



Figure 10. The author hand-cranking his Violinopan at the Waldkirch OrgelFest, June, 2008. Photo: Ron Bopp.

and a source of joy for Martin, who is even more pleased by his client's satisfaction. He has never wanted to turn it into a commercial business. But although he regrets that today's public often considers the barrel organ to be old-fashioned, he still takes part in various festivals of mechanical music.

Martin does believe that the large number of organs produced during the past 15 years, often as a serial product and playing the same repertoire, has made these festivals less attractive and less original. There's no doubt that the market has been flooded by plain and cheap instruments! Although he doesn't want to predict anything about the future of these meetings, he has come to the conclusion that both elderly people and young couples with their children remain fascinated by this music of an other era.

A Final Word

Ah ... I hear Johann Strauss *Voices of Spring*, but of course, it's a VIOLINOPAN! And one would think they are hearing a Bacigalupo.

The musical and old-time passion dedicated by Martin is enormous; he dedicated it to his friends, but also to his very special music of the barrel organ, to the passers-by in the street who stop for a moment in front of the organ grinder, and to any human in this world.

There he is: a great, contemporary, many-sided artist, who only works for the happiness of us all and whom I was lucky enough to discover. In all modesty, I simply couldn't resist to introduce him to you.

All photos by the author except where noted.

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Paul Fricker has had a 15-year interest in hand-cranked organs. His first organ was a 20-note Raffin, and his collection has expanded to seven hand organs. His Violinopan has four cylinders pinned with French, German and Italian tunes. Besides rallies he plays classical music on his Violinopan organ in church where the normally empty seats are filled with listeners.

*Giovanni Bacigalupo** 1889 - 1978

Mark Brayne

East Berlin, July 23, Reuter—for anyone who remembers the organ grinders once so common in Europe's capitals, with their gaily-decorated instruments and monkeys begging for alms from passers-by, an era has come

to an end. In East Berlin, Giovanni Bacigalupo has died, the last of one of the continent's greatest dynasties of barrel organ builders and a determined Italian who more than any other kept alive a tradition almost squeezed out

of existence by the development of recorded music.

He died earlier this month [July 10, 1978—*Ed*] aged 88, and was buried in a catholic cemetery not far from the central Berlin workshop

* A Reuter report (German press agency) printed just two weeks after Bacigalupo's death in a notice and tribute to Giovanni Bacigalupo in the German journal, *Musikhistorische Gesellschaft*, #1, 1978

where he was born in 1889. Organ grinders from east and west, and friends from the world's remaining barrel organ factory in the West German town of Hannover were at the graveside to bid him farewell.

For the last 30 years of his life, "Baci" as we was affectionately known to the Berliners, operated his private business with the encouragement, if not financial support, of the communist authorities who came to power here after World War II—and remained private, and an Italian citizen, until the end. According to his son, Giovanni, a doctor in West Berlin, his father and a staff of up to ten kept producing barrel organs and the music for them until 1973. But, failing health and creeping blindness forced him to close down the workshop last year. "The authorities never tried to restrict his activities in any way," said the younger Bacigalupo. "It's obvious they did well from the sale of his instruments in the west for hard currency, but otherwise his was like any business of its kind in London, Paris or anywhere else."

Possibly more than in any other European city, a Berlin street scene earlier this century would have been unthinkable without an organ grinder somewhere in the picture. And, more likely than not, his instrument would have been built by a Bacigalupo.

"The name means so much to my generation," reminisced a 65-year-old East Berlin lady who had come to the funeral after reading the obituary in the newspapers. "Organ grinders used to be everywhere in Berlin's back yards when I was young, with all the children dancing. And even if you were penniless, you would try to give the musician at least a coin."

The Bacigalupo dynasty was founded by Giovanni's father, an

Italian miller's son from Modena who came to seek his fortune in Germany, setting up a workshop in Berlin in 1875 after learning the barrel organ trade in France and England. Giovanni, as his daughter Carmen described him [as] the much spoiled "Benjamin" of the family, was born the youngest of seven children. He quickly showed that he was easily the most talented musically. He studied music and composition, but left his father's firm aged just 20 to set up on



Der Orgelbaumeister, Giovanni Bacigalupo, born July 23, 1889 in Berlin and died July 10, 1978, also in Berlin.

his own in 1909. By the 1920s he had over 200 employees building and repairing instruments; and providing music for more than 400 organ grinders plying [applying] their trade in the old German capital.

His influence was so great, according to West German music historian, Peter Schuhknecht, that even famous composers like Kurt Weill heeded his advice if he thought their music was too complex. "Weill and (playwright) Bertolt Brecht came to him with the *Mac the Knife* song from their "Three Penny Opera," said Schuhknecht, who drove here for the funeral from Hannover, where he runs a barrel organ museum in his spare time. "Baci played the tune on his

piano and pronounced there was no way he could transfer such a complicated song to the barrel organ, so he rearranged it for them, and they accepted it - the one we know today."

World War II caused heavy damage to the Bacigalupo workshops on Berlin's Schoenhauser Allee—one belong to Giovanni at 74a and another run by brother Luigi at number 78. Already aged nearly 60, Giovanni doggedly put his business back on its feet. His Brother's never took off again, and today faded paint signs direct visitors to an "Orgelfabrik" which turns out to be a burned-out and bullet-scarred building deep in a second courtyard. Next door, Giovanni's workshop, the signs still fresh, is now barred with a huge iron padlock.

A museum has two of his earlier works, a small barrel organ and a large "orchestri-on" said to produce the sound of a 28-man chamber orchestra, which it starts up twice a week for visitors.

His death robs East Germany and Berlin of their last organ builder, and leaves just two organ grinders in the east of the city employed part-time at parties, in restaurants and for private occasions. In West Berlin Schuhknecht says there are still about ten grinders left, most using organs built either [by] Bacigalupo himself or constructed according to his principles by the Hofbauer factory in Hannover.

"I know there are other people who build barrel organs," said "Orgelpaule" Schmitz from West Berlin, one of the city's best-known street figures who came over to the east for the funeral. "But none is as good and none of their instruments have the quality that Giovanni could produce."