

A photograph of an organ's interior, showing rows of organ pipes of various lengths and diameters, some with blue caps, housed in a wooden case. The pipes are arranged in a grid-like pattern, and the wooden structure is made of light-colored wood. The lighting is warm, highlighting the textures of the wood and metal.

MARK STEINBACH • ORGAN

ORGAN WORKS OF
**ANTON
HEILLER**



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ORGAN WORKS OF ANTON HEILLER

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1	Tanz-Toccata (1970)	5:55
2	Kleine Partita über das Dänische Lied "Den klare sol går ned" (1977)	5:45
3	Passacaglia (ca. 1940/42)	8:20
4-6	Kleine Partita "Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen" (1944)	3:34
7	Verleih uns Frieden gnädiglich (1974)	1:29
8	Som lilliens hjerte kan holder I grøde (1977)	1:24
9-11	Freu dich sehr, o meine Seele: Vorspiel, Choral, Nachspiel	3:50
12-14	Vorspiel, Zwischenspiel und Nachspiel aus der "Vesper" für Kantor, Chor und Orgel (1977)	13:52
15	Jubilatio (1976)	5:03
16	Orgelsatz: "Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen" (1977)	1:36
TOTAL TIME:		50:48

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Although chiefly remembered today as an esteemed Bach interpreter and pedagogue, Anton Heiller was also a virtuoso organist and prolific recording artist, as well as an accomplished improviser and conductor. With Heiller's centenary approaching, it is time for a reassessment of his legacy. Although he is not principally thought of as a composer, Anton Heiller was arguably the most significant Austrian organ composer of the twentieth century.

I was a junior at university when I first encountered Heiller's music. I had studied the German language and was eager to study abroad to experience Germanic culture and to play and hear historic organs. Professors suggested that I explore the music of Anton Heiller. I knew Heiller's moving recordings of Bach's "Leipzig 18" and the *Orgelbüchlein*, and I had heard glowing reminiscences of those who had attended his master classes, but I knew nothing of his compositions. The university library had an LP of Heiller's twelve-tone work "Salve Regina" and other organ compositions from the 1960s. I found the music strident and difficult to grasp at first, but provocative. I wanted to know more.

After graduation, I had the opportunity to study in Austria. During that time I often found Vienna as daunting and provocative as Heiller's music, given its layers of complex history and Vienna's own struggle with its post-war identity. Heiller's ability to evoke dark and uncomfortable aspects of

the human condition made more sense to me in the context of Vienna, the city of Freud, Mahler, Klimt, and Schoenberg. Both Vienna and Heiller's music can elicit feelings of existential angst and melancholy, but also of ecstatic joy and humor. The melancholy can also quickly

transform into quiet meditative solace. Above all, Heiller's music is highly visceral and demands an emotional response from the listener.

That Heiller's compositions remain relatively unknown is at once strange and sad. The current vogue of organ programming, at least in the United States, which has favored French romantic works to the exclusion of modern compositions, is perhaps one of the reasons. Another is that even Heiller performed very few of his own works, stating that they were "too difficult." He also seldom taught his own compositions, preferring to teach Bach instead. Heiller's student Thomas Froehlich recounted how after playing *Tanz-Toccata*, the master and he had a telling moment together: "Oh it's so hard, why do you play it?" Before I had a chance at a reply, he simply grunted, 'I'd rather play Bach.'

Unlike the twelve-tone works Heiller wrote in the 1950s and 60s, the compositions chosen for this recording do not abandon tonality altogether. At a time when boundaries were still clearly drawn between Germanic and French organ music, Heiller synthesized elements from both traditions, and others as well, to form his own musical language. In some of these works, he infuses a highly chromatic polyphonic idiom with rich colorful "French" chords. In others, sparse, Hindemithian harmonies emerge out of leaner two- or three-part counterpoint. His polyrhythms and mixed meters evoke Stravinsky and Messiaen as well as jazz.



