

Later Bacigalupo-Berlin Paper Roll Organs and the “Olympia” Legend

Fred Dahlinger, Jr. © 2009

The onset of World War I interrupted show organ construction in Germany. The hiatus endured until about 1920, at which time reduced operations were reinitiated. The market for most types of mechanical music handled by the firm was lessened by several factors, including inflation and changing musical tastes. In Berlin, the Bacigalupo shop continued the construction of small barrel organs and the requisite pinning and re-pinning of cylinders. The firm also undertook the repair of pneumatic organs and supplied paper books that were produced internally, or more likely, sourced from other shops. The G. Bacigalupo ad in the 1925/1926 Paul de Wit Welt-adressbuch indicates both cylinder and roll playing systems were sold.¹

Neu! Neu!

Noten Orgel.

Jedes Musikstück spielt bei diesen Instrumenten
vollständig aus.



Diese Orgeln mit Papiernoten sind dringend zu empfehlen, da sie ausserordentlich
haltbar sind. Eine Abnutzung der Noten ist hierbei gänzlich ausgeschlossen.
Bei Neubestellung der Noten genügt die Angabe der Nummer.

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Figure 1. Giovanni Bacigalupo and his partner Lino Gattorna introduced three initial models of roll-operated hand organs about 1925.

Peter Georg Schuhknecht collection.

The loss or abandonment of Luigi’s patented 1890s roll system, presumably via the 1904 sale of the Bacigalupo business to Emil Asmus, makes the mid-1920s re-introduction of rolls in Bacigalupo organs an interesting turn of events. In conjunction with these efforts, it should be noted that Bacigalupo Söhne produced 88-note piano rolls in the same decade. Siegfried Wendel indicated the operation was initiated at Schönhauser Allee 71a after the war. As early as 1922, rolls were manufactured under the Bacigalupo name at Schivelbeiner Strasse 21, Berlin N113. Luigi’s youngest brother, Giovanni “Hannes” Bacigalupo, was later the proprietor of the Excelsior Notenrollenfabrik at Finnländische Strasse 113, Berlin N 13. Whether other craftsmen such as Lino Gio Batta Gattorna (1882-c1944) were involved with these ventures is unknown, but it seems probable given his technical expertise.

Preise zu Seite 10.

No. 34.	41 Tonstufen, 13 Clarinetten, 16 Piccolos, Geigenpfeifen, grosser Bass, halbchromatisch, inkl. 2 Musikrollen	Mark 350,—
	Weitere Noten, Meter	0,75
No. 35.	41 Tonstufen, doppelte Geigenpfeifen, also grösseres Format vollere Musik wie obere Nummer inkl. 2 Musikrollen	650,—
	Weitere Noten, Meter	0,75
No. 36.	52 Tonstufen, 15 Clarinetten, 18 Piccolos, 3 fach doppeltes Register Geigenpfeifen, starke Bassmusik, chromatisch, inkl. 3 Musikrollen	850,—
	Weitere Noten, Meter	1,—

Jede Oper oder Ouverture und Potpourri kann zu dieser No. 36 angefertigt werden.
Alle Instrumente können auf Wunsch mit Schlagzeug eingerichtet werden.

Preis nach Uebereinkunft.



Figure 2. Bacigalupo and Gattorna would probably not believe the hundreds of similar roll-operated street machines that would be constructed for hobby enthusiasts in the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

Peter Georg Schuhknecht collection.

By 1925, “Hannes” Bacigalupo, who had been in partnership with relative and craftsman Gattorna since about 1908, introduced three new Noten Orgel designs.² These were conventional hand organs of 41 and 52-hole scales that played by narrow, perforated paper rolls, instead of the usual pinned cylinders. **Figures 1 & 2** A novel variation of

Gavioli's "pressure box" concept of 1910-1911 was the mechanism that operated the devices. The entire roll system was placed inside an air-tight enclosure, under pressure, holes in the roll permitting the entry of pressurized chamber air to work the valves.

