

# GRACE NOTES

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*We wish all our friends and customers a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!*

As we come to the end of 2016, may we take this opportunity to thank those who congratulated us on the occasion of our 40th year in business. It is a milestone of which we are proud (many firms in the 'golden age' of mechanical music did not trade this long!) and look forward to the projects and challenges leading up to the celebration of our next 'significant' milestone!

Looking to the future, we are pleased to report that we have a number of interesting projects in hand for customers both at home and abroad. These are set to include some important restorations which will occupy much of our time over the next few years. As work progresses, we hope to be able to bring you pictures and details in future editions of *Grace Notes*.

Now is the perfect time to con-



sider your tuning and maintenance requirements for the coming season; demand for this service usually peaks in the months of April, May and June and we are always pleased to welcome new instruments, large or small, into our care. An organ which plays well and in tune is always a valuable asset to you and a pleasure to the listener.

Over the years we have worked on a wide range of instruments from which we have amassed a great deal of specialist knowledge, so it is always worthwhile contacting us first as we may well have just the experience you are looking for.

**We wish all our readers a Happy and Prosperous 2017!**

## DECAP ORGAN REDISCOVERED IN USA

**In mid-December, a 68-key Gebroeders Decap café organ returned to Antwerp (Belgium) from the United States and is now back at the factory where it was built over 60 years ago.**

The pipe organ was found in a dismantled state in a storage facility on Grand Island, in the Niagara River, near to Buffalo in upstate New York, and not far from the famous Niagara Falls. Information already to hand leads us to believe that the organ was

once used as an attraction in a Dutch gift shop in Ontario, Canada. Later, it fell out of use and was stored for several years until it came to light quite by chance in September. So far, it has not yet been possible to ascertain when the organ left Belgium, or to identify the cafés in which it had played, but we hope this information may soon come to light.

Roger Mostmans, of Gebroeders Decap NV, said that the firm had recently contemplated building a brand new 72-key organ to add to

the company's own collection. However, since this original instrument came to light, Roger has decided to retain the organ and completely restore it for the collection over the next few years.

A. C. Pilmer Automatic Music Ltd. is pleased to have been able to arrange its purchase, collection, packing, documentation and shipping to Antwerp for its new owners.



Here are a few close-ups of some of the detailed decorative work which has been carried out on our latest restoration commission, an 87-key Gavioli organ, which is hoped will be making its public debut during the 2017 summer season.

We hope to bring you more pictures in the next edition of *Grace Notes*, which we anticipate being ready for publication in the middle of March 2017.

If you haven't already done so, please tell your friends how to subscribe using the simple form on the Homepage of our website.

Please note that when you subscribe, you won't receive the previous issue retrospectively, but the next published editions. If you're a new subscriber, *Grace Notes* Issue 1 can now be downloaded from our website.

## GAVIOLI RESEARCH PROJECT

Members of the Gavioli family have often been referred to as the 'fathers of the fairground organ', and as such, some enthusiasts nurture a special respect for them.

Carl Frei senior so fondly remembered his time spent working at the firm in Paris that he even dedicated a march to his former mentor, Ludovico Gavioli, for whom he had the highest regard.

The many vicissitudes that the family endured have, to some degree, already been documented, but the information currently available is widely strewn and written in several languages.

However, it has become the aim of a number of researchers to gather up as much Gavioli-related information as possible, with the ultimate intention of bringing this knowledge together for posterity in one easily accessible and comprehensive reference work.

For the past few years, a group in

the UK, Europe and the United States has been steadily gathering and sharing information about the Gavioli family and their famous company.

Whether the results of this joint endeavour will eventually become a published book has not yet been decided, but for the moment there are still many avenues of investigation yet to be explored, and this will doubtless occupy several more years of study.

So far, valuable information has been gleaned from old newspapers, magazines, books and public records, including birth, marriage and burial registers. Patent specifications from several counties, legal documents, court records, old and new photographs and detailed examinations of existing instruments have all yielded fascinating parts of the story.

Gathering the serial numbers of Gavioli products has also proven to be a very useful reference source.

Anyone can help with this fascinating project, and all contributors will be acknowledged. We would be very interested to receive any information you may have that you feel could be relevant to this research.

So far, more than 200 pages of study notes have been collected, but a great deal of original material has still to be properly analysed and contextualised.

Members of the Gavioli family were great innovators to whom all mechanical organ enthusiasts owe a great debt of gratitude. Their own paths through life were not without strife, yet undoubtedly, most of the organs we all cherish today would not exist in their present form without the Gavioli family's wide influence.

