Paul Manz

The only child of Otto Manz and Hulda (née Jeske) Manz, German-Russian immigrants who had come to America to make a better life for their family, Paul Otto Manz was born on May 10, 1919, in Cleveland, Ohio. At age five, Manz began piano lessons. Two years later, upon the advice of his first piano teacher, Emil Dinda, Manz began studying piano and organ with Henry J. Marlow at Trinity Lutheran Church in Cleveland. In order to study with Marlow, Manz had to quit school to work in a factory to earn enough money to have his younger brother, Herbert, and sister, Ruth, attend school. 

Paul Otto Manz, widely celebrated organist, dean of American church musicians, and composer of the internationally acclaimed motet *Een So, Lord Jesus*. Quickly came, died October 28 in St. Paul, Minnesota, at the age of ninety years.

Manz's life and career were filled with the honors and accolades that many performing musicians strive for yet seldom attain. With a lengthy list of performances at such venues as the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., with the National Symphony; Symphony Center in Chicago, with the Chicago Symphony; and Orchestra Hall in Minneapolis, with the Minnesota Orchestra, Manz was able to perform the works of major works for organ and orchestra—a feat that few organists can claim. His charisma at the console made him a favorite of such conductors as Leonard Shafkin, Charles-Duport, and Henry Charles Smith.

While his career as a soloist took him around the world to attend cathedrals and thrilling concert halls, his charisma as a musician and a servant of the church found its fullest expression in the action of leading people in congregational song. Through his work as an organist and composer, Manz reinvented the classic organ chorale of Buxtehude and Bach, giving it a new voice, which spoke clearly and unapologetically with a fresh American accent. His work in this genre led him to play thousands of hymn festivals around the world—playing that excited him to play thousands of hymn festivals around the world. His work in this genre led him to play thousands of hymn festivals around the world—playing that excited him to play thousands of hymn festivals around the world.

Paul Manz entered Concordia High School in River Forest, Illinois, eventually matriculating into their teacher training program. While a student at Concordia, he also began private organ studies at the American Conservatory in Chicago with the eminent American organist Edward Eigenschenk, a student of Bonnet and Vierne. Manz would go on to further study with the eminent Bach scholar Albert Riemenschneider at Baldwin-Wallace College in Berea, Ohio, and Edvard Arthur Kraft at Trinity Cathedral in Cleveland. Manz pursued formal graduate-level studies at the University of Minnesota, where he was a student of Arthur B. Jennings, and in 1956, he received a master’s degree in organ performance from Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois.

In 1956 Manz received a Fulbright grant for study with Flor Peeters at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Antwerp, Belgium. An extension of the Fulbright provided Manz with the opportunity to work with Helmut Walcha at the Dreikönigskirche in Fulda, Germany. Manz would subsequently return to Belgium for three more summers to study with Peeters. The bond between Peeters and Manz grew so close over the ensuing years that the Belgian government invited Manz to be the official United States representative in state ceremonies, including Flor Peeters's 90th birthday and his 80th year as titular organist of the Cathedral of St. Bavo in Mechelen, Belgium. At that time, Flor Peeters referred to his former student as “my spiritual son.”

In 1984, Manz married Ruth Mueller, a musician that was blessed with four children: David, who died at birth, Michael, who died unexpectedly in 2006; John, and Peter. Following the deaths of Ruth’s brother, Herbert Mueller, in 1961 and his wife Helene, in 1964, the Manzes took in their four orphaned children, Mary, Anne, Sara, and John, increasing their family number to nine. Through the course of their 65 years of marriage, Paul and Ruth shared an exceptionally close relationship until her death in July of 2009. Her influence on his work and career cannot be underestimated. 

Upon graduation from Concordia in 1941, Manz filled positions as teacher, principal, and musician with several parishes in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin and St. Paul, Minnesota. In 1949, Manz was offered a call to Mt. Olive Lutheran Church in Minneapolis, where he served as full-time director of Christian education and music, an affiliation that would last for 37 years. Over the course of his time at Mt. Olive, Manz’s job description would change several times as the congregation made every effort to nurture his gifts with the church-at-large. A man of many sought-after talents, Manz served on the faculties of the University of Minnesota and Macalester College in St. Paul before he accepted the 1987 call to serve as professor and chair of the Division of Fine Arts at Concordia College in St. Paul. Rather than lose him, Mt. Olive arranged for Paul’s duties to be pared down, allowing him to share his gifts at both institutions.

