

Ignaz Blasius Bruder (1806 - 2006) and 200 years of Building Mechanical Organs

Wolfgang Brommer and Peter E. Scherle

Ignaz Blasius Bruder designed and built his first street organ in the year 1806, and as a consequence 200 years later (September 1, 2006) celebrations for this momentous occasion took place (Figure 1 & 3). Bruder said, that “he



Figure 1. An oil painting of Ignaz Blasius Bruder.

looked to the street organ for others to enjoy even though the concept of this type of mechanical instrument was not well known.” Ideas later changed, however, and many organs were subsequently bought by discerning customers. Each instrument was different with an array of figurines performing different functions. Ignaz Blasius Bruder organs are characterized by action figures

on top; the highest quality pipes resulting in the best sound; the best mechanics of construction all with the highest quality in cases and details. Experts consider these organs to be the

Stradivarius of street organs. Amazingly, there are still six known original Ignaz Blasius Bruder organs surviving. These are located in Paris (France), Bruchsal (Germany), Seewen (Switzerland), and New York (USA). In Waldkirch (Germany) there are still two of these valuable and extremely rare musical instruments available for all to see (Figure 2).

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In order to promote the character and quality of the Waldkirch musical products, the Waldkirch Organfoundation (<http://www.waldkircher-orgelstiftung.de>), under the direction of Helmut Hummel and Wolfgang Brommer); the congenial Elztalmuseum (located in Waldkirch, Germany); and Dr. Wolfram Metzger and the Deutschen Musikautomatenmuseum (DMM or German Musical Automatic Museum) in Bruchsal, Germany, believed that it was time to promote the four paths of the original organ build-



Figure 2. Six Ignaz Blasius Bruder figure organs: the organ at the upper left was made in 1829 and in the DMM museum in Bruchsal; the organ in the upper center was made in 1839, and is housed in the Metropolitan Museum in New York; the organ in the upper right was made in 1828, and can be found in Paris; the bottom left was made in 1836, and is in the Musikautomaten Museum, Seewen, 1836; the lower, center organ is in the Josef E. Reich collection in Waldkirch; and the organ on the lower right was made in 1848, and is in the Orgelstiftung in Waldkirch.



Figure 3. An 1883 photo taken in Waldkirch. Titled (translation) “Hunting Club,” it reveals Ignaz Blasius Bruder sitting in the center (in white circle) of the group’s activity.

ing firms in Waldkirch. Gebrüder Bruder, Ignaz Bruder Söhne, William Bruder Söhne and A. Ruth and Sohn were the original founders of this historical area in the building of musical instruments. As a consequence, they are the reason for the creation of magical sounds and music arrangements for the instruments of Waldkirch.

This created the opportunity to celebrate 200 years of the building of mechanical organs in Waldkirch and gave rise to a whole year dedicated to “Ignaz Blasius Bruder (1806) and 200 years of building mechanical organs.”

It also reminds us that builders of mechanical organs still exist in the town of Waldkirch. Heinz Jäger (grandson of the Geb..Weber factory in Waldkirch) and Wolfgang Brommer, both Master Organ builders (<http://www.jaegerbrommer.de>), follow the tradition to make new pipe organs and do restoration work. Other companies also work in Waldkirch including Wolfram Stützle (<http://www.stuetzle.de/>) and Stefan Fleck (<http://fleck-orgelbau.de/>).

The Street of Waldkirch Organs

Another idea to promote the organ builders of Waldkirch was to incorporate nine museums into “The Street of Waldkirch organs.” (Figure 4). These now display instruments from Waldkirch. These include the Musikautomaten Museum in Seewen, Switzerland; the organ hall of the Waldkircher Orgelstiftung and the Waldkircher Elztalmuseum, both in Waldkirch; the Schwarzwaldmuseum (Black Forest Museum) in Triberg; The Deutsche Musikautomatenmuseum (German Automatic Music Museum) in the Schloss Bruchsal; the Technik-Museum (Technical Museum) in Speyer; Siegfrieds Mechanisches Musikkabinett (Mechanical Music Cabinet) in Ruedesheim; the Mechanischen Musikautomaten (Mechanical Music Automaton) in Königslutter; and the Nationaal Museum van Speelklok tot Pierement (National Museum from Music Box



Figure 4. The Street of Waldkirch Organs.

The possibility of letting the rest of the world know of this fantastic year of the 200th anniversary of Ignaz Blasius Bruder (1780 to 1845) was too good an opportunity to resist, especially as so many other organ builders have used the town of Waldkirch as their base. The highlights of the Waldkircher Organ Festivals were originally in the Waldkircher Elztalmuseum. A major ceremony in the Schloss Bruchsal was hosted by DMM director Wolfram Metzger and was based on Wolfgang Brommer’s idea of promoting the organ builders of Waldkirch.



Figure 5. Professor Herman Brommer’s book on design of organ pipes.

to Street Organ) of the Netherlands in Utrecht. All show examples of instruments from the Waldkirch organ marque. Visit: <http://www.sdwo.de> for more information.