**We believe that this is a very worthwhile project, and hope that you also share our view. If you can help us in any way, please get in touch.**

## ORGAN BUILDING ENDANGERED?

The Heritage Crafts Association has received a grant from The Radcliffe Trust to assess the vitality of traditional heritage crafts in the UK.

For the purposes of this research, a 'heritage craft' is defined as a 'practice which employs manual dexterity and skill and an understanding of traditional materials, design and techniques, and which has been practiced in the United Kingdom for two or more successive generations.' The Radcliffe Red List identifies those

crafts which are most at risk of decline. Significantly (and regrettably), organ building is to be found in the 'endangered' category. The Red List's definition of this is 'a craft which is still viable, but requiring oversight and support. This may include crafts with a shrinking market share, or crafts with a declining number of practitioners.' Mechanical organ building reasonably constitutes a sub-craft of general pipe organ building, but to produce a good new instrument, or to restore an old one, several other craft practitioners must also

be involved. The list reveals that wood carvers as a professional group have been 'in decline' since 2000, although at present the trade is categorized as being of 'least concern.' However, gilders are also 'endangered.' Training issues are mentioned in connection with many crafts, and this is certainly the case in mechanical organ building.

Visit the H. C. A.'s website at <http://redlist.heritagecrafts.org.uk> to find out more on this story.

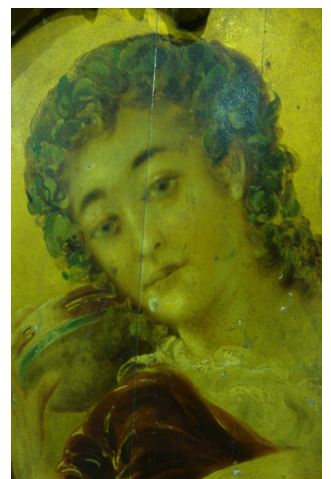
## RARE ORIGINAL GAVIOLI ART WORK

It is extremely rare today to find a Gavioli organ front in its original factory paint.

By their very nature, instruments that were intended to travel the fairs or dance halls were subjected to particularly hard use, especially when façade parts had to be frequently built up and pulled down. Even in their working lives, full or partial re-decoration took place to keep the instruments looking as fresh as possible. As the years passed and organs became redundant, many were simply stored away, neglected and forgotten about.

We are therefore pleased to be

able to publish this detail photograph of a panel from a large Gavioli organ which has remarkably survived over 100 years in its original paint. Depicting a beautiful winged angel, the colours have softened due to several coats of protective varnish being applied over the years. When this has been removed, the colours will be as vibrant as they were originally. The panel is extremely well-executed, and is typical of the very high standard of French decoration at that time. One wonders what events and people these dreamy eyes have impassively stared down upon over the last century?



## FEATURED ORGAN SCALE

### THE 46-KEY GAVIOLI SCALE

The **46-key scale** was introduced in the early years of last century by Gavioli & Co. to satisfy the need for a small, versatile and reasonably-priced instrument suitable for a variety of purposes. The 1906 catalogue lists two variants of this type, the most expensive having an elaborate carved front, whilst the other was offered with a plain, closed case, the percussion being mounted on removable consoles at each side. The scale is a very well-conceived one. There are 8 bass notes (the same sequence as in the 87/89-key scale) and these are often provided with bass baritone pipes. Nine accompaniment notes, f, g, and a, continuing chromatically upwards to d#. The melody division of 25 notes continues on chromatically through two octaves up to f, but is missing the top d#, as is the 87/89-key scale. Percussion is provided by a bass drum and cymbal coupled together, and two keys are allocated to the snare drum. Other

than the keyframe muting key, no other controls are provided.

A 46-key organ is capable of playing any piece of music that an 87- or 89-key instrument can. From old photographs, it does not appear that 46-key Gavioli organs were widely sold in the UK: the first mention of such an organ that has come to light is from 1903, when Mrs. P. Collins advertised one for sale with two boxes of music for £60.

The strengths of this scale were also noticed by others, making good music possible within a compact physical size.

In the early 1920s a demand arose for small organs for new rides such as chair-o-planes, which were coming in from Germany. To meet this demand, Chiappa Ltd. commissioned Wilhelm Bruder Söhne in Waldkirch to produce a series of new keyless instruments using this scale. A minor change saw the accompaniment being extended to 12 notes, the top e, f and f# being

transferred from the lowest notes of the melody division, and it is this variation that has been adopted as a standard today in the UK.

These 46-keyless organs found widespread success, and many were used on cakewalks, steam yachts etc. where space was at a premium. In later years, Chiappa Ltd. itself built a number of 'new' organs using this scale, as have many enthusiast organ builders. The scale can be extended by two extra keys, allowing automatic register control. 48-key / keyless instruments can add trumpets, a glockenspiel and sometimes trombones to give additional variety and dynamics to the music.

