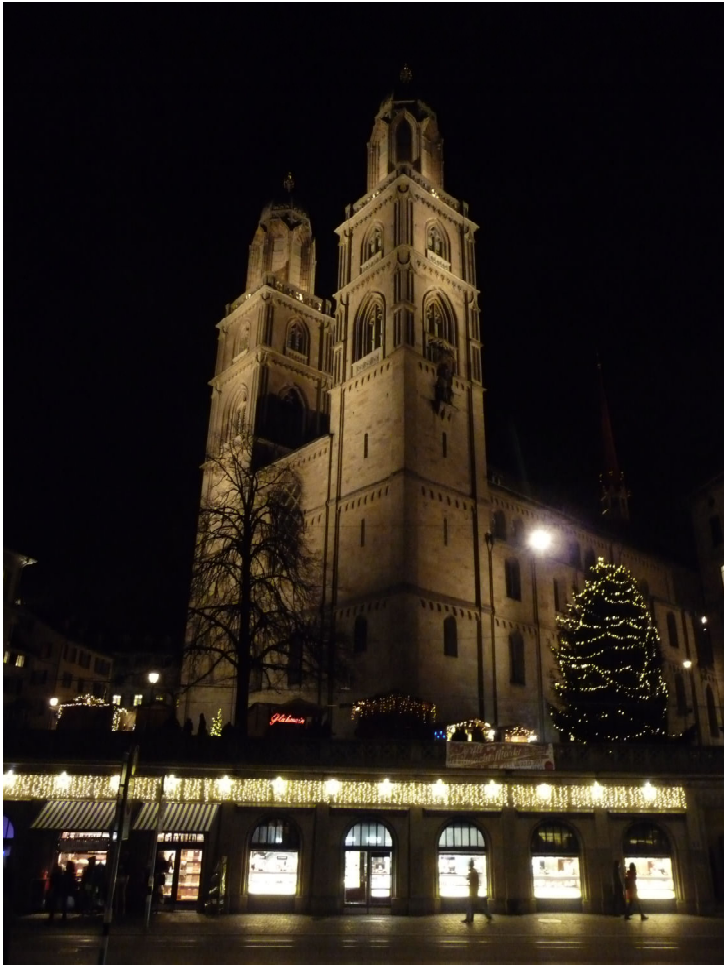


## The Grossmünster organ turns 60



In the 3rd century, Felix and Regula were members of an all-Christian Roman legion that was to be executed *en-masse* in southwest Switzerland. They fled with their servant Exuperantius and got as far as Zürich before being tried and executed in 286 AD. According to tradition, the governor plunged the three saints into boiling oil and forced them to drink molten lead. The trio still refused to renounce their faith and so were finally beheaded. Impressively, the martyrs still had enough energy to pick up their heads and climb to the top of a hill, where they dug their own graves and buried themselves.

This impressive feat is more

common than you might think - St. Denis in Paris and St. Miniatus in Florence also carried their heads to a hilltop resting place.

It was on this site that construction of the Grossmünster began in 1090, and most of it was completed by 1230. It was dedicated to the martyrs Felix, Regula, and Exuperantius, the patron saints of Zürich. From the 13th century, images of the saints carrying their heads were used in official seals of the city and on coins. They still appear on the seal of Zürich.

The Grossmünster was a monastery church, vying for precedence with the Fraumünster across the Limmat throughout the Middle Ages. On the saints' feast day (September 11), the relics of the three saints were carried in procession between the Grossmünster and the Fraumünster, and the two churches vied for possession of the relics. The remains of the martyrs made Zürich the most important pilgrimage site in the area. The relics are now divided between a church in Andermatt and the



new Church of St. Felix and Regula in Zürich.

The Grossmünster is now a Protestant church in Zürich, Switzerland. It is one of the four major churches in the city, the others being the Fraumünster, Predigerkirche (see *In The Pipeline*, February 2018) and St. Peterskirche. Its congregation forms part of the Evangelical Reformed Church of the Canton of Zürich. The core of the present building near the banks of the Limmat River was constructed on the site of a Carolingian church, which was, according to legend, originally commissioned by Charlemagne.



Huldrych Zwingli initiated the Swiss-German Reformation in Switzerland from his pastoral office at the Grossmünster, starting in 1520. Zwingli

won a series of debates presided over by the magistrate in 1523 which ultimately led local civil authorities to sanction the severance of the church from the Roman Catholic Church. He followed the view of Martin Luther, that anything the Bible did not explicitly mention should not be a part of religion. The reforms initiated by Zwingli and continued by his successor, Heinrich Bullinger, account for the plain interior of the church. The iconoclastic reformers removed the organ and religious statuary in 1524, accompanied by the removal of many of the religious practices of the Roman Catholic church. This church is one of the most important sites in the history of the reformation and the birthplace of the Swiss-German reformation. The theological college annexed to the monastery spawned what is now the University of Zürich.

