

ST. JOHN'S ORGAN SOCIETY

Annual Newsletter

JUNE 2023

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

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



Kevin Birch, Executive Director

Dear Friends,

On behalf of the St. John's Organ Society, I am pleased to welcome you to the pages of our 2023 Annual Newsletter which will bring you up to date on the many programs and activities accomplished in the past year and preview the exciting season just ahead!

Thanks to the many seasons of careful maintenance, our venerable E. & G. G. Hook, Opus 288 (1860) is in wonderful shape and ready for a new season. We are ever grateful to David E. Wallace & Co. for their expert care of Opus 288.

Our Summer Organ Concerts begin on Thursday, July 27 at 7:30PM and continue through Thursday, August 31. We are delighted to share news of our upcoming International Concert - April 9, 2024 at 7:30PM - featuring Spanish organist Loreto Aramendi.

We are looking forward to a newly-designed website: hookopus288.org and express our thanks to Monique Bouchard for her expertise and generosity.

Please consider supporting our 2023 Annual Giving Program. Your financial assistance makes possible St. John's Organ Society's programs of public concerts, education, and community outreach. We appreciate your generosity!

Deep thanks to Msgr. Andrew Dubois, Pastor of St. Paul the Apostle Parish, for his enduring support of St. John's Organ Society. Thanks also to our Board of Directors for their tireless work throughout the year, and thanks to all who support our work by your presence at our concerts.

I hope to see you soon!

Kevin Birch
Executive Director

Summer Organ Concerts 2023

30th Annual Series

Thursday Evenings at 7:30

St. John's Organ Society is pleased to announce our 30th Summer Recital Series on Maine's largest 19th-Century mechanical-action pipe organ, E. & G. G. Hook's magnificent Opus 288, at St. John's Roman Catholic Church in Bangor.

These hour-long recitals occur on Thursday evenings at 7:30. St. John's Catholic Church is located at 207 York Street in Bangor. Admission is free, but donations are appreciated.

July 27

Joshua Ehlebracht

New Haven, CT

August 3

Rosalind Mohnsen

Malden, MA

August 10

**Paul Griffin (organ) and
Sophia Anastasi Griffin (soprano)**

Washington, DC

August 17

Abraham Ross

Montreal, QC

August 24

Mary-Katherine Fletcher

Boston, MA

August 31

Kevin Birch

Bangor, ME

ST. JOHN'S ORGAN SOCIETY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Kevin Birch - Executive Director
Catherine Bruno - Secretary Jason Gould -
Treasurer Ruth Nelligan Carlton Russell
Sarah Johnson Abraham Ross

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, JULY-OCTOBER: AN OVERVIEW

by Carlton T. Russell

2022 was a year notably rich in musical treasure for St. John's audiences, with Gregory Crowell's International Recital on May 24 followed by six summer series programs and, in October, the Celebration of César Franck.

The summer recitals began on July 28, when Bridgette Wargovich presented a program of music spanning four centuries. Dr. Wargovich, Director of Sacred Music and Organist at Portland's Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, framed her recital with two grand works: Bach's Prelude and Fugue in E-flat Major, and Franck's *Pièce Héroïque*. Between these pillars were Mendelssohn's Sonata No. 2 and pieces by Vaughan Williams, Gigout, and Franz Tunder (17th Century): his chorale fantasia on *Komm, heiliger Geist* ("Come, Holy Spirit").



Bridgette Wargovich

On August 4, Juan Mesa, College Organist and assistant professor of music performance at Wheaton College (Mass.), also opened with Bach – a prelude and fugue in C Major – and guided us, with his fine playing and excellent notes, on a historical journey, from William Byrd (d. 1623) to William Albright and George Shearing (20th Century). Included were his own adaptation of a Clara Schumann prelude and fugue written for piano, and two movements from Rheinberger's 8th organ sonata: the Introduction and the final, climactic Passacaglia.



Dr. Juan Mesa

Sarah Johnson returned to the summer series with a stunning recital on August 11, which she opened with the early Toccata, Adagio, and Fugue of Bach. Along with pieces by Dutch organist Jacques van Oortmerssen (d. 2015) and the English composer Percy Whitlock (d. 1946), the program focused on American music: works by John Knowles Paine, Florence Price, and Paine's contemporary Dudley Buck. Sarah's recital ended with what is probably Buck's best-known composition, the virtuosic Concert Variations on "The Star Spangled Banner".



Sarah Johnson

Katherine Johnson, a student of Christa Rakich at Oberlin Conservatory, played the August 18 recital, opening with music of three women composers: Fanny Mendelssohn, Florence Price, and Ethel Smyth. She presented an interesting stylistic comparison by pairing Smyth's Prelude and Fugue on *O Traurigkeit, o Herzeleid* with that of Brahms. There followed music of Bach and "Elegy" by the African-American composer, William Grant Still. Ms. Johnson ended her program with the fourth organ sonata of Fanny Mendelssohn's younger brother Felix.



Katherine Johnson

August 25 saw the only ensemble concert of the summer, presented by Catherine Bull (flute) and Daniel Pyle (organ). Beginning ethereally with Debussy's *Syrinx* for flute alone, the program continued with music of Bach, Jehan Alain's



Dr. Daniel Pyle

Catherine Bull

Three Movements for flute and piano (transcribed for flute and organ by Alain's sister, Marie-Claire Alain), and selections from Carl Nielsen's rarely-heard *29 Small Preludes*. After a flute/organ version of Gabriel Fauré's famous Pavane, Dr. Pyle closed the concert with Franck's Chorale No. 3 in A Minor.

