Mechanics Hall
Where Community and Culture Meet

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Contact: Kathleen Gagne, Executive Director, 508-752-5608 x222, kgagne@mechanicshall.org
Amy Sklar, Director of Sales and Marketing, 508-752-5608, x239, asklar@mechanicshall.org

New generation of virtuoso musicians showcased in Mechanics Hall summer concert series

Worcester, MA — July 17, 2024 —This summer, two free organ concerts at Mechanics Hall will showcase a new generation of virtuoso musicians. Presented as part of the Worcester Organ Performance Series, the concerts will feature the Hall's Worcester "Hook" Organ, built in 1864 and one of the most sought after organs in the United States. On **Wednesday, July 31,** Alexander Richard Straus-Fausto, known for his imaginative outlook, innovative programming, and colorful style, will perform from his broad repertoire of music. On **Wednesday, August 21**, Cecily DeMarco, a graduate of The Juilliard School and an American Guild of Organists' "Rising Star," will play a wide-ranging selection of organ compositions. Both organists were featured in an April 2024 showcase at Mechanics Hall.

Free and open to the public, the concerts begin at 12 noon; doors open at 11:30 a.m. Cabaret-style seating in the Great Hall is available on a first-come, first-served basis. Attendees are invited to bring their own lunch, and refreshments will also be available for purchase. Mechanics Hall is located in downtown Worcester at 321 Main Street. For more information, visit mechanicshall.org or call 508-752-0888.

Produced by Mechanics Hall and supported by the Worcester Chapter of the American Guild of Organists, the Worcester Organ Performance Series has presented free concerts on the Worcester "Hook" organ since 2007. The annual series features accomplished organ musicians from throughout the northeast—and beyond—and showcases rising star talents in the organ world.

About Alexander Richard Straus-Fausto

Alexander Richard Straus-Fausto, originally from Kitchener, Ontario, is known for his exhilarating, colorful, and innovative organ performances. He has a broad repertoire of music, dating from early fifteenth-century keyboard music to contemporary organ compositions. He is a member of *The Diapason*'s "20 under 30 Class of

2023," which recognizes the most talented young artists under the age of thirty who have made significant contributions to the fields of organ performance, harpsichord, and church music. In 2019, while still a teenager, Straus-Fausto undertook a Canada Council-funded summer concert tour of the United Kingdom, playing in historic churches and cathedrals. In 2023, he was one of ten semi-finalists in the Longwood Gardens International Organ Competition. Straus-Faust is currently completing his master's degree in organ performance at the Yale Institute of Sacred Music, under the direction of Dr. Martin Jean. Learn more about Alexander Richard Straus-Fausto.

Photograph of Alexander Richard Straus-Fausto is available here.

About Cecily DeMarco

Cecily DeMarco, of Boca Raton Florida, is the organ scholar at the Hitchcock Presbyterian Church in Scarsdale, NY. In 2023, she earned a Bachelor of Music degree from The Juilliard School, where she is currently pursuing a Master of Music degree, studying with Grammy award-winning artist Paul Jacobs. DeMarco was awarded first prize in the New York City chapter of the American Guild of Organists (AGO) Regional Competition for Young Organists competition, as well as the Northeast Regional AGO Competition, where she earned the title of "Rising Star." Following this award, Cecily performed in a winner's concert at the 2022 AGO National Convention in Seattle, Washington.

DeMarco has performed throughout the United States, including in New York City at St. Patrick's Cathedral, Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, Columbia University, The Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Riverside Church, St. Paul's Chapel at Trinity Church Wall Street, and Cathedral of St. John the Divine. She performed at Mechanics Hall earlier this year. Learn more about Cecily DeMarco.

Photograph of Cecily DeMarco is available here.

About The Worcester "Hook" Organ

The Worcester Organ was installed at Mechanics Hall in 1864. The 52-stop, 3,504-pipe instrument was constructed by American organ builders Elias and George Hook, brothers from Boston, and thus also referred

to the E. & G.G. Hook Opus 224, or simply the "Hook Organ." Today, it is the oldest unaltered four-keyboard pipe organ in the Western Hemisphere located at its installation site.

Since its restoration in 1982, the Worcester Organ has become one of the most popular and respected organs in the United States. It has been featured numerous times on National Public Radio, performed in several recordings, and has been featured on television and in a major motion picture, as well as in a music video starring Michael Crawford, the original "Phantom of the Opera."

The Worcester Organ is used frequently for wedding ceremonies, graduations, and awards events, as well as for the Worcester Organ Performance Series, produced by the Hall in collaboration with the Worcester Chapter of the American Guild of Organists (AGO). Learn more at **hookorgan.org**.

About Mechanics Hall

Built in 1857 by the Worcester County Mechanics Association, Mechanics Hall is internationally regarded as one of the world's great concert halls for its superb acoustics and 19th-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 Ronstadt—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.

The accessible entrance to Mechanics Hall is located on Waldo Street. Elevators are available in the ground-floor Waldo lobby and provide access to the second and third floors. There is no elevator access to the balcony. All concerts take place in the Great Hall on the third level. Those who need assistance can contact the Mechanics Hall Ticket Office, Monday through Friday from 9:30am to 4:30pm, by calling 508-752-0888.

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.