PHOTO COURTESY BERNHARD HEILLER



PHOTOS COURTESY BERNHARD HEILLER

Heiller was drafted into the civilian service of the military. The military service forced him to give up his new positions and, temporarily, his pursuit of the music degrees.

The year 1945 marked a pivotal juncture in Heiller's life. The war ended in March, and he was freed from military service. In July, at just 21 years of age, he was named Lecturer in Organ at the Vienna Musikakademie, where he would continue to teach throughout his life. In November of that year he married his classmate Erna Hladik, an accomplished pianist and harpsichordist. The couple would eventually have two children.

Heiller's blossoming career in the late 1940s revealed him to be truly a Renaissance musician. As an organist, he performed many notable concerts, including the premiere of Hindemith's Sonata number III for organ. As a pianist, he performed his Toccata für zwei Klaviere with his wife Erna at the Salzburg festival and participated in the Austrian premiere of several contemporary works including Stravinsky's Les Noces. As a vocal coach, he was Korreplitor for the premiere of Frank Martin's Le Vin herbé at the Salzburg festival. As a conductor, he premiered Franz Schmidt's Symphonies no. 2, 3, and 4, as well as other works. In 1950, he was appointed conductor of the Collegium Musicum for contemporary music at the Musikakademie. This position allowed him to premiere many of his own choral

Although Heiller traveled widely and became an international figure, the home in which he was born in 1923 in Vienna's 17th district remained his residence until the end of his life. He was an only child whose remarkable musical gifts were recognized from a young age—he took his first piano lessons at age six with his father. He commenced studies in harmony and counterpoint four years later with his parish choirmaster, Ludwig Jamöck, who had been a student of Franz Schmidt. At age 12, he began organ lessons with Wilhelm Mück, the organist at St. Stephen's Cathedral. During his six years of study with Mück, he learned the majority of the organ works that would form the primary solo performing repertory of his career. At age 18, Heiller revealed his virtuoso prowess by completing exams in both harpsichord and organ after only a single year of study at the Reichshochschule für Musik. He was then, at this early age, appointed assistant conductor of the Vienna Singakademie and the Volksoper. Meanwhile, he continued pursuing further degrees in piano and theory. In 1942, with the war raging throughout Europe,

works as well as to perform other new music, which clearly stimulated his own creative process.

Winning the Haarlem International Organ Improvisation Competition in 1952 propelled Heiller to the forefront of the international organ scene. With this honor and his recent recording of the complete organ works of Bach, he found himself in constant demand internationally as a performer and masterclass teacher. Students flocked from around the world to study with him. He and fellow Haarlem teachers Marie-Claire Alain and Luigi Fernando Tagliavini were at the forefront of the nascent early music performance practice movement. He returned eight times to teach the Haarlem summer course.



The success of the Haarlem courses exemplifies Heiller's charisma as a teacher. His students included nearly 100 American organists who travelled to Vienna to study with him over the course of his career and many others who attended his frequent masterclasses in the United States during the 60s and early 70s. Heiller's students returned to their respective homelands with radical new perspectives on Bach-playing and organ design, favoring historically inspired mechanical-action instruments over the then-fashionable electro-pneumatic action organs. Heiller's many concerts and recordings also influenced organists' manner of interpreting and thinking about Bach. Many of his students also became important teachers: Jean-Claude Zehnder, Peter Planyavky, Yuko Hayashi, Peter Hurford, Herbert Tachezi, and Michael Radulescu, to name a few.

In the 60s, Heiller embraced international performing opportunities to an even greater extent. Hindemith chose Heiller to premiere his organ concerto at Lincoln Center in 1963 with Hindemith conducting. With the composer's endorsement, Heiller also recorded Hindemith's three organ sonatas on the recently built Fisk organ at Harvard University.

Heiller was known for living larger than life. He took on a huge schedule of performing and teaching commitments, and slept very little. He was a passionate man who enjoyed food, drink, and lively conversation. His fun-loving side contrasted with his more serious and deeply spiritual side. He was a devout Catholic, attending Mass daily. At times his appetites conflicted with his religious faith. These competing qualities contributed to his magnetic persona.