Kevin Birch, the master of Hook Op. 288, played on September 1, most of his recital consisting of less-well-known music. From the standard repertory were two Bach pieces: the Fantasia in G Major and the chorale prelude on *Schmücke dich, o liebe Seele*, the latter significantly followed by the *Abendlied* (Evening Song) of Robert Schumann, he who loved Bach's *Schmücke dich*. Dr. Birch opened strikingly with Aaron Copland's "Fanfare for the Common Man", and included three other works by American composers: Arthur Foote, Carson Cooman, and Dudley Buck, ending with what has become a signature piece for Kevin, Buck's Variations on "The Last Rose of Summer" – a fitting way to end the summer series.



Kevin Birch

Stay on top of all that's going on with the Hook Opus 288, concerts, and more by liking **HOOKOPUS288** or **ST. JOHN'S ORGAN SOCIETY** on Facebook.



2022 marked the 200th anniversary of the birth of César Franck; and, accordingly, Dr. Birch organized "A Celebration of César Franck" consisting of three evening programs. On October 10, we were gifted with a varied selection of Franck's music, with only one solo organ piece

EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH MARCH 2023



Executive Director Kevin Birch demonstrates E. & G.G. Hook's Opus 288 for Grades 4 and 5 of All Saints Catholic School.

RETINALS, JULY-OCTOBER: AN OVERVIEW CONTINUED

– the Chorale No. 3 in A Minor – and only one piece not by Franck (an arrangement of Duparc's *L'invitation au voyage*). Performers were Anatole Wieck, violin; Carmen Peralta, piano; Scott Burditt, horn; and Kevin Birch, organ and harmonium (a Parisian instrument dating – like Opus 288 – from 1860). We heard, among other music, the famous *Panis Angelicus* and the great Sonata in A Major for violin and piano.

October 11, the second Franck evening, featured Jonathan Moyer, organist, who opened with several pieces by Franck's teacher, François Benoist, and – after music from Franck's *l'Organiste* played by Dr. Birch on the French harmonium -- closed with Franck's magisterial *Grande Pièce Symphonique*, an expansive tone poem displaying the technique of thematic transformation so beloved by Romantic composers. As Dr. Moyer says in his concise and perceptive program notes: “[the work is] a narrative of striking transformation, leading both



Anatole Wieck



Carmen Peralta



Scott Burditt



Dr. Jonathan Moyer



Dana Robinson

CLAYTON A. “MOXIE” ROGERS (1927-2022) — R.I.P.



St. John's Organ Society expresses deep sadness at the passing of Clayton A. “Moxie” Rogers who passed away last December 3, 2022.

Clayton served as organist in various area churches, most notably at Columbia Street Baptist Church where he served from 1955 to 2022. He was a member of the Bangor Chapter of the American Guild of Organists and regularly played piano and organ in several local retirement homes.

He regularly attended St. John's Organ Society concerts and will be greatly missed.

listener and performer on a poetic journey from epic struggle to triumphant apotheosis”.

The final Franck program, on October 12, was preceded by Kevin Birch's demonstration of the 1860 Parisian harmonium. Dana Robinson's program included works by Lefébure-Wely and Gabriel Pierné, the latter a pupil of Franck and his successor at Ste. Clotilde. Especially interesting for organists were two Franck organ pieces that are not part of the 12 famous works: the Fantaisie in C Major, Op. 16, No. 1 (Franck's first major organ piece) and the Andantino in G Minor (his first published organ work). Dana ended his recital with the *Trois Pièces* (1878), the last of which is the *Pièce héroïque*. As Dana writes in his notes: “. . . this is Franck's most programmatic organ work, evoking struggle, hope, and triumph”. Dana's brilliant performance of it brought the Franck celebration and the 2022 season to what was, indeed, a triumphant close.

**ST. JOHN'S ORGAN SOCIETY
INTERNATIONAL CONCERT
APRIL 9, 2024 - 7:30PM**



Save the date...

Loreto Aramendi, organist of the Cavaillé-Coll organ (1863) of the Basilica of Santa Maria del Coro in San Sebastian, Spain returns to St. John's for the 2024 International Concert on Tuesday, April 9, 2024 at 7:30PM.

Aramendi regularly performs solo recitals and collaborates with symphony orchestras throughout Europe, in the United States and in Japan. We look forward to what promises to be a stunning evening of organ music!

**ST. JOHN'S ORGAN SOCIETY
ANNUAL FUND 2023**

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:

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

**A CELEBRATION OF CÉSAR
FRANCK - OCTOBER 10-12, 2022**

by Kevin Birch

A very special guest made possible by the kindness of the Bradford United Church of Christ, Bradford, Vermont.

**Harmonium - No. 22169 - 1860
by Alexandre Père et Fils, Paris**



Dana Robinson, Kevin Birch and Jonathan Moyer at A Celebration of César Franck - October 10-12, 2022

Alexandre Père et Fils were one of the earliest large-scale manufacturers of harmoniums in the world. Established in 1829 they originally manufactured accordions. By the 1840s they were involved in organ manufacture. Their instruments were highly regarded and they won numerous awards at international exhibitions. These included the Paris Exposition of 1844 where they were awarded a Bronze Medal, the medal of honor at the 1855 Exposition Universelle in Paris and an award in the London Exhibition of 1862.

After 1854 the firm was successful in patenting a number of important improvements to reed organ design. Their fame grew, attracting praise from several musicians and composers including Hector Berlioz.

Their instruments were quite compact and finely finished showing an elegance and simplicity of design which was without the ostentation and size of later reed organs. They differed from the American instrument by using a pressure system blowing air through the reeds rather than the suction method used in most American reed organs.

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We would like to let you know about St. John's Organ Society concerts, events, and newsletters! We've switched from spreadsheets to MailChimp for easier communication. Enter your name and email address at hookopus288.org/newsletter-signup to stay updated.