Ruth and Paul Manz

Paul Manz was born on May 10, 1919, in St. Paul, Minnesota, at the age of ninety years. 

The only child of Otto Manz and Hulda (née Jeske) Manz, German-Russian immigrants who had come to America to make a better life for their family, Paul Otto Manz was born on May 10, 1919, in Cleveland, Ohio. At age five, Manz began piano lessons. Two years later, upon the advice of his first piano teacher, Emil Dinda, Manz began studying piano and organ with Henry J. Marlow at Trinity Lutheran Church in Cleveland. In order to study with Marlow, Manz had to quit school to work in a factory to earn enough money to have his younger brother, Herbert, and sister, Ruth, attend school.

Paul Manz entered Concordia High School in River Forest, Illinois, eventually matriculating into their teacher training program. While a student at Concordia, he also began private organ studies at the American Conservatory in Chicago with the eminent American organist Edward Eigenschenk, a student of Bonnet and Vierne. Manz would go on to further study with the eminent Bach scholar Albert Riemenschneider at Baldwin-Wallace College in Berea, Ohio, and Edvard Arthur Kraft at Trinity Cathedral in Cleveland. Manz pursued formal graduate-level studies at the University of Minnesota...

Scott M. Hyslop
Paul Manz in 1986

Ingrassia Artist Management

Martin Setcheil
New Zealand

“Virtuoso of awesome capabilities”

Pavel Kohout
Czech Republic

Alexander Wasserman
USA

Plenist

Lucas Pollastrini
Italy

Fidelis Cathedral

Edward Broms
St. Paul's Cathedral, Boston

Scott Lamlein
USA

“Virtuoso Fair & Fire” (TAG)

Klaus A. Becker
USA

Pianist

DECEMBER, 2009

The Journey Was Chosen: Paul Manz in 1986

Manz would serve for many happy years as organist and choirmaster, among his numerous accomplishments during his tenure was his establishment of a solid program of music studies with a well-trained and distinguished faculty. His ultimate achievement at Concordia was the fulfillment of the dream that the Fine Arts Division of the school would have its own facility replete with rehearsal rooms, class space, and an auditorium complete with a concert pipe organ—designed by Manz (1974 Schlicker Hall)—as well as well-designed studios for the art department. Shortly after the realization of this dream, Manz would find himself caught in the whirlwind and cruel chaos that enveloped the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod at that time. His own convictions, coupled with deep personal connections to the fray, left Manz with little choice but to resign his position at Concordia. He returned to full-time parish service, this time as Cantor at Mt. Olive, with little hope but to resign his position at Concordia. He returned to full-time parish service, this time as Cantor at Mt. Olive, with a specific mandate to use his musical gifts in the service of the church catholic.

In 1983, after 37 years of service at Mt. Olive, Paul and Ruth Manz pulled up stakes and began a new chapter of ministry in Chicago, where Manz received a double call to serve as Christ Seminary-Seminar Professor of Church Music and Artist in Residence at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, and as Cantor at the Evangelical Lutheran Church of St. Luke. Manz retired from LSTC in September 1992, but this retirement was merely a change of direction that provided an opportunity for friends and colleagues to encourage him to share his wealth of knowledge through workshops and masterclasses throughout the country. The sharing was formalized with the creation of the Paul Manz Institute of Church Music, a nonprofit organization dedicated to sharing the legacy of his family, and ultimately through the music that he graced us with to stir our souls, to excite our imaginations, and to enable our prayer and proclamation, we hear Paul Manz say.

Thank you for the grace of singing with me across the years in good times and in bad, when our words have stuck in our throats and when our eyes have overflowed with joy. It has ever been a Song of Grace: ‘Love to the loveless shown that we might lovely be.’

I have just been the organist. Thank you for letting me play.

Scott M. Hoplog is the Director of Parish Ministries at St. Lawrence Lutheran Church in Franklin, Michigan. He holds the doctoral of musical arts degree in organ performance and sacred music from the University of Michigan, the master of church music degree from Concordia University, Chicago, and bachelor of music degree from the University of Wisconsin–River Falls. He has the privilege of studying with Paul Manz for three years in Chicago, and is the author of a biography on Paul Manz. The Journey Was Chosen, published by MorningStar Music Publishers.