

Crank Organ Digest—A Series

20-Note Music Arranger Roundup

Gordie Davidson

I was looking at my suitcases of 20-note music rolls and asked myself, “How did I ever acquire all these boxes?” The answer is complex, but essentially my collection has grown through many years of trades, purchases and anecdotal fact sharing with other grinders—thus the idea for this article. My intent is to (1) share some of the tips I have learned over the past 15 years, and (2) provide a roundup of current arrangers and vendors. All though focused on the 20-note scale, grinders of other scales and media should find this roundup useful (Figure 1).



Figure 1. The author with numerous rolls from many makers.

We all know our organ-grinding hobby is limited in scope and probably not a growth industry. A handful of arrangers do in-fact make a living, but most arrange for the musical challenge, supplemental income, and fun of it.

This summary is more informational than opinion/editorial based. I will give my general thoughts on the quality of arrangements of the rolls and their construction. Most readers have probably developed their own opinions on quality. A truism: all arrangements cannot please all grinders all the time—at \$100+ per roll, listen before you buy. I recommend you not buy any rolls based on titles alone or any perceived reputation of the arranger. That said, this is what I recommend the ideal arranger and/or vendor should provide in services:

- A dedicated, interactive web site
- The capability to order and purchase online with PayPal
- The ability to hear complete, individual tunes online
- The ability to order and sequence tunes on rolls; punch to order
- The ability to commission special arrangements

As of this writing, I am not aware of any one source that meets all the above criteria, but a few come close. None of these services is particularly difficult or expensive to accomplish—the technology has existed for years. The only requirements are initiative and the will to do so. Time is never an issue, everyone has it. A few vendors still rely upon the legacy system of conducting business through a US representative or middleman. This works, but is probably not necessary in the 21st century worldwide market.

Methodology—I developed a list of arrangers and vendors based upon my experience and input from several trusted grinders. All were contacted via email to determine their current status in the marketplace. The response was very good with only one negative contact. If I missed someone, please let me or the editor know for a footnote in future editions. Finally, language is not an issue in communicating with anyone as English works across the board.



Figure 2. Orgelbau Raffin’s web site (www.raffin.de).

Orgelbau Raffin (Germany)

www.raffin.de (Figure 2)

Rafael Engeser, engeser@raffin.de

Primarily an organ manufacturer in southern Bavaria, Orgelbau Raffin arranges and sells standard rolls. They do not custom sequence tunes or punch to order. An extensive listing with some sound files is available on the company web site. Rolls can be purchased directly or through US reseller, Hal O’Rourke. Hal’s web sites are www.halor.com and www.raffinorgans.com; email hal@halor.com (Figure 3). There is no price difference between buying directly or through reseller Hal O’Rourke. Hal, in many instances, can

save you money by coordinating workarounds for shipping and currency exchange. Hal is also the US representative for Raffin instruments.



Figure 3. Hal O’Roark’s website (www.halor.com)

Melvyn Wright (United Kingdom)
www.buskerorgan.com (Figure 4)
Melvyn Wright, music@melvynwright.com

Melvyn Wright, the Dean of arrangers, sells rolls directly or preferably through his US reseller, Hal O’Rourke (see above). A complete tune listing is available online. Melvyn has CDs available of all his tunes for a modest cost. He will also email you a sound file upon direct request. Melvyn’s arrangements are legendary; he is one of the few arrangers who will punch and sequence to order. You can mix and match tunes to the limits of roll capacity—no forced buying of unknown or undesired tunes with this arranger. Finally, Melvyn will custom punch your MIDI files and arrange upon request.



Figure 4. Melvyn Wright’s web site (www.buskerorgan.com)

Ian Alderman (United Kingdom)
No web site provided
Ian Alderman, ian@classicstreetorganmusic.fsnet.co.uk

Ian arranges and punches standard rolls. He does not custom sequence or punch to order. Ian arranges all genres,

but specializes in the classics. Sound files are currently not available. He sells exclusively through his US representative, Hal O’Rourke. You can find a complete listing of Ian’s rolls on Hal’s web site.

Note: many of Ian’s rolls are available through Orgelbau Steuber (see below).



