

# ST. JOHN'S ORGAN SOCIETY

## Annual Newsletter

JUNE 2024

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 2024 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!

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

It was a special joy to welcome Spanish concert organist Loreto Aramendi on April 9. Her program, which included works of Bach, Buxtehude, Duruflé, Liszt, Messiaen and Tanaka, was stunning. Programming continues with weekly Summer Organ Concerts beginning on Thursday, July 25 at 7:30PM. and continuing through August 29.

Your support of our Annual Giving Program makes possible St. John's Organ Society's programs of public concerts, education, and community outreach. Please consider a donation by using the enclosed form or visiting our website at: [www.hookopus288.org](http://www.hookopus288.org). And thank you for your generosity!

Many thanks also to Msgr. Andrew Dubois, Pastor of St. Paul the Apostle Parish, for his enduring support of St. John's Organ Society. Thanks to our Board of Directors for their tireless work throughout the year, and special thanks to our volunteers who assist at the concerts and in the office.

I look forward to seeing you as we celebrate another season of programming on the exquisite E. & G. G. Hook, Opus 288 (1860) at John's Catholic Church in Bangor!

Kevin Birch  
Executive Director

### ST. JOHN'S ORGAN SOCIETY SUMMER ORGAN CONCERTS 2024 THURSDAYS AT 7:30 PM

July 25 - Steven Young

August 1 - Erica Johnson

August 8 - Hentus van Rooyen

August 15 - Sarah Johnson

August 22 - Duo Edelen

Christina Scott Edelen (organ), Fred Edelen (cello)

August 29 - Season Finale

Anatole Wieck (violin), Sarah Hoskins (cello)  
Kevin Birch (organ)

### INTERNATIONAL ORGAN CONCERT 2024

Luc Beauséjour - Montreal, Canada  
Tuesday, October 15, 7:30pm

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

### 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.*

# RECITALS, JULY 2023 - APRIL 2024: AN OVERVIEW

BY CARLTON RUSSELL



*Joshua Ehlebracht*

The 30th annual recital series at St. John's, featuring the glorious E. and G. G. Hook organ, began on July 27 with a recital by Joshua Ehlebracht, a recent recipient of a master's degree in organ performance from the Yale School of Music. Mr. Ehlebracht began with music of Horatio Parker, and ended with that of Dudley Buck, two American composers whose music is especially well suited to Hook Op. 288. Also on the program were two transcriptions

of music by Elgar and Mozart, the latter the Fantasia in F Minor, K. 608, written for a mechanical clock but, when arranged for the organ, mighty and memorable. Pieces by Bruhns and the American composer Florence Price rounded out a stylistically varied recital enhanced by excellent program notes.

On August 3 Rosalind Mohnsen, a highly-respected organist and church musician of long standing, presented a program mostly consisting of less-well-known works. Along with Bach's famous Prelude and Fugue in E-flat Major and shorter pieces by Arthur Foote and Florence Price, we heard music by Henri Büsser, Paul Fey, Everett Titcomb, and René Becker, all performed with colorful registrations and Ms. Mohnsen's characteristic rhythmic drive.



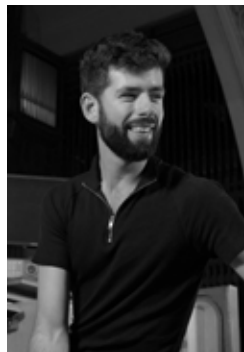
*Rosalind Mohnsen*

Washington, D. C. musicians Paul Griffin (organist) and Sophia Anastasi Griffin (soprano) performed on August 10, the only concert -- a performance by two or more musicians -- in the 2023-2024 season. Mr. Griffin played organ music by Buxtehude, Bach, and Benoit, and ended the program with Franck's *Pièce Héroïque*. Mrs. Griffin sang several pieces with organ accompaniment, including Franck's beloved *Panis Angelicus*.



*Paul Griffin and  
Sophia Anastasi Griffin*

August 17 saw the return of Abraham ("Abe") Ross, who began organ study with Dr. Birch on Op. 288, and was about to become Dr. Ross, with a Doctor of Music degree from McGill University. Abe gifted us with a program of music by American composers (1864-1927): John Knowles Paine, George Whiting, Charles Ives, Horatio Parker, and Florence Price, ending with the latter's rarely-performed First Sonata for organ, and including Abe's reconstruction of Ives's Prelude for "a (mild) Revival Service".