Beginning in 1974, Heiller's manic schedule began to take its toll, with his life plagued progressively by depression and ill health, including a series of three strokes. On March 25, 1979, he died in his lifelong family home in Vienna, at the early age of 55.

When I asked his widow, Erna Heiller, about his personal philosophy, she responded: "Regarding religion, he was very ecumenically minded and did not limit himself to the institutional church. A conversation with him was always enriching and liberating." For those of us who never knew Heiller personally, his passion for life, his spiritual journey and personal struggle still speak through his music. The conversation continues.

—MARK STEINBACH

For further reference: Peter Planyavsky's "Anton Heiller: Alle Register eines Lebens", Musickverlag Doblinger 2009; Thomas Schmoegner's "In Memoriam Anton Heiller", "Oesterreichische Orgelforum 1989"; and Robert Gant's "The Organ Works of Anton Heiller", University of Rochester, 1975.



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There is a rhythmic urgency and vitality to *Tanz-Toccata* (1970) that reflects the rock ‘n’ roll *zeitgeist* of the turbulent early 1970s. Although the secular nature of *Tanz-Toccata* is an anomaly within Heiller’s otherwise primarily sacred oeuvre, it has become his best known and most frequently performed composition.

Heiller creates a veritable *Rite of Spring* for organ in *Tanz-Toccata* through primitivistic rhythms, polyrhythms, angular melodies, and his dissonant harmonic language. Like Stravinsky in his kaleidoscopic orchestrations, Heiller is very specific here in terms of tone color designations for the organ. It is as if *Tanz-Toccata* were written for the vast 4-manual von Beckerath organ selected for this recording: all of Heiller’s designated stops are available, a rarity indeed. From the initial chord cluster played on the anachronistic Vox humana with Tremulant, primarily a French nineteenth-century registration, Heiller conjures up a world of decadence and foreboding. The Sesquialtera stop appears in the tenor solo for the beguiling “lyrical” secondary theme where Heiller indicates “sehr locker, aber nicht zu schnell” (very loose, but not too fast). As the score unfolds, new challenges await the performer at every turn: startling tempo changes, constantly shifting meters, complex cross rhythms, “added values” (a rhythmic device frequently used by Messiaen), rapidly moving parallel fifths, and bold, athletic leaps in the pedal part. The player must literally dance at the organ console. The finale spirals out of control with feet and manuals moving in parallel clusters, culminating in the cataclysmic final two chord-bursts. Heiller wrote *Tanz-*

Toccata for his student and muse Monika Henking, who performed the premiere in 1970.

Both the chorale text and the musical affect of the *Kleine Partita* “Den Klare sol går ned” evoke a world-weariness reminiscent of a northern European Expressionistic woodcut:

“As the clear sun sets and evening draws nigh,
every laborer is weary and longs for rest. One day
closer am I to death than before. Time so quietly
opens the door of death to me.”

Heiller was known to be preoccupied with death throughout his life and perhaps even more so around the time he wrote the *Kleine Partita* in 1978. During this time Heiller suffered through several strokes and the partial paralysis of his left hand, as well as the sudden deaths of two close friends: Aksel Andersen, Professor of Organ at the Royal Danish Conservatory, and Christa Landon, Viennese musicologist. The *Kleine Partita* was dedicated to the memory of these friends. Heiller reveals himself to be a master of contrapuntal and harmonic invention in these short variations, reminiscent of his improvisations. The jagged bass line beginning the second movement features on this recording the unusual and growly 16' Barpfeife (“bear pipe”). It starts and stops, with ritardandi and fermati indicated in the score, as if

reeling from something: shock? dismay? The brooding third movement sets the unadorned cantus in the tenor, played here on the swell Schalmey. The final variation summons the full organ with the cantus firmus set as a descant, soaring high above polychords in an outpouring of grief.