Figure 5. Orgelbau Steuber (www.berliner-drehorgel.de)

Orgelbau Steuber (Germany)
www.berliner-drehorgel.de (Figure 5)
Axel Steuber, berliner@drehorgel.de

Orgelbau Steuber is a Berlin based organ manufacturer who offers an extensive selection of 20-note and 31-note instruments. They also sell directly an extensive selection of rolls from third party arrangers. I recommend you visit their web site to view the listing and communicate directly with Axel Steuber to identify your favorite arranger (Ian Alderman, Edi Hofmann, etc). Steuber does not custom arrange or punch to order. There are a few sound files online, primarily to hear a particular organ model.

Jaeger & Brommer (Germany)
www.jaegerbrommer.de (Figure 6)
Wolfgang Brommer, info@waldkircher-orgelbau.de

Jaeger & Brommer manufacturer organs in Germany’s Black Forest region. They also arrange and sell rolls direct-



Figure 6. Jaeger & Brommer’s web site (www.jaegerbrommer.de).

ly to consumers. They will punch to order the tunes you select for sequencing. They will also custom arrange where feasible. They do have a few online sound files available of their arrangements and more by email request.

Jaeger & Brommer manufacturer an extensive selection of fine crank organs (20-note through 45-note). For organ sales, contact their US representative, Ron Bopp, in Bradenton, Florida.

Alan Pell (United Kingdom)
www.alanpell.com (Figure 7)
Alan Pell, alan@alanpell.com

Alan Pell is both a talented arranger and organ builder. His popular 20-note buskers can be seen and heard all over the US. I previously owned one of his 45-note trumpet organs for years along with dozens of his superb arrangements. His focus has been on the production of chip media in conjunction with Melvyn Wright. Alan recently added the superb arrangements of Hiddo van Os to his slate of available tunes. I have never seen or heard a 20-note roll punched by Alan, but he tells me he is ready to

sequence and punch to order. Perhaps I'll be the first to purchase a roll. As of this writing, Alan does not provide music files on his web site, but can provide individual files via email.. Potential buyers should contact Alan directly.



Figure 7. Alan Pells web site (www.alanpell.com).

Christian Wittmann (Austria)
www.drehorgelmusik.net (Figure 8)
Christian Wittmann, christian.wittmann@tele2.at

Christian Wittmann is a bright young arranger and co-builder with Robert Niemeczek of the spectacular 20-note Bauchorgel. Their factory, der orgelbau im Wienerwald, www.drehorgel.at, is located in Pressbaum, a suburb of Vienna. I have visited their factory and personally toured Christian's studio. He is attempting to navigate Austrian and EU bureaucracies in order



Figure 8. Christian Wittmann's web site. (www.drehorgelmusik.net)

to become an officially sanctioned online business. A few of us 20-note grinders have his rolls and are absolutely pleased. He will eventually arrange for several scales, sequence and punch to order, sell directly, and provide online music files. I recommend you correspond directly and continue to monitor Christian's web site for future developments.

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Hiddo van Os (Netherlands)
www.hvmusic-books.nl (Figure 9)
Hiddo van Os, info@hvmusic-books.nl

Hiddo van Os is another bright arranger located in Holland. I came to know his superb arrangements through Ed Gaida. Ed punched 20-note rolls a few years back, but has since stopped. Actually, that is Hiddo's Achilles heel—no punching capability. His rolls are currently available from Le Turlutain in France (see below). You can also buy chip-based files of Hiddo's arrangements from Alan Pell - perhaps punch to order rolls in the near future (see above).

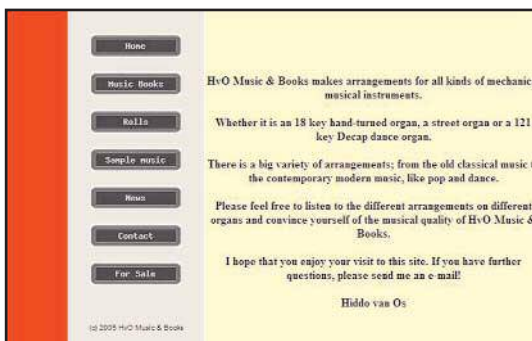


Figure 9. The Hiddo van Os web site (www.hvmusic-books.nl).

Hiddo has some music files posted on his web site and others are available via email. Again I recommend you contact Hiddo directly for coordination details.