Few of these original roll-operated Bacigalupo hand organs survive. The first to be made, or claimed as such, was offered for sale in 1971. It was labeled for Bacigalupo Söhne and was a trumpet organ. Curt Baum, a close friend of Giovanni "Hannes" Bacigalupo, also identified it as the first roll-player. He dated the fabrication of the instrument to 1910, which seems about a decade and a half too early. It remained in the possession of organ grinder August Albert of Schliesen through 1939. The instrument ended up in Hamburg, likely in Baum's possession, where it was recorded for a long-playing phonograph record.³ **Figure 3**



Figure 3. This Bacigalupo Söhne hand organ, last known to be in the possession of Curt Baum, was reputedly the first of the pressure box style hand organs built in the 1920s.

A variety of Bacigalupo roll scales are reported in later literature, recordings and sales documents: 38; 41; 42; 45; 52; and 53 hole. All of the instruments known to the author bear the Schönhauser Allee 74a, Berlin N 58 address, which was occupied first in 1910, but some are labeled G. Bacigalupo while others are Bacigalupo Söhne. There are several possible explanations for this identity confusion. At least one 42-key Eduard Hilger cylinder organ was converted to the Bacigalupo rolls, but the published date given for the change, 1920, appears to be about five years too early.⁴ Bacigalupo also modified their own cylinder organs into roll players, a vintage 1919 machine also being heard on a Curt Baum LP recording.

The circa 1911 connection between Berlin and Waldkirch was revived by the mid-1920s, a benefit to both communities. At the same time as the new Noten Orgel models were introduced, Bacigalupo also offered to sell 52

and 106-keyless, roll-operated fair organs. These were surely Gebrüder Bruder devices, as evidenced by surviving Model 107, roll-playing Bruder instruments with the G. Bacigalupo name on them. The 106 was also a scale associated solely with that particular Bruder firm, as well as previously with Cocchi, Bacigalupo & Graffigna before 1905. In conjunction with the Bacigalupo shop work with roll-operated organs, Lino Gattorna was granted a patent for a roll system improvement, DE499903 on January 11, 1928, published May 22, 1930.

The Bacigalupo catalogue issued in the mid-1920s provided no images of a specific 52 or a 106, the only representation being a recycled engraving of the King of All Organs, the façade that now exists as the front of Erich Grund's Model 38 Ruth. There is no documentation for the existence of a mammoth 106-hole scale device. Nothing as immense as that was built so late for the German fairgrounds.



Figure 4. This Gebrüder Bruder roll player has a 100-hole tracker bar, intended to serve on different makes of organ by means of rolls incorporating the requisite scale. Author's photograph.

Yet, it must be noted that a 100-hole Gebrüder Bruder-style roll player from the 1920s or 1930s does survive in the collections of the Waldkircher Orgelstiftung. **Figure 4** Based on observations by Stefan Fleck and Andrew Pilmer, it is thought to have been a "universal" roll-player mechanism, intended for use with different scales, including both German and French, punched onto the same width of paper roll. It was able to handle the 96-keyless Ruth as well as the 98-key Marengi, the largest scales in common service. The

concept facilitated standardization of roll manufacture while enabling the original scale of the device to be retained, thereby avoiding the truncation of musical capability prevalent in typical American roll conversions of European organs.⁵ Unfortunately, the decline in fair organs occurred before the universal roll arrangement made substantial inroads via the conversion of book organs.

There is an undated photograph depicting “Hannes” Bacigalupo, as an older man, installing a roll in a player system attached to the side of a vintage Cocchi, Bacigalupo & Graffigna organ.⁶ The façade of the instrument matches the one seen in a 1929 photograph, a No. 64, 71-key device, as presented in a 1903 CB&G catalogue.⁷ It was an elegant, 1890s-era cylinder organ modified to play a roll scale for which music was readily available, the Model 107 Gebrüder Bruder.

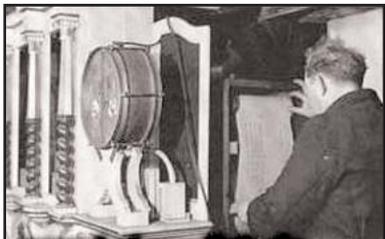


Figure 5. Giovanni “Hannes” Bacigalupo is shown adjusting a Gebr. Bruder Model 107 roll in a player system attached to a Cocchi, Bacigalupo & Graffigna organ.

Image courtesy Internationale Drehorgelfreunde Berlin e. V.