J. S. Bach’s towering Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor was one of Heiller’s signature pieces as a concert organist, and must have served as inspiration for him to compose in the genre. Heiller had learned this piece and most of his concert repertoire by the age of fourteen. He wrote his own *Passacaglia in C minor* under the shadow of the Nazi annexation of Austria when he was only seventeen or eighteen, shortly before being drafted into the military. Heiller creates a world of cumulative complexity and palpable angst in his *Passacaglia*. The initial statement of the eight-bar theme in the pedal

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gradually evolves as each variation unfolds. Heiller explores a variety of textures and tonalities, including polytonality. Each of the nineteen variations provides an opportunity for the performer to change organ registrations, allowing the work to serve as a tour de force of the von Beckerath's tonal palette. The score was not published until 1995, more than fifty years after its composition. Heiller's widow Erna and Viennese musicologist Thomas Schmögner first discovered the Passacaglia amidst other unpublished manuscripts in the 1990s.

Although the *Kleine Partita "Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen"* (Lo, how a rose e'er blooming) was composed in December 1944, during World War II, it bears a hopeful and sunny outlook. Heiller composed it as

a gift to Erna, whom he would marry within the year. The dedication reads "Meiner lieben Erna zu Weihnachten 1944! Toni." The Partita consists of three contrasting variations: the chorale transformed into a waltz-like Lied; a lean bicinium in strict canon at the octave; and a siciliano in colorful four-part counterpoint.

The unpublished manuscript *Verleih uns Frieden gnädiglich* (Give peace in our time, O Lord) is a highly subjective personal prayer. The unadorned chorale is played here on the Rückpositiv quintadena with the imitative figuration in the left hand performed on the swell Violflöte. Heiller signed the manuscript "S.D.G." (Soli Deo Gloria), as was his practice, emulating that of his mentor, Johann Sebastian Bach. This chorale prelude was written in 1974 for Monika Henking, who was Director of Music at the Protestant Church in Thalwil, Switzerland.

The seven choral preludes published after Heiller's death as *Choralvorspiele zu Liedern des dänischen Gesangsbuchs* (Chorale preludes to hymns of the Danish Hymnal) were written while he was on a concert tour in Denmark in the winter of 1977–78, including a concert at the church of former student Kirstin Stig Pedersen. During his time there he suffered his third stroke. As he was convalescing, she encouraged him to compose these pieces as a kind of occupational therapy to elevate his spirits. Although not all of these works are dated, they appear to be Heiller's very last compositions. *Som lilliens hjerte kan holdes i grøde* (As the heart of the lily, so faith springs eternal), from this collection, is based on a chorale tune by Johann Anastasius Freylinghausen, 1704. Heiller sets the melody as a menuet, including the shifting accents characteristic of hemiolas found in baroque dance music. The unadorned



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melody, in A-flat major, is punctuated by sporadic triads that appear in non-functional chord "progressions."

In *Vorspiel: Freu dich sehr* (Rejoice, O my soul), a trio texture emphasizes the contrast between the unadorned cantus in the tenor voice, a sprightly right hand arabesque motive, and a simple step-wise descending bass line. A sparse three-voice harmonization follows, suitable for liturgical accompaniment. The *Nachspiel* is one of Heiller's most lyrical and expressive organ compositions. The cantus firmus is transformed into a coloratura soprano melody via florid ornamentation in the manner of Bach's melismatic *O Mensch beweine*, from his *Orgelbüchlein*. The rejoicing of *Freu dich sehr* expressed here comes from a highly introspective spirituality.