The twin towers of the Grossmünster are regarded as perhaps the most recognized landmark in Zürich. Bollinger Sandstein (sandstone) was used for construction of the church, quarried from Bollingen near Rapperswil, 37km to the south east on Zürichsee. The two towers were first erected between 1487 and 1492 and originally had high wooden steeples. These structures were destroyed by fire in 1763, following which the present neo-Gothic tops were added, completed in 1787. The Karlsturm is one of the two Grossmünster towers: 187 stairs lead from the nave up to the tower vantage point, from where there is a bird's-eye view over the Zürich rooftops and lake as well as majestic alps on the horizon.



Architecturally, the church is considered Romanesque in style and thus a part of the first pan-European architectural trend since Imperial Roman architecture. In keeping with the Romanesque architectural style, Grossmünster offers a great carved portal featuring medieval columns with grotesques adorning the capitals. A Romanesque crypt dates to the 11th and 13th centuries.

The church now features modern stained-glass windows by Swiss artist Augusto Giacometti added in 1932. Ornate bronze doors in the north and south portals by Otto Münch were added in 1935 and 1950. The crowning glory of the church interior is the Metzler Orgelbau AG organ, built in 1960 in Dietikon, a northern district of Zürich. Five years later Metzler Orgelbau built a similarly sized organ for St. Pierre's Cathedral in Geneva, Switzerland.

The Metzler is the fourth organ in the Grossmünster. The first is thought to

have been built in the 14th century.

Documents from 1418 explain how the first known organist, Theodor Sebach, had to rub rat poison into the bellows. In 1505 the instrument was rebuilt – but the new organ didn't get much of an airing: in 1524 Zwingli banned anything that wasn't sanctioned by the bible, and pictures, altars, sculptures and even the organ were all removed.

Nothing was heard until 1876, when an organ was installed by Swiss builders Kuhn Orgelbau on which Saint-Saëns and Bruckner – among many others – played. After much tinkering on the Kuhn, it was decided that a fourth organ was needed. The Metzler organ was inaugurated on January 31, 1960.

The instrument has its beginnings in an 1876 organ by Johann Nepomuk Kuhn with 52 stops on three manuals and pedal. This instrument was given a complete renovation at the same time as new construction in the old casework by

Carl Theodor Kuhn in 1914 (73 sounding stops on three manuals and pedal).

Following further work by Kuhn, Metzler was asked to create a new organ in 1960. Some registers were brought



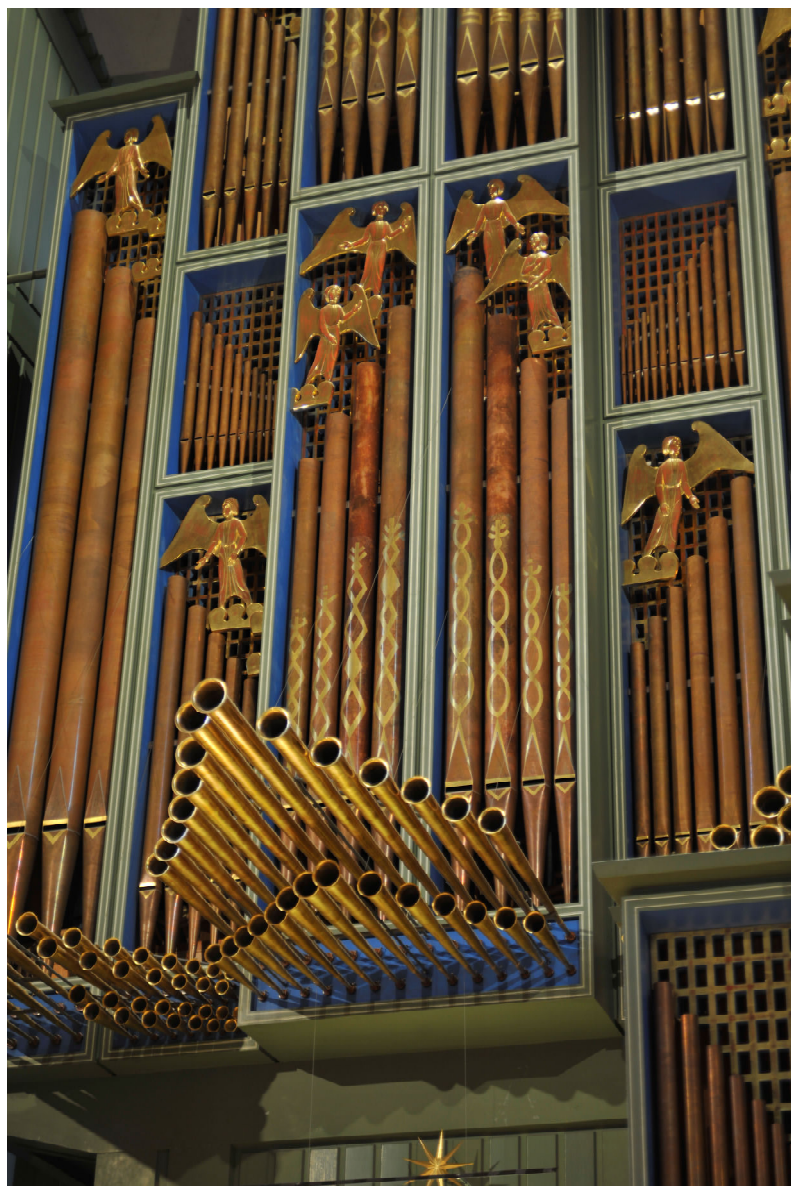
over from the previous organ.

