

ST. JOHN'S ORGAN SOCIETY

Annual Newsletter

JUNE 2022

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

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



Kevin Birch, Executive Director

It is with great joy that I welcome you to the pages of the 2022 Annual Newsletter of St. John's Organ Society. I am pleased to report that we are thriving as an organization and very much looking forward to a bright future of programming and activities in support of E. & G. G. Hook's magnificent Opus 288, built for St. John's Catholic Church in 1860.

Read on and enjoy Carlton T. Russell's wonderful review of the past year's programs, an article about recent International Artist Christa Rakich by Ruth Nelligan, details of the upcoming Summer Concert Series which begins on Thursday, July 28 at 7:30pm, and news of our fall programming in celebration of César Franck on the 200th anniversary of his birth.

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

My deep thanks to St. John's Organ Society's Board of Directors for another year of dedicated service, to David E. Wallace & Co. for caring so well for our treasured instrument, to Monsignor Andrew Dubois, Pastor of St. Paul the Apostle Parish, for his encouragement and support, and to all who so generously support our work through concert attendance and generous financial contributions.

May this noble instrument sing on for generations to come!

Kevin Birch
Executive Director

Summer Organ Concerts 2022 - 29th Annual Series

Thursday Evenings at 7:30

July 28 - Bridgette Wargovich (Portland, ME)

August 4 - Juan A. Mesa (Norton, MA)

August 11 - Sarah Johnson (Rochester, NY)

August 18 - Katherine Johnson (Oberlin, OH)

August 25 - Daniel Pyle (organ) and
Cathrine Bull (flute) (Bar Harbor, ME)

September 1 - Kevin Birch (Bangor, ME)

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
20 Broad Street, Bangor | 207-992-2820
www.thecharlesinn.com

EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH



Scout Troop 61, Dover-Foxcroft, visited the E. & G. G. Hook Organ in the fall of 2021.

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.

RETITALS, AUGUST 2021 - MAY 2022: AN OVERVIEW

by Carlton T. Russell

After the silent summer of 2020, when the St. John's recital series was suspended due to safety concerns arising from the Covid-19 pandemic, the 28th annual series began jubilantly on August 5, 2021 with the pedal scale that opens Bach's youthful Prelude and Fugue in D Major, BWV 532. This bold beginning was no problem



Jennifer McPherson

for the prize-winning recitalist, Jennifer McPherson, Director of Music and Liturgy at St. John's Episcopal Church, Portsmouth, NH. Ms. McPherson went on from Bach to music of the contemporary American composers Gwyneth Walker and William Bolcom, and ended her eclectic program with 19th and 20th-Century French music by Guilman, his friend Salomé, and Franck's student and successor at Ste-Clotilde, Paris, Charles Tournemire.

On August 12, Jeremy Thompson of Charlottesville, VA feasted us with a remarkable display of virtuosity rooted in his training and continued activity as a pianist as well as an organist, a rare combination. Opening with Bach's great Fantasia and Fugue in G Minor, BWV 542, with its intensely chromatic fantasy and rollicking fugue, Dr. Thompson played works of Gigout, Mulet, Howells, and Parry before concluding with another Fantasy and Fugue by another piano virtuoso, Franz Liszt, based on the notes corresponding to the letters of the name BACH (B being B-flat in German, and H being B-natural). The audience could give thanks not only for a stunning and well-organized program, but also for Thompson's thorough and informative program notes.



Jeremy Thompson



Erica Johnson

Massachusetts-based Erica Johnson, College Organist at Wellesley and Director of Music and Liturgy at Sacred Heart Parish in Newton Center, presented on August 19 a program of little-known music by women composers: Szönyi, Smyth, Bon, Sandresky, Chaminade, Price, and Shepherd. With her excellent – both scholarly and personal – program notes, Dr. Johnson further illuminated an already eye-opening recital.