The most extensive work in Heiller's late oeuvre is *Vesper für Kantor, Soli, Chor und Orgel*, written to celebrate both the 850th anniversary of the city of Graz, and the dedication of the new four-manual Klais organ at the Graz Cathedral. Heiller had the three organ solo movements from *Vesper* published separately as an independent organ suite: *Vorspiel*, *Zwischenspiel*, and *Nachspiel*. The Graz Cathedral is a stunningly reverberant space, and Heiller uses many dramatic pauses to highlight the acoustical environment. This recording also takes advantage of the ample acoustics of St. Paul's Cathedral in Pittsburgh. The beginning chordal ostinato, which evokes the tolling of church bells, frames the *Vorspiel* (Prelude) and the *Nachspiel* (Postlude). In contrast to the ostinato, an angular pedal solo enters on full organ, encompassing a battery of pedal reeds: 16', 8', and 4' (the 32' Posaune is reserved for the recap and coda in the third movement). The pedal solo with bell-like accompaniment is interrupted by a jazzy mixed-meter chordal section based on the octatonic scale. Ending quietly, the *Vorspiel* leads directly into the intonation of the cantor, when performed as part of the entire Vespers service.

The mercurial *Zwischenspiel* (Interlude) features a mélange of motives, tone colors, and textures, flowing freely like a written-out improvisation. The florid ornamentation takes its cues from the French classic tradition, while the harmonic language is closer to that of Messiaen or Frank Martin, whom Heiller cited as a major influence. Heiller demonstrates the many solo stops of the organ, specifying registration changes, sometimes every few bars. We sample a Cornet, Flute, Cromorne, pedal reeds 8' and 4', pedal flute 4', and also combinations of various stops. The collage effect of the movement is heightened by the score's change of tempi.

The restless nature of the *Zwischenspiel* finds relief in the strophic *Nachspiel*, marked "tranquilly – somewhat

freely." The *Nachspiel* is actually an organ transcription of Heiller's a cappella motet "Ave Jesu, lux serena," which he used earlier in the actual Vesper service. In this transcribed recapitulation of the motet, we hear the soprano line soloed on the 8' principal stop. Lush 9th and 13th chords abound. This primarily tertian language contrasts with the dissonant clusters so frequently encountered in the *Vorspiel* and final coda of the work. Heiller's biographer, Peter Planyavsky, describes the interlocking thirds of the layered chords here as referring to the sign of the cross, or a dualistic simultaneous "yes/no" that reflects Heiller's own personal struggles between the spiritual and earthly life. In the context of the slow tempo indicated, these rich color chords create a timeless mystical vision of eternity, reminiscent of the slow movements in Messiaen's *Quartet* for the end of time or *L'Ascension*. The coda's final eight bars feature jarring fff chord clusters. Was Heiller testing the wind supply of the new organ? The *Graz Kleine Zeitung* review gives no account of the audience reaction to this perplexing ending.

The Brutalist architecture of the 1960s and 70s seems well reflected in *Jubilatio* ("Rejoicing") of 1976. The work opens with massive howling blocks of sound offset by shifting pedal arpeggios. These soon morph into a syncopated double-pedal section which serves to destabilize the block chords of the manuals. A lean sprightly fugal section emerges, reminiscent of Heiller's *Gaudete*, an earlier work for soprano and organ. Now the rejoicing actually begins. Cascading and ascending manual arpeggios, which outline 7th and 9th chords in unconventional harmonic contexts, are answered by mischievous pedal arpeggios. A return of the opening theme is followed by a

brief coda in which polytonal chords sink into a final shout. Here the feet play simultaneously at the extreme ends of the pedal board. Those of us who were first taught to keep our heels together when practicing the organ must leave all of those fetters behind at this point! *Jubilatio* was commissioned for the 100th anniversary of Vienna's Doblinger-Herzmansky's publishing house. Peter Planyavsky performed the premiere in the Vienna's *Gesellschaft der Musikvereine* in 1976.

Thirty-three years after Heiller wrote the Partita "Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen" as a Christmas gift for Erna, he composed another prelude for her based on the same chorale *Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen* (December 1977). Heiller transforms the chorale melody into a highly ornamented soprano line, accompanied by lush, bluesy harmonies. The result sounds more like a nightclub jazz improvisation than a liturgical chorale prelude for the organ. We are left with a huge sense of loss that Heiller did not compose more pieces like this, because it is an anomaly in the organ repertoire and also because it is so beautiful.

