

## *A New Small Organ Builder A New Small Organ—The “Vienna Woods”*

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As I inevitably age I find my small belly organs become heavier and heavier. Having crossed 70 several years ago even my Raffin “Mini” which weighs only 26.5 pounds has become too heavy to carry for other than short periods of time. Then, last summer (June 2005) at the Waldkirch, Germany festival I found the answer to my problems. The answer came in the form of a “Vienna Woods” belly organ constructed by “Der Orgelbau in Wienerwald,” located in Pressbaum, Austria<sup>1</sup> that weighs only 12 pounds (**Figure 1**). The organ was being played by Margriet Goedhart and because of its size, obvious quality and pleasant, bright, musical sound immediately caught the attention of people passing by. Indeed there was almost always a group surrounding Margriet, and the organ, asking questions about the organ and its builder. For those not familiar with Margriet, she is a citizen of the Netherlands and one of the best known organ grinders in Europe. She regularly appears with the well known “Scarlatti Trio” on their concert tours throughout Europe; most notably in Monaco, Salsburg, Leipzig and Vienna.



Figure 1. The “Vienna Woods,” a new organ manufactured by Der Orgelbau in Wienerwald.

The “Vienna Woods” organ is the direct result of a collaborative effort between Margriet and Christian Wittmann (**Figure 2**), an original Orgelbau associate. Christian had previously constructed a 16 note organ as small as 10 inches by 6.5 inches by 10.5 inches during his apprenticeship as an organ builder. The problem with this original organ was the 16 note scale is very uncommon so the design was changed to accommodate the standard 20-note roll format. The result is the smallest commercially built crank organ which is available today. The organ builder, Der Orgelbau in Wienerwald, was founded in 2002 by master organ builder Robert Niemecek. Christian was one of the first employees of the firm which now has four

organ builders on its staff. The firm’s principal effort is building and restoring church organs and now has several years of such work booked for completion. In addition to the belly organ they also construct “Pipe Ariston Organs” that play commonly available cardboard disks. The Orgelbau has a website which may be found at [www.derorgel.com](http://www.derorgel.com) at which pages displaying both the belly and Ariston organs along with pages of information about the firm, the workshop and employees. There is also a page with links to MP3 and WMA music files so you can hear music produced by their products.



Figure 2. Christian Whittman playing a 20-note “Vienna Woods” organ.

The Bauschorgel I purchased is a 20-note organ measuring 12" by 12.75" by 9.6" and weighs 12 pounds. The pipework consists of European cedar pipes (sides and back) with maple fronts, and the case is made of European cherry.<sup>2</sup> While the pipework construction is generally common across all the 20-note organs, cases are also available made of walnut and mahogany. The 20-note scale of the organ begins and ends one note higher than the ubiquitous Raffin 20er organs but is the same as those constructed by Jaeger & Brommer of Waldkirch, Germany. This is only of interest if your intention is to play a synchronous duet with a Raffin 20er<sup>3</sup>1er; or, another organ of the same scale compass as a Raffin. Unique to this organ is the fact it utilizes double, compound bellows which give an air supply unsurpassed by other small organs (**Figure 3**). A problem with sufficient air supply to the pipes is common to small

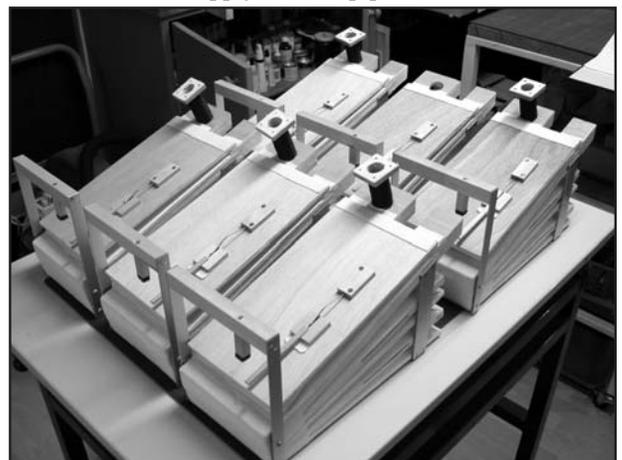


Figure 3. Six double-compound bellow units ready to be inserted into the small 20-note organ cases.

organs but the “Vienna Woods,” because of its bellows arrangement, has absolutely no problem in this regard. It plays songs other small 20ers just can’t handle regardless of arrangement complexity that require playing runs of six or more notes simultaneously.

The price of the organ is Euro 3,250.00, which converts to



Figure 4. An interior view of the roll frame and pressure bar.

approximately US \$4,095.00 at 1.26 US\$/Euro. The organ comes with one Raffin roll which is chosen by the buyer. There is only one accessory made for the organ, a fitted case which may be seen on the aforementioned webpages and costs approximately US \$204.00. The workmanship of the case is of the same excellent quality as the organ. Express shipping to your door by Federal Express, and insurance, adds an additional \$384.00 to the cost. Additionally, Uncle Sam may add a customs duty on the value of the organ and case if imported together. The organ may be imported as a “Music Box” which carries a U.S. Customs Duty of 3.2 percent which adds an additional \$174.00 to the total cost for the organ and case. All of this ends up a total of US \$4,857.00. This cost is extremely competitive with small organs made in Germany and elsewhere throughout Europe. Delivery from the time I placed my order to arrival at my door was three months.

Needless to say, before making such an investment I contacted other owners, in Europe and England, to see if their opinion relative to the organ was equivalent to the one I had formed in Waldkirch. All responded with such exclamations as: ‘a



Figure 5. Two “Vienna Woods” organs completed—the organ on the left with maple-faced pipes and the one on the right with walnut facing.

wonderful instrument;” “the best organ of my collection;” and, “I cancelled my order for an instrument from another builder and purchased this one after hearing it and will recommend it to anyone without qualification.”

I recommend the Vienna Woods organ to anyone without



Figure 6. A Vienna Woods organ fitted with double side chest, handy for roll storage.

reservation. The quality of construction is superb, the sound brilliant and its regulation and repetition is without peer. Also, miracle of miracles, it was delivered on time. I own three other crank organs, purchased in Germany, and this one is far superior in every quality aspect to each of those; and many others I have seen at festivals in Germany and Switzerland. Communication with the builder concerning the purchase, construction and delivery of the organ was easy and without flaw. All communications were completed via e-mail (info.drehorgel.at) with Christian Wittmann whose command of English leaves most of us far behind.

We have a winner here and it deserves your consideration when contemplating the purchase of a new organ. I, along with all the other owners I contacted before making my purchase, recommend this instrument with out reservation or qualification.



Figure 7. The organ in its fitted case.

#### Notes

1. Pressbaum is a small community located in the Vienna Woods (Wienerwald) just to the east of Vienna.
2. Fifteen pipes are visible on the front of the organ with the remaining five pipes arranged under the visible pipes within the case.

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