George Bozemen

The pattern of arresting programs and edifying notes continued with organist and organ builder George Bozemen's recital on August 26. George, whose firm restored E. and G. G. Hook Op. 288 in 1981, performed Bach's *Clavierübung*, Part III (the so-called "German Organ Mass"). The recitalist was assisted in his performance of the manuals-only settings of the chorale preludes by Kevin Birch, who played the chorale melodies on a W. P. Hastings melodeon, the gift of Brett and Gayle Baber.

Completing the summer series was the September 2 concert by Dr. Kevin Birch (organ) and Dr. Anatole Wieck (violin). These two musicians have performed together so many times over the years that their music seems to emanate from a single player. The program alternated between solo organ pieces and those for violin and organ. Part I consisted of 17th-Century music by Sweelinck, Castello, Bruna, and Biber. In Part II, we heard three audience requests: Bach's famous Toccata and Fugue in D Minor, BWV 565; Fritz Kreisler's popular Praeludium and Allegro in the Style of Pugnani; and Widor's Toccata in F Major (Organ Symphony No. 5).



Kevin Birch & Anatole Wieck



Christa Rakich

On November 9, Christa Rakich presented the first of two "international" recitals -- those by internationally-recognized performers. She opened and closed with *contrapuncti* from Bach's Art of Fugue, complex music Christa is noted for playing with expressiveness and clarity: as she said, "I want people to hear everything." The middle piece was Franck's *Prière* (1862). Surrounding the Franck were James Woodman's Prelude and Passacaglia in F Minor (1981) and Christa's *Trois Hommages*, combining music of Gershwin, Mancini, and Walton with hymntunes: "Summertime"/*Slane*, "Moon River"/*Crucifer*, and Crown Imperial/*Laudes Domini*.

LOOKING AHEAD - FALL 2022

IN CELEBRATION OF CÉSAR FRANCK (1822-1890)

MONDAY-WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 10-12, 2022



Featuring Jonathan Moyer - Oberlin Conservatory (organ) • Dana Robinson - University of Illinois (organ) • Kevin Birch - St. John's Organ Society (organ, melodeon, harmonium) • Anatole Wieck - University of Maine (violin) • Carmen Peralta - Middlesex Community College (piano)

More to come...

CHRISTA RAKICH

by Ruth Nelligan

We ended the 2021-22 season and opened our 29th anniversary year with a second international recital on May 24, 2022. Gregory Crowell's program consisted mostly of music not normally heard in recitals, including two of his own arrangements (of a Vivaldi concerto and "Prayer" by Grieg); an 18th-Century arrangement of music by Bach; and Karg-Elert's transcription of Schumann's lovely *Abendlied* ("Evening Song"). Dr. Crowell's recital also included two American pieces written for organ: Amy Beach's Prelude on "The Fair Hills of Eire, O" and a toccata by Arthur Foote, its rich chords closing the season with the full organ sound of Op. 288 in all its glory.



Dr. Gregory Crowell

Christa Rakich grew up in a household where music, its enjoyment, participation, and study were a given. Her parents were immigrants from Serbia and Montenegro. She was raised with an appreciation for education and classical music. Piano lessons were begun at a very early age.

As Christa entered adulthood, her father was instrumental in having his daughter perform at recitals, many times at a moment's notice. More frequently than not, the requests were favorites her father wanted to hear his daughter perform. Remarks and comments about her performance, technique, and presentation were often made, but always in a kind and loving manner. He fully appreciated and understood her exceptional abilities. In turn, Christa was thankful for the presence of her father.

Christa was a Fulbright scholar who studied in Vienna, Austria with Anton Heiller, a renowned Bach interpreter. She holds bachelor's degrees in organ and German from Oberlin Conservatory and College.

A master's degree from The New England Conservatory ultimately led to her joining the faculty. She has also served on the faculties of Westminster Choir College, Brandeis, and the University of Connecticut, as well as assistant organist at Harvard. A highly respected pedagogue, Christa is on the organ faculty at Oberlin Conservatory.