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THE ORGAN

THE RUDOLPH VON BECKERATH ORGAN (1962)

ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL, PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

RESTORED (2009) BY TAYLOR AND BOODY

The organ chosen for this recording of mid-twentieth-century Austrian music is the 4-manual/66-stop mechanical-action Rudolph von Beckerath organ (1962) at St. Paul's Cathedral, Pittsburgh, PA. This is the first recording on this landmark mid-century instrument since its March 2009 restoration by Taylor and Boody. This organ is considered to be one of the most influential instruments in United States. It was one of the first large-scale mechanical action organs in North America to be modeled after classic North German concepts of organ building, known as the "Orgelbewegung." It is arguably the finest instrument built by Rudolph von Beckerath, who was one of Germany's leading builders of the twentieth century. Both Heiller and von Beckerath shared the ideals of the "Orgelbewegung." These instruments influenced performance practices and composition for the organ, as well as future organ design and construction.



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ORGAN REGISTRATIONS

In 2009, organ builders Taylor and Boody of Staunton, Virginia restored the 1962 vin Beckerath organ of St. Paul's Cathedral in Pittsburgh. They did the following work:

- Replaced pneumatic stop action with electric stop action
- Replaced seventeen collapsing 32' Principal pipes with new pipes
- Replaced five collapsing interior Principal 32' pipes
- Restored the console
- Strengthened the sides and back of the case
- Cleaned and repaired all interior pipes
- Polished and lacquered all facade pipes
- Added Great to Pedal coupler
- Installed multi-level solid state combination action

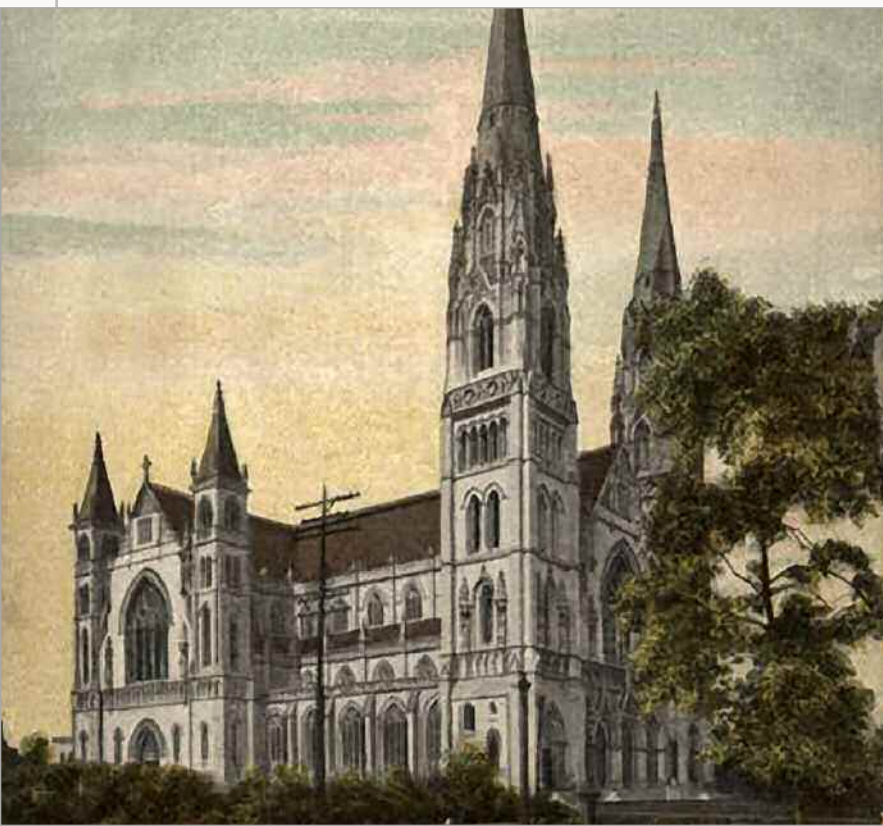


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GREAT

16'	Principal
8'	Principal
8'	Koppelgedackt
4'	Octave
2 2/3'	Quinte
2'	Octave
V	Mixture (1 1/3')
IV	Scharff (2/3')
16'	Trumpet
8'	Trumpet
4'	Trumpet

