

Recording Review . . .

40 Jahr Orbelbau Raffin

This CD presents the finest recording of small organ music available today. It was issued by Orgelbau Raffin in celebration of Josef Raffin's 40th Anniversary as a master craftsman and organ builder. The presentation of the CD was held simultaneously with an open house hosted by the Raffin on Saturday, June 3, 2000. This event was described in an article by this author in Issue No. 5 of this journal dated October, 2000. The purpose of the disk beyond a doubt is to promote Raffin products, organs and arrangements; but that aside, this disk is a "must have" for all collectors of mechanical music.



Josef Raffin's 40th anniversary CD.

The disk has several attributes that place it at the acme of recorded small organ music: The acoustic quality of the recording; examples of synchronous playing of more than one organ; presentation of the wide and diverse catalog of available small organ music; and, Josef Raffin's incomparable grinding style.

The recordings are of extremely high acoustic quality. Because a great many of the pieces feature synchronous playing of two organs of varying size, range and compass the balance and mixing of the various pieces is very important. For this recording these are excellent. Synchronous playing, which is an important feature of Josef Raffin's live presentations, and in which he specializes, is performed with the accompaniment with his brother, Berthold Raffin, who was part of the original Raffin organization in the early days of the firm's organ building activities.

The music presented features twenty-three of Raffin's best arrangements ranging from the *Te Deum* played synchronously by the Raffin brothers with two 31-note organs, through the operatic *Bacarole* played solo on a 20/31 "Mini" to *De Rote Sonne von*



A 40th anniversary organ—20-note.

Barbados (The Red Sun of Barbados) a calypso piece played on a single 31-note organ. There are only a few of the usual type of lively small organ pieces such as *Sal und Pfeffer (Salt and Pepper)* on the playlist with some lately popular music such as *Time to Say Goodbye* and a number of pieces tending toward more formal music such as Handel's *Hallelujah Chorus*, J.S. Bach's *Air* and of course Schumann's ubiquitous *Ave Maria*. All in all a very impressive list of pieces which show a variety of small organ capabilities to their fullest. In addition to the sheer enjoyment provided by the music the disk also has a utilitarian value. It provides a unique opportunity to hear music before it is purchased. Given the high price of both 20er and 31er rolls today it is almost mandatory to hear a roll, or piece before it is purchased. This disk permits the ability to preview slightly over 71 minutes of music; the equivalence of ten or



Mr. and Mrs. Josef Raffin (center), sons-in-laws, and employees of "Orgelbau Raffin."

more rolls. Also, for the prospective purchaser of a small organ it presents the ability to assess the capabilities of a full range of small organs from Josef's own 31\119 through the exceptional 20\78 with its full sounding clarinet pipes to the lively, brightly sounding 20\31 "Mini."

The disk comes in the standard jewel case and has a photographic presentation of the exterior of the "Orgelbau" (shop), various Raffin organs currently being offered by the firm and photograph of Mr. and Mrs. Raffin, their sons-in-law, now associated with the management of the firm, and their employees. The disk is readily available in the United States from Hal O'Rourke (hal@halor.com), or may be seen on his web page at www.halor.com



Josef Raffin playing for the open house.

There is also a 40th Anniversary video tape, available from Hal O'Rourke, which shows a program presented by the entire, extended, Raffin family which was performed in Josef's Church for the Populace of Uberlingen, home of the Raffins. The video shows Josef playing alone, with his brother Berthold, with Rafael Engeser, a son-in-law and firm manager, three of the Raffin daughters playing three organs simultaneously and a grandson playing solo. It is a unique opportunity to see a giant in our hobby, his associates and progeny; and, not only the present physical product of their efforts, but entertain us at a high level of performance in their unique and unequalled style. Unfortunately, the video loses some quality in being transferred from the European PAL recording standard to the standard used in the United States, but is still more than adequate for our enjoyment.

Tom Griffith