

50 years of the Barrel Organ Company, Raffin *A look back at the Jubilee Weekend*

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The year 2010 is a very special one for the barrel organ company of Raffin in Überlingen, Germany because the company celebrates its 50th anniversary. All friends of barrel organs were invited to come together for a jubilee weekend at the end of April.



Josef Raffin playing his *Jubilee* organ while surrounded by friends and family.

Many visitors came from Germany, Great Britain, France, Slovenia, Austria and from Switzerland to fill the festively-decorated factory with joy. Every visitor received a jubilee medallion that each wore proudly.

Josef Raffin welcomed the party and described with amusing, exciting and moving words, the history of his company. He also introduced all of his employees that have been loyal to the company, many for several decades. A special “thank you” went to his wife and his daughters that have been supporting him for all these years. He also thanked his friends of barrel organs and clients that he was able to share countless joyful and extraordinary moments with. Then he revealed his *Jubilee* organ (which received great applause). It is an accordion organ with several registers and 31 tone intervals.

Afterwards, everyone was invited to eat something from the delicious lunch buffet. In the afternoon, some of

the guests serenaded Josef Raffin with barrel organs, accordions, an alphorn and a singing saw. Others surprised him with a poem about the history of the barrel organ and the development of the company.

During the two days, music from the barrel organs and animated voices from almost 200 visitors per day filled the rooms. Several songs were sung and because of the favorable weather, some were able to eat lunch outside as well as drinking a glass of wine while having a nice conversation. A lot of new contacts were established and many interesting facts and stories about barrel organs were exchanged.

One visitor described the open day as the “day of open hearts.” Everyone would agree that it was two wonderful days filled with sunshine, warmth, harmony and enthusiasm for a mutual hobby: the barrel organ and its music.

A Capsule History of Orgelbau Raffin

Josef Raffin, born on May 24, 1932 in Ueberlingen on Lake Constance, learned everything there was to know about the occupation of Organ Builder. Following his master training in Ludwigsburg and having successfully completed his master examination in Stuttgart, Josef Raffin set up his own business on January 2, 1960.

In the beginning of the 70s, he was given the task of restoring a barrel organ, and this provided him with the motivation to develop a barrel organ himself. This resulted in the 20 Series-Player Organ, still loved today, which comprised the first production line with 13 organs in 1977.

Meanwhile, this program has grown: From the portable music box with 31 pipes up to large concert organs with trumpets which can accommodate up to 124 pipes, barrel organ admirers will find everything the heart desires. The high-quality hand-made Raffin barrel organs are distributed throughout 20 countries in the world. In recognition of his achievement, Josef Raffin was awarded the “Oscar Europe” in 1988 in a celebratory ceremony in Rome.

Josef Raffin has focused much of his attention in the last few years on the musical arrangements, which are primarily distinguished by his extraordinary musical fantasy. The result is that there are meanwhile in the range of 170 different music rolls produced in-house for both organ types (R20 & R31).

In 1997, the home-owned business was converted into a corporation. Josef Raffin, along with his two sons-in-law, Wolfgang Kaupp and Rafael Engeser, manage the business. While Josef Raffin focuses mainly on new developments, the 2nd generation is responsible for the technical and commercial areas.

There are also the two Raffin’s daughters Gudrun and Friedlinde who are actively involved. Gudrun Kaupp has contributed her experience in a positive way in the tape-production for years and Friedlinde Engeser has devoted herself to the music arrangements since 2003.