The use of the partially ornamental copper pipes over the entire front is primarily of visual importance as colour contrast juxtaposed against the grey sandstone walls. In 1989 Metzler made some changes to the disposition:

- The original seventh in the Hauptwerk was replaced by the Terz and expanded (from G instead of from A).
- The Choralbass 2' +1' was changed to a Choralbass 2'.
- The original Sordun 16' was replaced by the Dulcian 16'.

In 1997 the old combination system was replaced by an electronic Setzer system with floppy discs. On this organ, between 1961 and 1964 the young recitalist and teacher Lionel Rogg recorded an impressive cycle of the complete Bach organ works, his first of three.

The organ has just celebrated its 60th birthday – young in organ terms, but in its day it changed the way the wind blew. It was quite literally the organ that went back to the future. The inauguration of the fourth instrument to grace Zurich's largest church was a significant event, but it was how the keys, valves and pipes were all connected that had everybody talking. The organ uses tracker action for the keys, electro-pneumatic registration and slider chests. Along with the expected manual couplers there is an electronic setter system.



“At the time it was definitely a special undertaking to build an organ of this size with a mechanical action system,” Andreas Jost, organist at the Grossmünster, said. “Before 1960, organ actions were usually electric or pneumatic. However, from the keys to the furthest valves, everything in this instrument happens mechanically.”

“To say it was a pioneering organ is a bit of an exaggeration. It wasn't as if the entire world came and said ‘wow, I've never heard a mechanical action organ before’ – but it was somewhat unusual for the era,” Jost said. “Also, builders again began housing the various



manuals in separate cases,” he said, pointing to the pipes for the pedals to the left and right, for the Great (the main manual) directly above the console and for the Swell (the upper manual) right at the top, all in their own chests. “This makes the polyphony much more noticeable; the sound is more transparent,” he said. “That’s another characteristic of this instrument.”



The Metzler organ has 67 registers (stops) – half as many as the largest in Switzerland in the Klosterkirche in Engelberg – but Jost says that’s enough. The Grossmünster organ is powerful, but not deafening. “Each register has its own character. You don’t need more. The charm and the excitement lie in the limits. It’s like being in a kitchen with every possible spice and not knowing how to mix them and ending up with a meal that doesn’t taste good at all,” he said. “With such a giant instrument it takes a lot of time and you have to know it really well to

be able to combine everything. You have to be creative and try things out.”

The organ sounds totally appropriate for the building when you hear it from the nave and works very well as a solo instrument or as accompaniment to choir or congregational hymn singing. I expected that in the gallery it would be overwhelming, but that was not the case.

Even standing next to the massive 32’ Principal pipes is more a feeling than a sound sensation. Perhaps the only hair-curler is the panoply of Spanish Trumpets, but, if you are playing at the console, that blast goes over your head and warms the

hearts of those below. The console, built in to the organ case, is very efficiently designed and a delight to use. The action is precise and not at all heavy to use, despite the very long tracker runs to distant parts of the instrument.



There are two other organs in the Grossmünster. In the Sacristy is a 1987 Kuhn Orgelbau two manual and pedal organ which has five stops, and in the Helferkapelle is a fully restored 1754 Looser organ of one manual, no pedal, and six stops. The restoration of this organ was by Kuhn Orgelbau.