Her activities include: Vice-President of the Boston Clavichord Society and performing at the Big Moose Festival in New Hampshire. Christa is a founding member of the Marion Baroque Ensemble as well as keyboardist for the Fanfare Consort, a Connecticut-based ensemble that includes baroque trumpet, strings, lute, organ, and harpsichord.

A prize-winning organist at many competitions, Christa has received particular acclaim for her interpretation of the music of J.S. Bach.

We are so fortunate to be able to include Christa Rakich, this outstanding talent, as one of our performers on the E. and G.G. Hook Organ at St. John's Church.

ST. JOHN'S ORGAN SOCIETY ANNUAL FUND 2022

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, education, and community outreach.

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

GIVING LEVELS ARE:

Benefactor (\$500+)	Patron (\$250-\$499)
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Gifts may be made online at hookopus288.org or sent to:
St. John's Organ Society, 207 York Street, Bangor, ME 04401.

A form is enclosed for your convenience. 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 Jason Gould - Treasurer

Ruth Nelligan Carlton Russell

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Stay on top of all that's going on with the
Hook Opus 288, concerts, and more by
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ST. JOHN'S ORGAN SOCIETY.

SIGN UP TO GET THE LATEST NEWS

We would like to let you know about our news and activities!

In the past, we maintained an email list in a spreadsheet; this is cumbersome both for you and for our staff. St. John's Organ Society chose MailChimp to automate email communication. The platform includes advanced features, like your ability to subscribe and unsubscribe to our list.

Please sign up to get future news about St. John's Organ Society concerts, events, and newsletters by visiting the link below and entering your name and email address.

<http://hookopus288.org/newsletter-signup>

CELEBRATING E. & G. G. HOOK, OPUS 553 (1870) AT HEILIG KREUZ KIRCH IN BERLIN - MAY 1, 2022



Executive Director Kevin Birch with past and present organists of Berlin's Heilig Kreuz Kirche stand at the E. & G. G. Hook, Opus 553, May 1, 2022, (from left to right) Gunter Kennel, Johannes Stolte, Kevin Birch, and Matthias Schmelmer.

It was a special honor to participate in a festival of music celebrating E. & G. G. Hook's splendid Opus 553 (1870) at Heilig Kreuz Kirche in Berlin, Germany.

Opus 553 was built for the First Unitarian Church in Woburn, Massachusetts and, when the church closed, was moved to Heilig Kreuz Kirche in Berlin. The rededication recital was played by American organist Thomas Murray in 2001.

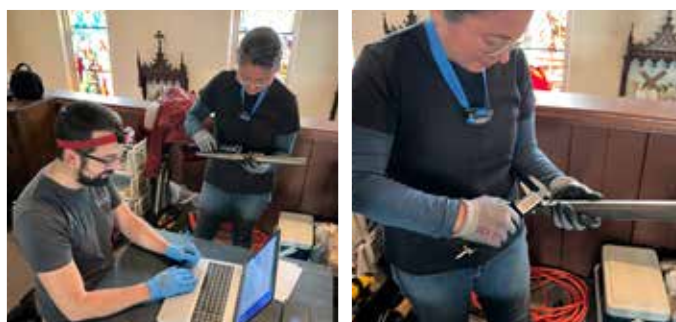
Since that time, St. John's Organ Society has welcomed organists of Heilig Kreuz Kirche to Bangor to perform and study on our beloved Opus 288 (1860) and nearby instruments by E. & G. G. Hook and Hook & Hastings. We look forward to more collaborations ahead!

Kevin Birch

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

We are pleased to introduce two gifted organ builders, Nami Hamada and Nicholas Wallace, who are currently working on documentation of E. & G. G. Hook's Opus 288 (1860).

Their work will include detailed measurements and photographs of the pipework, key and stop action, and wind system. We look forward to sharing details on our website: hookopus288.org



Organ Documentation Work: June 2022