Harald Mueller (Germany)
www.haraldmueller.de (Figure 10)
Harald Mueller, harald.m.mueller@bigfoot.com



Figure 10. Harald Mueller's web site. www.haraldmueller.de.

I have several of Harald's rolls purchased directly from him—they are superb. He will punch to order and sell direct. This is a hobby for Harald, so patience is required and worth any potential wait. His site features music files of

Of interest is that Hiddo will sell you MIDI files of his arrangements for punching by third parties.

public domain tunes. He will email you others upon request. Harald will custom arrange for most scales. I recommend you correspond directly with him.



Figure 11. The web site of Le Turlutain (www.leturlutain.free.fr).

Le Turlutain (France)
 www.leturlutain.free.fr (Figure 11)
 Gerard Dabonot, leturlutain@wanadoo.fr

This is the only 20-note site I'm aware of in France. I have purchased some of the Hiddo van Os arrangements from Le Turlutain. Sound files are currently not available online nor do they punch to order. Le Turlutain does offer a superb collection of French tunes. Navigating the web site is tricky, but worth it once you find the listing. Roll quality is superb and I recommend you contact Gerard Dabonot directly.

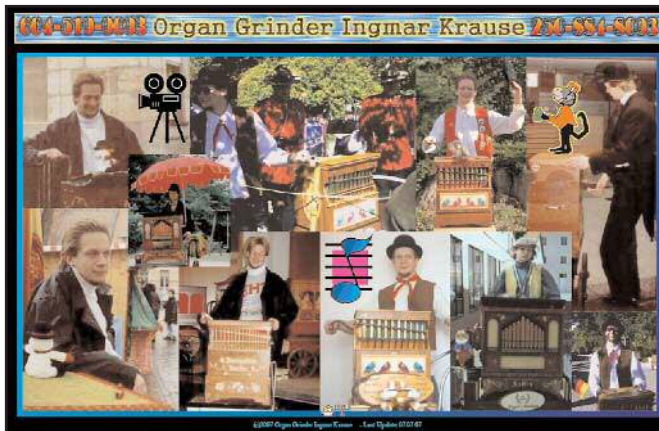


Figure 12. Ingmar Krause's web site (www.vilm.ca).

Ingmar Krause (Canada)
 www.vilm.ca (Figure 12)
 Ingmar Krause, organ@vilm.ca

Ingmar Krause is a Canadian based arranger of international origin. I acquired several of his arrangements during my visit to Christian Wittmann. Ingmar arranged Paul Desmond's *Take Five* for the 20-noter in the 5/4 time signature. He also arranged *Yakity Sax*—look out Boots

Randolph! Thanks to Ingmar for taking on those challenges. Music files exist in some cases but I recommend you correspond directly for all requirements to include pricing, music files, sequencing, etc.

Adrian Oswalt (Germany)
 www.papermusic.de (Figure 13)
 www.adrianoswalt.com
 Adrian Oswalt, papermusic@t-online.de

Adrian Oswalt is one of Germany's consummate arrangers, that is, really good at what he does. You can find his list of classic and contemporary tunes online. He does punch to order, therefore pricing is so many Euros per meter. Adrian currently does not post online music files for his arrangements, however he will send files by email request. I recommend direct coordination with Adrian.



Figure 13. Adrian Oswalt's web site (www.papermusic.de).

Thomas Sterk (Netherlands)
 www.thomas-sterk.nl
 Thomas Sterk, Thomas@thomas-sterk.nl

Thomas Sterk is another bright, young arranger from Holland. He does not punch to order or provide online music files. You can purchase directly from him via email. Take a look at his online tune listing.

Final Thoughts

Legacy arrangers and vendors—there are a few names out there many readers may recognize. Ed Gaida, USA, previously punched and sold his Excelsior branded rolls with arrangements by Hiddo van Os. Ed no longer punches. Wayne Holton, USA, has previously arranged for the 31-note, 45-note and larger scales but he does not arrange for the 20-note scale. Thomas Meijer, Netherlands, arranges for large-scale instruments, but not for the 20-note scale.

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... continued from page 29.

Stephen Simpson, United Kingdom, Happy Cow Music, previously arranged and punched for the 20-note scale, but is no longer participating. Finally, Edi Hofmann, Germany was the arranger I was unable to contact. His arrangements remain available through other vendors as listed.