Professor Herman Brommer

For two and a half years, Professor Herman Brommer, father of Wolfgang Brommer, has researched and dedicated himself to the detailed work of Waldkirch organ builders, and especially the style of Ignaz Blasius Bruder. This information is now available worldwide in the form of a 278 page book, *Handbuch der Orgelbaukunst-von Ignaz Blasius Bruder*. Over 120 copies have sold and the book is now out of print (Figure 5).

“It was a stroke of luck,” writes the chairman of the organ foundation, Helmut Hummel, in the forward in Brommer’s book. Professor Brommer, also a church organ expert, had explained that he wanted to continue this great work “for everyone to appreciate.”

Experts consider these organs [made by Ignaz Blasius Bruder] to be the Stradivarius of street organs.

Professor Brommer’s book confirms the fact that Ignaz Blasius Bruder had no teacher to learn his trade from much as did neither the maker of mechanical flute clocks (Spieluhrenmacher) or Matthias Martin (1760-1825), Waldkirch’s first church organ builder. These men were certainly pioneers in their field.



Figure 6. The Ignaz Blasius Bruder Anniversary Organ.

Anniversary Organ

In addition, two dozen of the limited edition “Ignaz Blasius Bruder Anniversary Organ” were produced by the Jäger & Brommer firm (Figure 6).

Celebration 2006

Events were held throughout 2006 in celebration of 200th year of organ building. The Elztalmuseum, the Orgelstiftung, the Jäger & Brommer workshop, St. Margarethen Church, the Paul Fleck workshop, a local hotel (Suggenbad), all of Waldkirch as well as Waldkirch’s marketplace as well as Bruchsal’s DMM shared in hosting meetings and festivities. One of the highlights included a speech by Dr. Evelyn Flögel (Director of the Elztalmuseum) on “Ignaz Blasius Bruder and his Work.” On September 13th, 2006, the transcription of the Ignaz Blasius Bruder’s handwritten 278-page book was presented to the public by the Waldkirch Organ Foundation in the organ hall, Waldkirch.

For more events of 2006 check the website: <http://www.ignaz-bruder-jahr-2006.de> (in German).

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Figure 7. Authored by Herbert Jütteman, and published in 2005 by the Waldkirch Organ Foundation, the book details the complete story of the hand organs made in Waldkirch with mechanical figures.

Wolfgang Brommer has built and restored organs since 1990. He is the co-founder of the “Waldkircher Organ Foundation.” Peter Scherle has given several talks about street organs and is performs as a “Moritatensänger.”

The Waldkircher music instrument builder—a success history

Ignaz Blasius Bruder (born January 31, 1780 - died March 13, 1845) moved his organ workshop from Simionswald to Waldkirch in 1834. Waldkirch has continued, up until the present time, the well-known tradition of building organs. Ignaz had married Maria Siffert and they had 15 children, of which five were sons that learned the art of building organs. The sons, Andreas (1807 - 1859), Xaver (1808 - 1888), William (1819 - 1892), Carl (1820 - ?) and Ignaz (1825 - 1891) manufactured organs in their own workshops. Even the grandchildren of Ignaz Blasius Bruder had continued this tradition. The last Bruder workshop was dissolved in 1941.

In addition to the Bruder firms the workshop of the Ruth family added to the prestige of Waldkirch as being known world-wide as the center of organ organ building. Andreas Ruth (1817 - 1888) opened his workshop in 1842. Andreas was a Waldkirch native and his son, Adolf (1845 - 1907) and grandson, Adolf II (1878 - 1938), continued the organ building factory until the Adolf's death in 1938.

Joining the domestic organ builders were the French Companies. In 1896 the firm of Orgelbauanstalt A. Gavioli (Paris) opened its factory in Waldkirch. Richard Bruder was director of that firm (until their dissolution in 1908). He also influenced another French company, Limonaire Freres, to come to Waldkirch. After WWI this Paris firm closed it's doors. With economically difficult times, and the onset of WWII, the organ manufacturing business in Waldkirch dwindled. The firm of Carl Frei and Son began, however, in 1945/46 and operated an organ workshop for many years. Today, the firms of Heinz Jäger and Wolfgang Brommer, Wolfram Stützle and Stefan Fleck continue this tradition.

Waldkirch strengthened its hold as the center of organ architecture with the church organ builders, Mathias Martin (beginning in 1799) and Anton Kiene, as well as the world famous Orchestrion Company of Gebruder Weber.

None of the old "masters" could imagine at the time that the interest and demand for Waldkirch-made organs would continue to exist. The name Waldkirch will continue as the name of the outstanding city for future generations of organ manufacturers.



Figure Organs by Bruder Descendants in the Waldkircher Orgelstiftung



- Left. An 1855 figure organ made by Gebr. Bruder. It has five figures and features Napoleon in a casket.
- Center. An Bruder organ made in 1858. It has 22 notes and is known as the "Dumpling Eater" (for the character in the center).
- Right. A much later organ (1875) with eight figures and 22 notes made by Wilhelm Bruder.

Photo credits: Ron Bopp