

# *Mechanics Hall*

*Where Community and Culture Meet*

## **Press Release**

### **For Immediate Release**

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### **MECHANICS HALL HOLDS 180th ANNUAL MEETING**

*Hall reports gross revenue of \$3.2 million*

Worcester, MA (September 26, 2023) —The 180<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the Worcester County Mechanics Association, which owns and operates Mechanics Hall, was attended by nearly 100 people on Tuesday, September 26<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 p.m.

Financial highlights of the Association for fiscal year 2023 include gross revenue of \$3.2 million including \$1.4 million from rental activities. The total value of investment portfolios held at U.S. Trust Bank of America and the Greater Worcester Community Foundation was \$4.3 million. Overall grant and donor support used for capital improvements and to produce the Mechanics Hall outreach programming totaled over \$1 million. The Hall hosted 187 events in 2023, 73 more than in 2022, resulting in increased hall rental income. “I am pleased to report that the overall financial health of Mechanics Hall is good,” said treasurer Peter Alden.

Officers elected at the meeting included Thomas McGregor, President; Peter Thomas, First Vice President; Anthony Consolmagno, Treasurer; Ellen Conte, Clerk; Jamie Leehy Vice President (Governance); Satya Mitra, Vice President (Membership and Development); and David Smith, Vice President (Property Co-Chair).

The following trustees were elected to first terms: John Daniels, Director of Investments, Menkiti Group; Diane Giampa, Executive Vice Present at Bay State Savings Bank; Paul Kelly, Regional President of Berkshire Bank; Evan Maloney Associate Dean of Students at the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences; Victoria Mariano, Program Director of the Downtown Worcester Business Improvement District; and Abby Marschke, Executive Director of Retail, Marketing, and Customer Service at Saint-Gobain. Bob Goodell, Regional Vice President of Cumulus Media, was elected to a second term on the board.



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The meeting included remarks by President Tom McGregor, who thanked supporters for continuing to bolster the operations and maintenance of Mechanics Hall. Executive Director Kathleen Gagne reported on new initiatives at the Hall, including [Many Voices: Mechanics Hall Youth Singers](#), a free choral group, open to all Worcester fifth and sixth graders, which made its debut in October 2022; [Club 321](#), a new monthly contemporary music series with an artful, coffee house ambience; the [Portraits Project](#), which will add commissioned portraits of four 19<sup>th</sup>-century Black Americans to the Great Hall in 2024; and upgrades to the light and sound equipment and technologies.

“The new portraits of Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Trust, and William and Martha Brown will honor the impact these inspiring Americans had on the evolution of our country,” said Ms. Gagne. “They will also draw attention to the role our city and the Mechanics Hall stages played in the highly contentious social reform issues of that time: abolition of slavery, women’s rights, and temperance.”

Carolyn Stempler, a co-chair of the portraits fundraising campaign, reported that donations and pledges total \$402,000, or 80% of goal. Ms. Stempler officially announced the public phase of the campaign with the goal of raising the additional \$98,000 needed. The project includes commissioning the portraits, framing, transporting, re-positioning portraits in the gallery, preservation work, and educational programming for youth.

Guest speaker James Goldsberry, a Mechanics Hall trustee, spoke about his family’s long history with the Hall and about the Portraits Project, which includes one depicting his great-great-grandparents, William and Martha Brown.

William Brown was a successful 19<sup>th</sup>-century Worcester upholsterer and carpetmaker. A free man, Brown came to Worcester from Boston, establishing his trade here in 1841. He and his wife, Martha operated the business located in the Central Exchange Building, in the heart of downtown. William Brown was first recognized by the Worcester County Mechanics Association in 1849 for the skill he exhibited at that year's Mechanics Fair. In 1867, he became the first Black member of the WCMA. His son, Charles, also became a member and was an expert draper and interior decorator.



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Goldsberry, the founder and CEO of NextUp2Lead, a management and leadership coaching and training firm, also reflected on his first term on the Mechanics Hall Board of Trustees. “I reflect on my first year as a trustee while standing on the shoulders of a family legacy with Mechanics Hall going back four generations and 156 years. It was an eventful year of learning where Mechanics Hall has been, where it is now, and where it is going in the future,” Mr. Goldsberry said. “It is an absolutely exciting time to be on the Board, as there is a once-in-a-generation major initiative underway: the Portraits Project, which will add portraits of Black Americans to the Great Hall. Our family is honored that one of these portraits will include my great-great-grandparents William and Martha Brown in recognition of their significant contributions to the Worcester community.”

## **About Mechanics Hall**

Built in 1857 by WCMA, Mechanics Hall is internationally regarded as one of the world's great concert halls for its superb acoustics and 19<sup>th</sup>-century elegance. Regionally, it is widely considered to be Worcester's finest meeting place. The world's most renowned orchestras and performers—from the London Philharmonic to Yo-Yo Ma and Ella Fitzgerald to Linda Rondstat—have taken the Hall's stage. Among the many luminaries who have spoken at Mechanics Hall are Charles Dickens, Susan B. Anthony, Frederick Douglass, and Mark Twain. In addition to serving as a premiere venue and recording site, Mechanics Hall offers inspiring cultural experiences for diverse audiences through a variety of creative initiatives—including free concerts, community events, a youth chorus, and collaborative programs with local colleges and non-profit organizations.

A non-profit organization, Mechanics Hall is owned and operated by the Worcester County Mechanics Association (est. 1842). It is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Learn more at [mechanicshall.org](http://mechanicshall.org).

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