Organist of the Grossmünster, Andreas Jost, was born in 1973. He studied organ with Rudolf Meyer (teaching certificate), Ludger Lohmann (concert and soloist diploma), David Sanger and Pater Theo Flury (improvisation). He successfully participated in various competitions. For example, he was awarded the first prize at the 52nd International Organ Interpretation Competition in Nuremberg and won the special prize of the Siemens Arts Program for the best interpretation of a commissioned work.

From 1998 to 2007 Andreas Jost was organist at the Reformed Church in Stäfa, where he initiated the organ concert series "Bach in autumn" and conducted the children's concerts. In 2007 he was appointed organist of the Grossmünster cathedral in Zurich. As artistic director he organizes the Grossmünster's annual international organ concerts. Since 2007 he also teaches Organ at the Zurich University of

the Arts. Numerous lectures round off his teaching activity. He is a regular performer in concerts in Switzerland and abroad and is regularly invited for broadcast recordings, such as productions by Radio DRS 2 and the Bayerische Rundfunk, for example. Andreas Jost, moreover, acts regularly as jury member and counselor for competitions and exams.

His broad repertoire spans works from the early 16th to the 21st centuries. In addition to the study of ancient works, he takes a big interest in the discovery of contemporaneous works and he also commissions new works. As soloist as well as chambermusician he performed numerous world premieres, among which are Thomas Daniel Schlee's "Amen. Halleluja" op. 57 (commissioned by the Siemens Arts Program for the 53th ION Nuremberg - Musica Sacra) and works by Isabel Mundry, Peter Wettstein and Madeleine Ruggli commissioned by the Musikpodium Zürich. On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the





Metzler-Organ of the Grossmünster in Zurich and with the generous financial support of the Zurich Presidial Department and the Steo-Foundation he was able to commission two new compositions which had their premiere in 2010.

As the organist of the Grossmünster, he organizes all church services, weddings, abdications and other church celebrations such as pausing, a joint event with the parish of Fraumünster, events in connection with the Polkefenstern or the Froscherbibel, musically. Together with the cantorate, he is responsible for planning the concert series in the Grossmünster. In addition, he organizes and supervises the annual international organ concerts, at which both he and the guest organists perform.

It is also important to him to demonstrate the colourful instrument of the Great Minster to interested groups, be it in the form of organ tours or concerts.

It was my special privilege to meet Andreas and to explore the amazing wonders of this great organ. I hope you enjoy my recounting of it.

*Bruce Duncan*

Photographs by Bruce Duncan and from the internet.  
Supporting information from the following sources:

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 Andreas Jost Biography

## Stoplist of the 1960 Metzler Orgelbau AG organ in Zürich: Großmünster

I Chorpositiv	II Hauptwerk		III Oberwerk		IV Schwellpositiv		Pédale		
Portunalflöte	8	Prinzipal	16	Stillgedeckt	16	Suavial	8	Prinzipalbass	32
Prinzipal	4	Prinzipal	8	Prinzipal	8	Copula	8	Praestant	16
Quintatön	4	Flauto	8	Rohrgedeckt	8	Rohrflöte	4	Holzprinzipal	16
Gemshorn	2	Gedeckt	8	Spitzgambe	8	Prinzipal	2	Subbass	16
Sedecima	1	Oktave	4	Unda maris	8	Spitzgedeckt	2	Oktavbass	8
Sesquialtera	II	Nachthorn	4	Oktave	4	Larigot	1 1/3	Gedacktpommer	8
Scharf III	1 1/3	Quinte	2 2/3	Querflöte	4	Terz	4/5	Oktave	4
Krummhorn	8	Oktave	2	Salizet	4	rep. 1 3/5	Rohrflöte	4	4
Musette	4	Flachflöte	2	Nasat	2 2/3	Glockenzimbel II	2/3	Choralbass	2
		Terz	1 3/5	Piccolo	2	Holzregal	16	Großsesquialtera III	
Tremulant		Cornett V	8	Cornet d'Echo	II	Vox humana	8		5 1/3
		Mixtur V	2	Plein Jeu V	2			Mixtur IV	2 2/3
		Spanische Trompete	16	Basson	16	Tremulant		Bombarde	16
		Spanische Trompete	8	Trompette harmonique				Dulzian	16
		Trompete	8		8			Trompete	8
				Oboe	8			Bärpfeife	8
				Clairon	4			Klarine	4
				Schweller				Schalmei	2

Four manuals  
All manuals C-g'''  
Pedal C-f'  
88 ranks  
66 registers