There you have it, not quite an all-inclusive roundup of 20-note arrangers and vendors. Do not hesitate to establish

an email repoire with any of them. As of this writing (November 2008), currency exchange rates are quite favorable for US buyers. Finally. please call or email me if you would like to hear an arrangement played on the Raffin 20/78. If I have the tune or roll I'll crank it to assist in your purchase decision. I suspect most grinders would do the same upon request. Thanks for reading this, and stay in tune!

Gordie Davidson is a retired army engineer officer currently working as a defense contractor at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. His interest in mechanical music began in 1981 with his assignment to the Berlin Brigade. He has performed professionally in and around the Greater Kansas City Area since 1995. He and his wife Sue, reside in Lansing, Kansas. His web sites can be found at www.streetorgangrinder.com and www.gordiedavidson.com. For email feedback and correspondence, please use gordiedavidson@gmail.com.

A Note from the Membership Chairman

The status of the COAA Membership is as follows:

- * We started 2008 with 428 members and ended with 463 members (we gained 35 new members in 2008).
- * We had 34* members (7.3%) that did not renew. Therefore we will start 2009 with 429 members.
- * Bottom line: the COAA membership increased by 1 member from 2008 to 2009.

New members are crucial to the life of the organization. As a current member, you can help gain new members by talking up the benefits of COAA.

To help you with this effort, COAA will run an end-of-the-season **Half Price Special**. Join after December 1st for \$15 (half price) and receive a six-month membership and the last two journals (January & April) of the year plus the Rally Edition. This special is limited to new memberships; it is not for renewals.

Death and poor health accounted for about 25% of nonrenewals. Financial hardship accounted for about 15% of the nonrenewals. "No longer collecting Band Organs" accounts for about 15% of the nonrenewals. The remaining chose not to renew for reasons that are not known.

Provenance of the Ames 70-key Decap Dutch Street Organ (pictured on the right, page 33)

One of the most emotional moments during my first visit to the United States in 1993 was seeing the Decap Dutch 70-key organ in the collection of Mike and Marilyn Ames in Solana Beach, California. This was because it was one of the first organs I saw in my early life in the Netherlands. It is a pleasure to tell the story of this organ to all my friends, in America and elsewhere, who are interested in the history of old European instruments.

In 1925, Piet Timmermans, who operated a street organ rental business in Rotterdam, became the sole representative of the Decap Brothers, organ builders in Antwerp, Belgium. Now everyone who wanted to buy a Decap organ had to go to the Timmermans and so did Mr. F.G. van Leeuwen, carousel owner of Haarlem, Holland, who wanted a new organ for his ride. The organ was delivered in 1928 and was named *Decap en Co*. After some time the son of Mr. van Leeuwen, named Henk, took over the business and painted his own name on the organ.

In 1948, Henk van Leeuwen bought a new ride called a swing mill, and the organ was prepared to play with this ride. It was rebuilt by the famous firm of G. Perlee and a bourdon register stop was added to the organ. This register was made by Perlee's half-brother, Karel Struys, who also made the extraordinary bourdon stop for *The Arab*, the world-famous street organ of the Perlee Company. The swing mill was a magnificent ride painted with jazz celebrities such as Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, and Gene Krupa. To fit with this ride, the organ was painted with a Negro conductor and a saxophone and guitar. This is how I remember the *van Leeuwen* when I first saw it in my hometown of Haarlem during the Fair for the birthday of our queen.

Henk van Leeuwen was a fine gentleman who always wore a nice suit, tie and hat. He never touched a piece of his ride—for that he employed a staff of workers. After many years, he sold the swing mill with the organ to Mr. Hoefnagels, another showman from Helmond, Holland. Hoefnagels also came to the Haarlem Fair, but with a ride called a Cake-walk, which had moving stairs and bridges and so on. The organ was also repainted again to match up with paintings of Elvis Presley, Paul Anka, Cliff Richard and Brigitte Bardot which were all over the ride.

After many years the organ was not used any more and was stored in a warehouse owned by the Hoefnagels family.

One day in 1975, while living in the town of Breda, Netherlands, my friend, Andreis Neleman, asked me to come over to his place because he was expecting a phone call from a dealer who wanted to offer him an organ. The dealer would play it through the phone and I had to tell Neleman which organ it was. From the first notes my answer was "This is the Decap of Henk van Leeuwen."