn on the *Choeur d'Enfants* program in July, we were treated on August 8 to a full recital by this remarkable player. His program consisted of frequently-heard music of Bach, Mendelssohn, Brahms, and Franck; however, his virtuosity and characteristically French playing style ensured that no one would be bored!



Laurent Jochum



Choeur d'Enfants d'Ile-de-France

Dr. Daniel Pyle, Organist/Music Director at St. Saviour's Episcopal Church, Bar Harbor, and musical director of Blue Hill Bach's annual *Messiah*, gave a varied program on July 25, with music from the 16th Century to the 20th, including a *Magnificat* by Matthias Weckmann (17th Century) and the 1938 *Sonata da chiesa* for organ and viola d'amore, with violist Dr. Elena Kraineva. The program notes were scholarly and detailed.



Daniel Pyle



Sarah Johnson

Two of Dr. Birch's prize students, heard in the 2018 series, returned in 2019. Sarah Johnson's fine August 15 recital was characterized by great stylistic variety and excellent, well-written program notes. We heard some music from the standard repertory, but also Nico Muhly's "The Revd Mustard his Installation Prelude". Sarah ended with Rheinberger's grand passacaglia – comparable to Bach's – from the 8th of his 20 organ sonatas.

On August 22, Birch protégé Abraham Ross, also a returnee from 2018, feasted us with American works (by Paine, Buck, Chadwick, and Thayer) that are ideally suited to the St. John's

ST. JOHN'S ORGAN SOCIETY ANNUAL FUND 2020

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:

| | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Benefactor (\$500+) | Patron (\$250-\$499) |
| Sponsor (\$150-\$249) | Contributor (\$100-\$149) |
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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

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AN INTERVIEW WITH GUNTER KENNEL

By Ruth Nelligan



Abraham Ross

organ. Abe ended his set program with a masterful performance of Franck's monumental Chorale No. 1 in E Major. As an encore we heard a lovely *Adoration* by Lemmens, a student of Hesse, whose concert fantasy had occurred earlier in the program.

The summer series ended with St. John's *titulaire*, Kevin Birch. His August 29 recital featured works by

Mendelssohn, Bach, and Schumann (a W. T. Best arrangement of Schumann's *Abendlied*, Op. 85). As a fitting climax for the 2019 season, Dr. Birch played the demanding and rarely-heard Grand Sonata in E-flat, Op. 22 of Dudley Buck, with its final fugue on "Hail, Columbia", which (according to the notes) "was a popular patriotic song in Buck's day, and was sung at the inauguration of the first American president, George Washington." I was again reminded of Kevin's musical and administrative gifts, the center of everything S. J. O. S. does.



Kevin Birch

The German organist, composer, pastor, and theologian Gunter Kennel played a recital at South Parish Congregational Church in Augusta during "A Hook Holiday" in October of 2010. Dr. Kennel returned to Maine on October 1, 2019, this time to play the International Concert at St. John's. His program was framed by Bach's Prelude and Fugue in E-flat Major, with other pieces between that were

related to parts of the ordinary of the Mass: Bach's setting of the Credo (*Wir glauben all an einen Gott*) in the middle; the Gloria and Sanctus replaced by music of Mendelssohn and Reger; and *Kyrie eleison* and *Agnus Dei* settings by Gunter Kennel.



Gunter Kennel

It was with extreme pleasure that on October 1, 2009 St. John's Organ Society hosted Dr. Gunter Kennel for a concert on the historic E&G.G. Hook Organ, Opus 288 (1860). His program was inspired by Bach's "Organ Mass" as well as chorales by Max Reger in addition to some of his newly composed works.

Dr. Kennel was born October 2, 1961 in Kaiserslautern, Germany, not far from Ramstein Airbase. He studied Protestant church music at the Munich Music Academy as well as Protestant Theology at the University of Munich. He is an ordained minister who holds a Doctor of Theology degree. His doctoral dissertation in 1995 was titled "Early Christian Hymns".

Since 1992 he is supervisor and coordinator of the district cantors in his diocese. Since then he has also been organist at Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church in Berlin as well as Honorary Professor of Church Music at the Humboldt University in Berlin. He is a guest lecturer, focusing on hymnology, liturgy, liturgical singing, religion and cultures. As organist and conductor, Dr. Kennel has appeared throughout Europe, Israel, Aserbaidjan, U.S. and South Africa.

At this time, I would like to turn the tables and ask Dr. Kennel a few questions with regard to his talents as an organist, composer, recitalist and theologian.

RN: In preparing for an upcoming concert or recital, do you study the unique characteristics and capacity of the organ on which you will be playing? Do you consider the organ's settings, as well as the manual and pedal capabilities before you decide on your program?

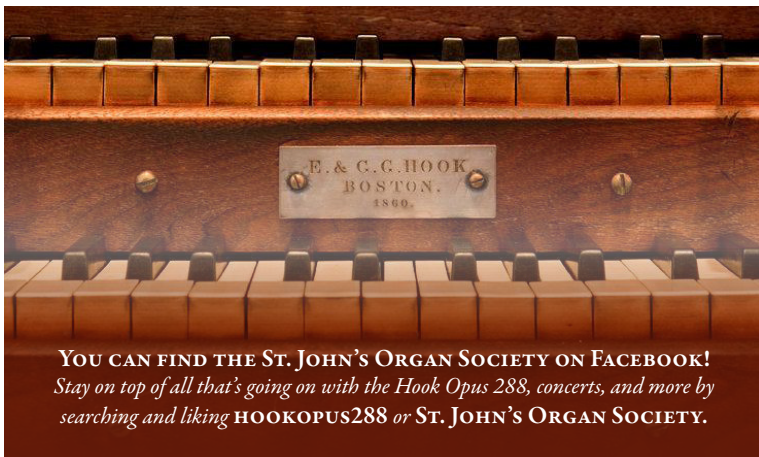
GK: *I always try to meet the special features of a particular instrument. That makes playing the organ so interesting, since you have always to find an individual solution for a program.*

RN: Is there a distinctive acoustical feature of a church that might make you hesitant about performing at that particular site?