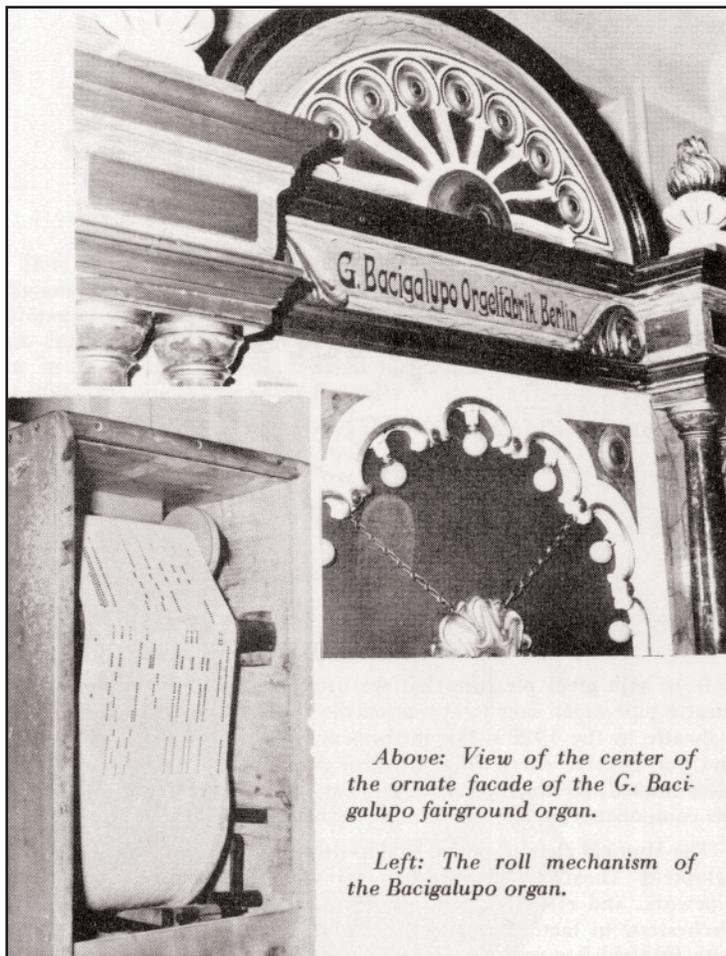
The mechanism is clearly identical to other Bruder roll player devices. **Figure 5** To what degree the Bacigalupo shop may have modified other vintage organs of their own or other manufacture to Gebrüder Bruder rolls is unknown.

An inaccurate legend relating to “Bacigalupo” roll-operated organs was composed at some time in the past and then committed to paper by 1969. In that year, German collector Curt Baum issued his LP recording *Drehorgel Souvenirs, Zeitlose Melodien*, Vol. II. The sleeve notes declare that a 52-keyless roll-operated Bacigalupo organ heard on the recording was played at the 1936 Berlin Olympics, the façade of the instrument specially carved for the event. To some, the front design must have suggested the 1791-built Brandenburg Gate and Olympic torch activity. How Baum came to issue this story can only be speculated upon.

This “Olympia legend” provided a suitable story line for a similar Bacigalupo organ offered for sale in 1974 by American International Galleries. It bore the same façade as the Baum recording instrument, having six columns spaced across the width and torch pots at the top. **Figure 6** The alleged association was fueled by the identification found on the façade: “G. Bacigalupo Orgelfabrik Berlin.” The accompanying description declared that it was “one of three or four special Olympics Model instruments made in 1935 and 1936.”⁸

The half dozen or more instruments that are periodically assigned the “Olympia” accolade, including those on the Baum LP and sold by AIG or are actually roll-playing Gebrüder Bruder devices. These are Waldkirch fabricated

devices; not Berlin built instruments. They were examples of the 52-keyless organs advertised for sale by Bacigalupo that were fabricated in the Black Forest. The earliest dates from about 1927, newly constructed, or modified to play rolls nearly a decade before the Berlin event. The original artist’s sketch for the façade survives in the collections of the Elztalmuseum in Waldkirch with the Gebrüder Bruder name upon it. **Figure 7**



Above: View of the center of the ornate façade of the G. Bacigalupo fairground organ.

Left: The roll mechanism of the Bacigalupo organ.

Figure 6. The legend of the Bacigalupo “Olympia” organ may be based in history or may have originated with a fanciful description in a 1974 sales description. This clip is from the American International Galleries catalogue No. 7. Author’s collection.