SWELL

16'	Quintadena
8'	Violflöte
8'	Flute
8'	Gemshorn
8'	Gemshornceleste
4'	Violflöte
4'	Nachthorn
2 2/3'	Nasat
2'	Blockflöte
V-VI	Cornet
VI	Mixture (1 1/3')
16'	Fagott
8'	Oboe
4'	Schalmei
8'	Trompette en chamade
4'	Clairon en chamade
	Tremulant

SOLO

8'	Gedackt
4'	Principal
4'	Rohrflöte
2 2/3'	Quintflöte
2'	Waldflöte
1 3/5'	Tierce
1 1/3'	Nasat
1'	Sifflöte
III	Cymbel (1/2')
8'	Vox Humana
4'	Musette
	Tremulant

RÜCKPOSITIV

8'	Principal
8'	Quintadena
8'	Rohrflöte
4'	Octave
4'	Blockflöte
2 2/3'	Nasat
2'	Octave
2'	Gemshorn
1 1/3'	Quinte
II	Sesquialtera
V	Scharff (1')
16'	Bärpfeife
8'	Cromorne

PEDAL

32'	Principal
16'	Principal
16'	Subbass
16'	Flute
8'	Octave
8'	Spielflöte
4'	Octave
4'	Rohrflöte
2'	Nachthorn
VI	Mixture (2')
III	Rauschpfeife (4', 2 2/3', 2')
32'	Posaune
16'	Fagott
16'	Posaune
8'	Trumpet
4'	Trumpet

COUPLERS:

SW/GT, SOLO/GT,
RP/GT, SW/PED, GT/PED

26 general combination pistons
6 divisional pistons
4 pedal division pistons

THE ARTIST

Mark Steinbach has performed solo recitals in Austria, Germany, Italy, and in major venues in Boston, New York, Washington, D.C., and San Francisco. A passionate advocate of new music for the organ, he regularly programs works by contemporary composers. He performed the U.S. premiere of Nico Muhly's "O Antiphon Preludes" at Brown University in 2011 and the world premiere of Dan Pinkham's "Odes" at the American Guild of Organists Regional Convention in Worcester, MA in 1999. He has performed at the International Organ Festival at the Oude Kerk in Amsterdam, the Bolzano, Storici Organi della Valsesia, and Picena International Organ Festivals in Italy and twice at National Conventions of The Organ Historical Society. He is also active as a master class presenter. Mr. Steinbach has been featured on National Public Radio's "All Things Considered," performing on a 1640's English cabinet organ in Wickford, Rhode Island. Mr. Steinbach is University Organist, Curator of Instruments, and Lecturer in Music at Brown University, where he teaches music theory in the Music Department and organ through the Applied Music Program. He also serves as Director of Music, Organist and Choirmaster of historic St. Paul's Church in Wickford, Rhode Island. Mr. Steinbach earned the Bachelor of Music degree from the University of Kansas as a student of James Higdon. Steinbach has focused research on Anton Heiller since 1984. As a Fulbright Scholar he studied works of Heiller at the Hochschule für Musik in Vienna with Peter Planyavsky. He earned the Master of Music and Doctor of Musical Arts degrees from The Eastman School of Music where he studied organ with David Craighead and harpsichord with Arthur Haas.

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Thanks to
Donald Fellows, organist, and the
staff of St. Paul's Cathedral, Pittsburgh, PA

**Recorded in St. Paul's Cathedral,
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania using the
Rudolph von Beckerath Organ
on June 14-17, 2009**

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