

## Play It Again, Gaviman! . . . a recording review of outdoor mechanical music

*Drehorgelmusik*

Daniel H. Widmer, Drehorgelspieler

It is with no small amount of trepidation that I begin this effort to bring you reviews from time to time of Compact Disk recordings of small mechanical organ music. There are several reasons for this but the most daunting is the very limited library of American recordings that have been made to professional standards. Many such recordings have been made by various European organ grinders but they tend to suffer from a commonality of content; and, with few exceptions, are generally available only from the individual grinders at festivals they are attending.

I have set the following goals for my reviews of small mechanical organ music. First, the quality of the recording must be made to a high professional standard to justify its cost. Second, the recording should be unique in some sense as to the instrument being played, special content, music arrangement or commemorating a special event. Third, the recording must be reasonably easy to acquire by American

purchasers. This last goal is perhaps the most difficult to achieve given the relatively narrow market channel by which the recordings are available coupled with the concomitant differences in language, currency, postage and custom's regulations. So, with this in mind I have chosen *Drehorgelmusik* recorded by Daniel H. Widmer playing his 33-key Bruns Trumpetenorgel with three registers for my first review.



The unique feature of this recording is the instrument being played—a 33-key Bruns Trumpetenorgel which is a Bacigalupo replica. In many quarters, particularly Berlin, the roll-operated organs made by Bacigalupo are considered the "acme" of the organ builder's art. In recent years several builders have attempted to replicate the quality and sound of Bacigalupo organs. The most notable being the Hofbauer firm in Gottengen, the late Kurt Niemuth of Berlin and Rudolf Bruns. All of these builders paid strict attention to the techniques and attributes of Bacigalupo organs particularly in the area of pipe construction and voicing. Herr Bruns served for some time as a designer for Hofbauer; and, upon his retirement, for a short period, constructed a few Bacigalupo replicas consisting of 33-key, 43-Key and 45-Key organs.

Daniel Widmer and his wife Esther are seen quite often at European organ festivals. They are invariably together—he playing his 33er Bruns and she alternating with him playing her Ariston Zungendrehorgel. Residing in Basel, Switzerland, they attend festivals from Monte Carlo to Vienna and have a wide coterie of organ grinding friends. They both acquired their interest in mechanical organs while attending the 1985 Thun International Drehorgelfest. They began grinding with a Raffin 20/31 and now have seven instruments in their collection. In 1999, Daniel was invited to perform in Japan by a Japanese hotel chain subsidiary and spent some 37 days playing in a Swiss theme entertainment park at their expense.

The compact disk contains some 69 minutes of music consisting of 25 different pieces. Some of the pieces are unique to this recording but most are the same tunes often heard at European festivals played on other organs. The star of this show is clearly the instrument playing the pieces. The great care and attention of the builder to voicing the pipes is clearly evident. Particularly noticeable are the very pleasant mellow, almost muted, tones of the trumpet pipes in their support of the other melody and accompaniment ranks. Also noticeable is the greater use of the violin rank, which seems to be more prevalent with

European grinders than those of us in the United States. While a few of the arrangements are not particularly unique many are outstanding making full use of the organ's range, quality and character. This recording is a fine example of the music played and enjoyed at festivals in Europe and I recommend it for addition to your mechanical music collection.

The disk comes in the standard jewel case but unfortunately contains no information about Herr Widmer and his activities. He does have a very interesting web page which contains a great deal of information and many pictures of various events in which he and Esther participate. You can find his web page at [www.drehorgel-tanzbaer.ch](http://www.drehorgel-tanzbaer.ch) If you would like to purchase a copy of this recording contact me at [tommyg@media-net.net](mailto:tommyg@media-net.net). I have made arrangements with Herr Widmer to collect orders for shipment to me here in the United States, which I will distribute to you at my cost of \$17.00 per disk.

Tom Griffith



Daniel Widmer playing his 33-key Bruns Trumpetenorgel on location.

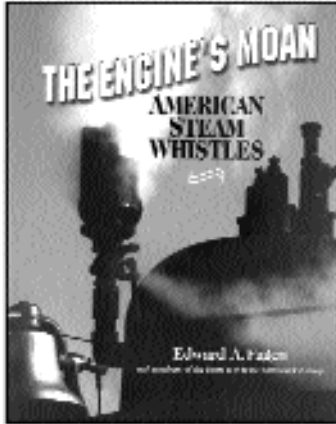
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