GK: *An organ always sounds better with some reverberation. So I prefer venues, where the sound blends with the help of the particular space and its echo. But I also play in rather dry acoustics. In such a case it is even more important, which pieces one chooses for a program.*

RN: Have you at any time attended a concert where you have also performed and found how remarkable the difference in interpretation of the soloist from you? Did this give you a glimpse into the musical expression, technique, personality and ability of the performer to draw a completely different sound from the same instrument?

GK: *It is one of the most fascinating things with the organ, that the same instrument can sound completely different with different*



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**.

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PROJECT 2020 - DOCUMENTING E. & G. G. HOOK'S OPUS 288 (1860)

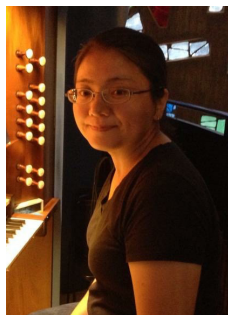
We are pleased to introduce two gifted organ builders who will carry out documentation work on E. & G. G. Hook's Opus 288 (1860) in the coming season. Their work will include making detailed measurements and photographs of the pipework, key and stop action, and wind system. We look forward to sharing details on our website: www.hookopus288.org



Nicholas Wallace

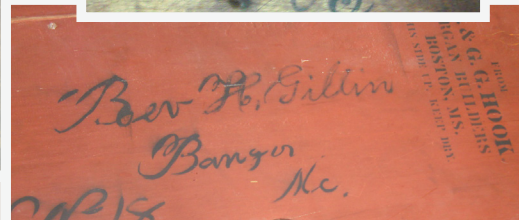
Nicholas Wallace holds a Bachelor's Degree in Classical Guitar Performance graduating with honors from the University of Southern Maine School of Music where he studied with Keith Crook and organ with Ray Cornils and Harold Stover. While in college, Nick worked for C.B. Fisk in Gloucester, MA. After graduating from college, Nick joined his father's pipe organ building and restoration company, David E.

Wallace & Co. LLC, full time. Nick assumed more responsibilities during the restoration and installation of the three-manual 1854 E. & G.G. Hook organ at the Church of Our Lady and St. Rochus in Boom, Belgium. Nick oversaw the major work on the three-manual 1893 Hook & Hastings organ for the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, NY. He is a member of the Organ Historical Society, the American Institute of Organbuilders and the International Society of Organbuilders.



Nami Hamada

Originally from Tokyo, Japan, Nami Hamada studied organ performance at Ferris University in Japan and New England Conservatory in Boston, Massachusetts. After graduation, she began her organbuilding career at C.B. Fisk in Gloucester, Massachusetts. She has learned general organ building skills including woodworking and metalwork, as well as pipe making and voicing flue and reed pipes. She also worked with John Brombaugh on his last major instrument in Toyota-shi, Japan, and with Bertrand Cattiaux in France as an exchange worker. She currently works at The Noack Organ Company in Georgetown, Massachusetts, where she has been in charge of tonal designing and finishing.



An Interview with Gunter Kennel continued

players. Thus it is always very interesting to listen to other players performing on an instrument I know. You can learn a lot from such experiences for your own playing.

RN: A point of interest to those of us who are New Englanders, is that the Hook Organ formerly used in the First Unitarian Church in Woburn, Mass. has since 2001 been used in Holy Cross Church, Berlin. Please give us one distinctive feature of the Hook organ at St. John's Bangor, Holy Cross Berlin and the organ on which you played.

GK: I love the very warm and well blended plenum of the Hook in St. John's. And the flutes, and strings, as well as the profound sound of the Trombone 16' in the pedal, a stop, the Holy Cross organ unfortunately lacks. But the Hook in Berlin blends very well too. The Doppelfloete there is one of my favorite stops of all, especially if you blend it with the Viola da Gamba of the Great.

RN: As a minister, church organist and liturgist, are there any liturgical works written by contemporary composers which you frequently use in your church services?

GK: Music in liturgy is always a challenge to find the right mixture of appropriateness, theological content, character of a hymn, dramaturgy, function, length and the expectations of the congregation. So I try to find an individual musical solution for each church service which always includes organ literature and improvisation. There is for me no special favorite of contemporary composers in liturgy, but Oliver Messiaen is without any doubt one of the very influential composers for modern liturgical style. And I also try to make my own contributions in that field. Liturgy is the source of many of my own compositions.

RN: A final question... When performing at St. John's in Bangor, we witnessed your enormous enthusiasm and energy. What are your dreams and hopes for the future? As a lingering wish, where would you like to play in the future and on what organ?

GK: There are some countries in Europe where I have had only a few or no opportunities to perform so far: France, the Netherlands, Spain. But I would also be very happy to come back to the US and to Bangor, since the Hook in St. John's is one of the most remarkable instruments in your country.