*Abraham Ross*

This scholarly but exciting program was meticulously registered and played, and was further enriched by historically substantive and beautifully-written program notes.



*Mary-Katherine Fletcher*

Mary-Katherine Fletcher, a Master of Sacred Music candidate at Boston University, was our performer on August 24. Her recital comprised music by Bach and composers who influenced his music (Buxtehude and, in transcription, Vivaldi); who were his contemporaries (Johann Ernst and J. G. Walther); or who were influenced by Bach in their composing (Mendelssohn and Franck). Most of Ms. Fletcher's program was drawn from the standard repertory, except for her last piece, a Walther concerto in B minor, based on a Vivaldi violin concerto.

One can depend on Kevin Birch, who knows Hook Op. 288 better than anyone else, to provide an inspiring season finale. The August 31 recital was of Dr. Birch's usual high quality, consisting this time mostly of music by French composers of the Baroque and Romantic periods: Dandrieu, Franck, and Guilmant, whose thematically appealing Sonata No. 1 brought the 2023 summer series to a grand *finale*.



*Kevin Birch*



*Loreto Aramendi*

Many remembered the St. John's debut performance by the Spanish organ virtuoso Loreto Aramendi in May of 2016, when she played a brilliant recital that included several transcriptions. Her return International Concert on April 9, 2024 was devoted to music written for the organ. Perusing her printed program—listing as it did one substantive piece after another—one might have thought it impossible to fit all that music into an hour. Ms. Aramendi's brisk tempi, however, resulted in the program concluding precisely at 8:30, having covered a wide range of periods and styles, from Buxtehude (d. 1707) to Karen Tamaka (two pieces from 1961), and including along the way major works by Bach (after Vivaldi), Alain, Messiaen, and Duruflé — a lavish musical feast and a stunning conclusion to the 2023-2024 recital series.



**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 OUTREACH - WELCOME TO ORONO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

On March 14, students from Orono High School's Core Program visited E. & G. G. Hook's Opus 288 with instructor Jon Hawley. The morning began with a discussion of Bangor in the mid-19th century and continued with a demonstration of the organ, an exploration of the interior of the instrument and the hand-pumping mechanism, a question and answer period, and a concluding performance of Bach's Toccata in D Minor, BWV 565.



Visitors from Orono High School - March 14, 2024

## ST. JOHN'S ORGAN SOCIETY ANNUAL FUND 2024

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:

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Gifts may be made online at [hookopus288.org](http://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!

## ABRAHAM ROSS - DOCTOR OF MUSIC

Congratulations to SJOS Board Member Abraham Ross who recently earned the degree of Doctor of Music at McGill University.



Abraham enjoys an active career as a concert organist, harpsichordist, and director, presenting imaginative programs informed by the most recent research into performance practice, technology, and musicological context.

His repertory ranges from the earliest written keyboard sources to music by living composers, reflecting a commitment to diversifying and strengthening the canon of western art music. Connections with composers of new music enable him to give several national or world-premieres each year. Most recently, he has prepared modern-day premieres of several unfinished, reconstructed, and recently discovered works.

Abraham's final doctoral project comprised a practical study of contrapuntal improvisation methods contained in two early-modern Italian treatises of Banchieri and Diruta. The performance component finished in a lecture recital featuring improvisations on a cantus firmus, a reconstitution of a double-choir motet by Rafaella Aleotti, and considerations of contrapuntal applications in 17th c. *basso continuo* realization. The written thesis aimed to consolidate these findings into a pedagogical model by which future performers might study historical improvisation practice.

Abraham began organ studies on Opus 288 and continued his studies at Holy Cross College, Oberlin Conservatory and McGill University. We are especially proud of him and wish him well as his career unfolds!





*The 2024 International Concert by Loreto Aramendi was the day after the solar eclipse. Here, she and Kevin Birch pose with an organ pipe.*



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

St. John's Organ Society is using MailChimp to automate email communication. The platform includes advanced features, including your ability to subscribe and unsubscribe to our list.

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