Was there any actual truth in the “Olympia legend”? One Olympia organ was reportedly rebuilt by the G. Bacigalupo shop for placement in front of the Olympic stadium in 1936.⁹ Whether the placement part of the story involving the purpose-built structure known in Germany as the “Olympia-Stadion” is accurate or not we’ve been unable to determine; no photograph has been found that confirms the presence of the instrument. In summary, Gebrüder Bruder manufactured the “Olympia” 52-keyless roll-playing organ as early as 1927 and the only affiliation with the 1936 Olympics may be an unconfirmed appearance at the Olympia Stadion following preparation by G. Bacigalupo.



Figure 7. The original sketch for the so-called “Olympia” façade carries the name Gebrüder Bruder, but no date. Several such instruments can be dated to 1927. Elztalmuseum, Waldkirch.

Another kernel of truth can be found in a flashback publication of the Gesellschaft für Selbstspielende Musikinstrumenten, 1975 “Kinder wie die Zeit vergeht . . .!” 2000. It includes a photograph of a Model 107 Gebrüder Bruder organ with a façade similar to the reputed Olympia device. The image, generated by 1968 hobbyist activity, is labeled “Bacigalupo Olympia Orgel.” German organ man Willi Holl added a glockenspiel to the device. Painted on the façade were the trademark five interlocking rings of the Olympic Federation. Accompanying dialogue indicates that the instrument was prepared for a member of the Kennedy family in the United States. The author believes that it was associated with the Special Olympics that were organized by the late Eunice Kennedy Shriver in 1968. This activity may also have played into the legend of the “Olympia” Bruder. The 1968 instrument may have played into the 1969 LP issuance, which in turn fueled the 1974 catalogue description and numerous subsequent portrayals of a Bacigalupo “Olympia” organ.

As a postscript, it should be noted that Giovanni Bacigalupo composed a tune titled “Olympia” or “Olympia March,” in conjunction with the 1972 Olympics at Munich. Curt Baum dated it specifically to July 25, 1972.¹⁰

The German implementation of roll-playing devices, and Waldkirch factory-installed conversions from books to rolls in the 1920s and 1930s has received little coverage to date. Fred will be addressing the topic in a future COAA article exploring the history of Tom Billy’s exceptional Ruth organ.

Notes:

1. *Het Pierement*, XLIII, 4, page 164.
2. Piotr Walczak. www.drehorgelinfo.de, relying upon the work of the late Klaus Krug, identifies Gattorna as a co-owner of the Bacigalupo operation.
3. *Catalog of Offerings by G. W. MacKinnon*, Spring 1971, page 61, lot F-159; sleeve notes, *Drehorgel Souvenirs, Zeitlose Melodien*, Volume II, issued by Curt Baum, the instrument being number 2 on the cover. The issue was not dated, but it was covered in *Het Pierement*, XVI, 2, July 1969, page 12.
4. Heinrich Weiss-Stauffacher with Rudolf Bruhin, *The Marvellous World of Music Machines*, (1976), page 162.
5. Durward Center informed the author in a June 18, 2009 e-mail that M. Welte & Sons implemented something akin to a “universal roll” perhaps about circa 1919. It was a 100-hole roll format with eight to the inch spacing that could be installed on the full range of Welte’s cottage and concert orchestrions, as well as military band and piano orchestrion devices. The practice was noted in a letter sent on May 5, 1922 by Welte’s A. C. Terwilliger to the Zaharakos Brothers of Columbus, Indiana. Of interest is Terwilliger’s use of the wording “100-hole scale” to describe the innovation. It was surely coincidence that the Bruder and Welte systems both contained 100 holes.
6. The image was once posted on www.drehorgelinfo.de.
7. Willy Römer, *Leierkästen in Berlin 1912-1932*, (1983), page 12.
8. American International Galleries Inc., *Automatic Musical Instruments Issue No. 7*, (1976), pages 95-96
9. Letter from Bill Lindwall to the author dated September 14, 1987.
10. *Das Mechanische Musikinstrumente*, 12, page 21; sleeve notes, *Drehorgel-Souvenirs, Zeitlose Melodien*, Vol. 9.



Mid-Winter meeting (Tampa, FL) organs: L-R, Wurlitzer 150 (Sciotino/Beckett); Bursens (Darlak); and Mortier dance organ (Leis)