

The DELEIKA® Drehorgelbau

Carlo Klemm

My name is Carlo Klemm, and I am a new barrel organ owner and grinder. I have also the privilege of being the sales partner/agent for DELEIKA® Drehorgelbau in both Canada and the USA. Being the “new” kid on the block, allow me to introduce you to the DELEIKA®.

Let’s start with a bit of historical information. The DELEIKA® barrel organ may be new in North America, but it has recently celebrated 30 years of success and popularity in Germany (**Figure 1**).



Figure 1. Announcing the 30th anniversary celebration with trumpet and a hearty mug.

Gerhard Fischer was born in 1939 in Stuttgart, Germany and grew up to be a mechanic by trade. In April of 1981, in his home town of Crailsheim, he started learning all about barrel organs from Carl Frei of Waldkirch. The early organs were aptly named Fischer Organs. Since then thousands of people have been happy to relive the old time memories in their living rooms, on the streets and elsewhere.

In 1986, just a scant five years after starting, the company was moved to Züttlingen and now fifteen people were employed in the manufacture of the barrel organs. During this time, Gerhard took complete control over everything there was to do with the manufacturing. It was also in 1986 that a new company name was chosen and all organs since then have been called “DELEIKA® Organs (DE-LEI-KA which stands for Deutscher-Leier-Kasten) **Figure 2**.



Figure 2. The Deleika logo.

Times were good but not great in Züttlingen and after being flooded out by the river “Jagst” twice, it was time to find higher and drier ground. Waldeck is a little village on the outskirts of Dinkelsbühl (**Figure 3**) in Bavaria, and it became the new home of DELEIKA® Drehorgelbau and remains as such to this day. The larger facilities have also allowed for a museum of technical instruments such as Weber, Hupfeld and other machines, as well as more space for the workshop.

Dinkelsbühl itself is a significant and historical city in Germany, mainly due to the fact that it is really old, dating back to its earliest memories in the 8th century. In 1826 Bavarian King Ludwig issued a decree prohibiting the destruction of the town walls and towers, thereby contributing to the preservation of the old town.

Dinkelsbühl survived the two world wars without damage. The perfectly preserved, historic old town is one of Europe’s most important cultural monuments. The town has been home to the head office of the “Romantic Road” since 1985. Dinkelsbühl became a “Grosse Kreisstadt” (district capital) in 1998.



Figure 3. Dinkelsbühl, Bavaria: part of a tour given during the 30th anniversary events.

It was in the early 80’s that DELEIKA® started with a 20-note scale organ, and then added the 31-note scale organ in the mid 80s. In the 1990s 26-note scale organs became part of the product list. It was in the 2000s that the pride and masterpiece of the company came into existence with the 36-note scale, complete with a full percussion section (**Figure 4**).



Figure 4. Mr. Gerhard Fischer with the pride of Deleika, a 36-note scale organ with full percussion.



Figure 5. Deleika employees: Manfred Kraus, Kai Rafeldt, Rosemary Gary, Betty Greth, Hubert Reinwand, Hassan Mesilmani and Gerhard Fischer.

DELEIKA® Employees

Kai Rafeldt was born in 1966 and started to learn all about barrel organs from Mr Fischer in 1987. Just as Gerhard learned in 1981, Kai took it all in and in 2006 he became the new manager at DELEIKA®. Being manager means you do it all, office, workshop, sales, presentations, fair bookings and more.

Hubert Reinwand learned music from building cellos and other instruments in Bubenreuth and has been employed at DELEIKA® since 1989. He is the technical director and also is responsible for the pipes that make up the various organs.

Manfred Kraus is the engineer for electronics and is the man behind the “memory” system on the organs (Figure 6). He is also the “musician” as he is responsible for the music end of things, both paper rolls and electronics and has been with the company since 1990.

Hassan Mesilmani has also been with DELEIKA® since 1990 and most things revolving around the workshop and putting the organ together come under his attention.



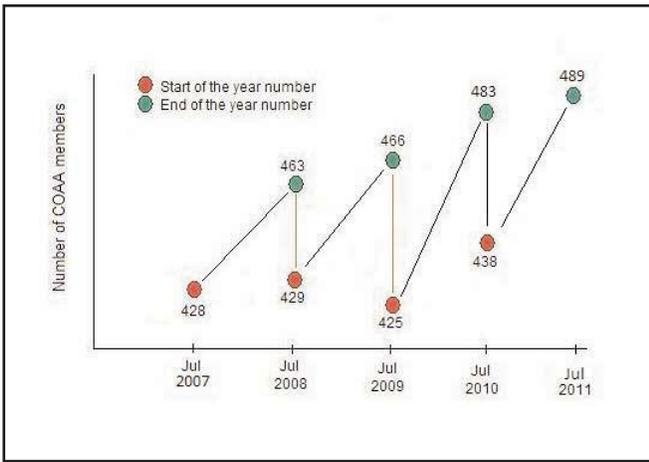
Figure 6. The barrel organs can, on request, be fitted with an integrated memory along with the music roll.

Rosemary Gary is the “artist.” When you notice the paint schemes on the organs, it has been her careful hand and watchful eye that has put the scenes together, meticulously, one instrument at a time. It is also her handiwork that shines through the custom paint requests the company gets. At just over 70, she loves her work and it shows in all she does and has done since joining the company in 2001.

A new employee since 2009, Betty Greth loves her work assembling the bellows on not only the manufactured organs from DELEIKA® but she also painstakingly helps in bellows restoration of restored pieces.

The company and its employees are proud of the fact that all that is DELEIKA® is made by them, by hand. They are proud to add that every DELEIKA® made, carries a piece of them. The company boasts of more than 30 years of top service, along with highest quality. COAA members are invited to visit the manufacturing facilities as well as the DELEIKA® museum in Germany (to view the various hurdy gurdy models and other musical instruments from the 19th and 20th century).

Carlo Klemm lives in Canada and is a new COAA member, hoping one day to host a rally in Alberta. He is a grandfather to five living in Finland. He also finds time to be a balloon animal maker and during the season he is Santa Edson.



Membership Report

The COAA membership continues to grow as shown in the attached graph (left). This growth is because we have a great product (the rallies & the journal) plus the members who work very hard to bring in new members. The winter meeting also brings in about a dozen new members each year.

Given the current economy, it is very important for everyone to work to bring in new members if COAA growth is to continue as it has over the past four plus years.

Dan Danko
COAA Membership Chairman