



Mechanics Hall Restoration

Worcester
Massachusetts



MECHANICS HALL.

ANTON DVORAK conducted here. Anton Rubinstein played here. Mark Twain, Oliver Wendell Holmes and Clara Barton lectured here. The list of illustrious musicians who have appeared in Mechanics Hall is seemingly endless—Ignaz Jan Paderewski, Fritz Kreisler, Ossip Gabrilowitsch, Louise Homer, Giovanni Martinelli, Amelita Galli-Curci, Dame Nellie Melba—and apart from the thousands who have heard the voices and playing of these immortals there has been another witness, another observer, standing respectfully silent at the proper times, yet possessing a magnificent voice of its own: the great E. & G.G. Hook organ. Completed in 1864, seven years after the hall was opened, its voice is both a voice from the past and a voice for today, although at this moment it sorely needs some “vocal therapy,” for like Mechanics Hall itself, the organ requires a complete restoration, an immense undertaking, but a project which offers incalculable rewards and satisfaction for all concerned.

As host to the celebrated artists mentioned above, Mechanics Hall has had an illustrious past, and an increasing number of people in Worcester, including some foresighted AGO members, are becoming committed to the preservation of this historic place and stirred by its promise for the future. Admirers have long hoped for a restoration of the hall and organ, but a concert-convention-exhibition hall is expected to “pay its own way.” Mechanics Hall has not been able to do this in recent years. Before television, the hall was rented nearly every night, but rentals have become increasingly infrequent and unprofitable. In 1957 the building was for sale and a staff writer on the *Evening Gazette* wrote: “Worcester’s most venerable host is going to be 100 years old next month. There won’t be any celebration. Even the old timer’s best friends admit he’s outlived his usefulness. In fact, they’re trying to get rid of him.” As it happened, the building did not sell, but lingered into the 1960s to become the scene of roller-skating during the day and wrestling matches at night. Used in this way it

was hardly appreciated for what it really is.

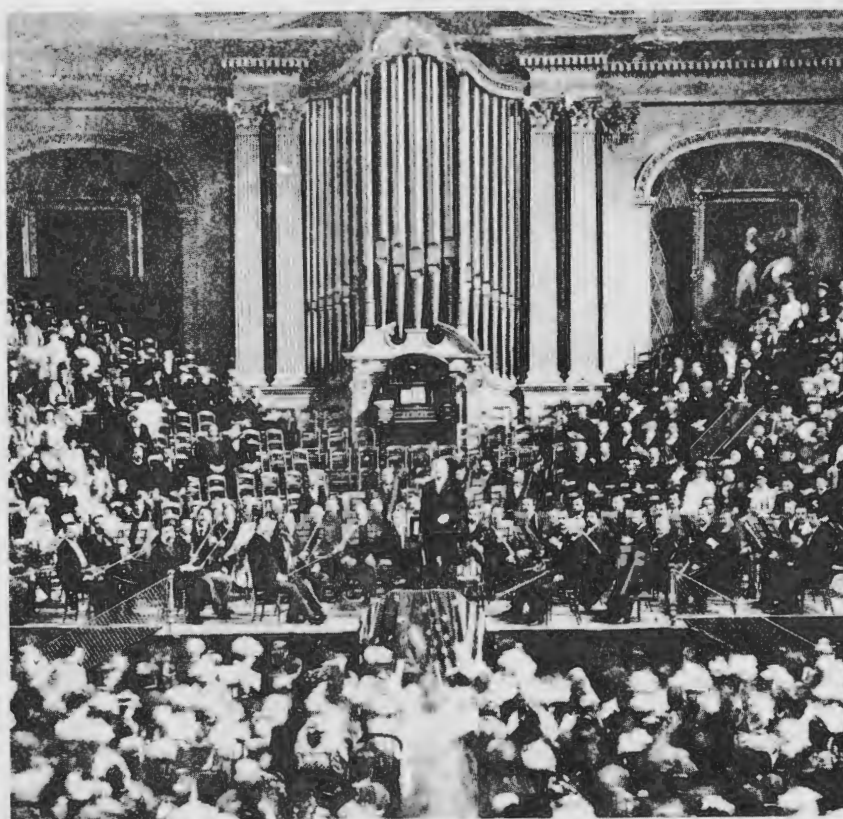
If people at large were once in doubt as to what Mechanics Hall *really is*, however, they abruptly became aware not long ago when Denys Peter Myers, chief architectural historian of the Historic American Buildings Survey (a branch of the National Park Service) declared it “the best 19th-century concert hall in the United States today”—a statement which fortunately has received repeated and widespread publicity. The building is now on the National Register, and under the extraordinary leadership of Mrs. Julie Chase Fuller, president of the Worcester County Mechanics Association, and a dedicated board of directors, positive steps are being taken towards a restoration of this superb landmark.

How are AGO members involved? Worcester Chapter Dean Robert Dickinson and chapter members Charles Lane Davis, Stephen Long and Barclay Wood are active members of a standing committee with members of the Mechanics Association and the Worcester Heritage Society. Fund-raising efforts of this group will include a benefit recital in the Worcester Municipal Auditorium by Thomas Murray, organist-director of the Cathedral Church of St. Paul in Boston and first-place winner of the AGO National Competition. This concert will be on Saturday, September 27, at 8:15 p.m. Once the restoration of the organ is actually in progress, this group will also organize volunteer help to assist in those phases of the work where non-professional labor is feasible.

If Mechanics Hall is “the best 19th-century concert hall in the United States today,” what does the Hook organ represent to us? It is the only surviving 4-manual 19th-century American organ, and the second largest in number of speaking stops. Mechanics Hall is one of those few places left in America where a great historic instrument can be heard in a resonant building. Its preservation should be of concern to us all.

**E. & G.G. Hook Organ, Opus 334, 1864
Mechanics Hall, Worcester, Massachusetts**

GREAT		CHOIR	
16	Open Diapason	16	Aelina
8	Open Diapason	8	Open Diapason
8	Stopped Diapason	8	Melodia
8	Viola da Gamba	8	Keraulophon
8	Claribella	8	Dulciana
4	Principal	4	Flauto Traverso
4	Flute Harmonique	4	Violin
2½	Twelfth	2	Piccolo
2	Fifteenth	III	Mixture
III	Mixture	8	Clarinet
V	Mixture		
16	Trumpet		
8	Trumpet		
4	Clarion		
SWELL		SOLO	
16	Bourdon	8	Philomela
8	Open Diapason	8	Salicional
8	Stopped Diapason	4	Hohl Pfeife
8	Viol d'Amour	2	Piccolo
*8	Quintadena	8	Tuba
4	Principal	8	Corno Inglese
4	Flute Octavante		
4	Violin		
2	Fifteenth		
V	Mixture		
16	Trumpet		
8	Cornopean		
8	Oboe		
8	Vox Humana		
4	Clarion		
		PEDAL	
		**32	Contra Bourdon
		16	Open Diapason
		16	Violone
		16	Bourdon
		10½	Quinte
		8	Violoncello
		8	Flute
		16	Posaune
		* replaced 2½' Twelfth	
		** a later addition	



Orchestra and chorus, Mechanics Hall, 1900.