We have a large library of music for this scale covering a wide variety of genres. At the present time we also have a number of second-hand keyed and keyless music books in stock for sale.

**Contact us for a list.**

## IN BRIEF

During late November and early December, as this edition of *Grace Notes* was being prepared, Russell Wattam was in the United States working on a Ruth organ which is under restoration there. This has been a long-term project for the owners but is now nearing completion.

While there, he was also pleased to have the opportunity of visiting the respected mechanical music restorer Durward Center. Durward's own collection includes the magnificent Style 5 Welte orchestration formerly installed in Oakley Court, Windsor, England.

### Grace notes?

Last time, we heard from some readers who were intrigued by our choice of title for our newsletter. In music, grace notes are simply extra notes added as an embellishment to the harmony or decoration of a piece.

Such embellishment helps to keep the music interesting to the ears of the listener. To some extent, grace notes are flexible and subject to personal interpretational preference. So, whilst you don't get the full story in our newsletter, we hope that you will find entertaining 'extras' that you find interesting. We welcome your feedback via the Contact Page on our website.

Previously, we wrote about the popular International Organ Festival to be held in Waldkirch, Germany, in June, 2017. Now the dark nights are upon us it's a great time to learn more about the organ builders who worked there and the instruments they made. There is no better way of doing this than by reading *Waldkirch Street and Fairground Organs*, the 300 page book with 330 illustrations, regarded as the standard work on the subject. As a *Grace Notes* subscriber, secure your copy before the end of February 2017 for just **£19.99 with FREE POSTAGE** (place order via the Contact Page).

Use the QR Code to  
access our website from  
your phone!



## EFFECT OF 'BREXIT' ON PRICES

**The national referendum to decide the fate of the United Kingdom's membership of the European Union, held on June 23, 2016, attracted world-wide media attention.** The outcome was that 51.9% of voters opted to leave the EU - the so-called 'Brexit' vote.

One of the most significant and immediate effects of this decision was the steep fall in the value of the Pound against other major international currencies such as the Euro, US Dollar, Australian Dollar, Japanese Yen, etc. In fact,

since the referendum, the Pound has lost at least 10% of its former value on the world market.

However, this decline in monetary value offers a rare opportunity to our many customers abroad, who can now benefit from significantly reduced prices for any of our goods and services. Furthermore, because the amount paid in local currency will have reduced, any duty or taxes payable on importation which are calculated on that value will also be correspondingly lower. This surely makes it one of the best

times to consider enlarging your music repertoire by purchasing some new books or rolls, or scheduling a visit to work on your instruments when we are next in your country.

It could even be an opportunity to buy an instrument from us and make a considerable saving over previous prices. The 'For Sale' page on our website lists most current offerings, but it's always worthwhile contacting us directly if you can't see exactly what you are looking for, as every item we have available is not always listed.

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You *can* hear the difference!



Close-up of a Uniflex circuit board

# UNIFLEX ORGAN CONTROL SYSTEMS

The cinema organ is a close relative of the mechanical organ, as both were designed to entertain the public, and in all but the very largest, both seek to create the best musical effects from a minimum of resources. Up to 1914, the largest mechanical organs ever made fronted the immense travelling cinema shows which toured the fairgrounds, so the connection with moving pictures is a strong one.

Since 1990 we have had an active involvement with cinema organs, when the York Museum of Mechanical Music acquired a 3 manual, 9-rank Compton organ which was originally built for the Astoria Cinema in Hull, East Yorkshire. Concerts were given on it by many of the country's top organists and it was featured several times on TV and local and national radio. On the closure of the museum, the organ was purchased by an enthusiast in the Netherlands and we undertook the task of dismantling, moving and re-installing the organ in its new home. As the owner does not play the organ himself, he also requested that it should be equipped with a system which could record and play back the performance of an organist - these days a feature of many installations.

In order to do this, we sought the help of organist Kevin Grunill, who had played the Astoria organ many times when it was at Rufforth. Kevin is well-known on the concert circuit at home and abroad and has been responsible for the restoration and installation of a number of cinema organs throughout the country. He immediately recommended the Uniflex organ control system as being the best available.

### What actually is an organ control system?

In manually-played organs, it is necessary to incorporate some form of *transmission* between the keys and other console controls and the actual mechanism of the organ, thereby connecting the two. Sometimes this is achieved by purely mechanical means (*tracker action*), and in others by *electro-pneumatic* (as in cinema organs) or *direct electric* action. In these two last examples, some form of intermediate relay is required. Over the years, organ builders developed their own relay systems which were often a complex combination of electro-mechanical or electro-pneumatic actions. Whilst these bulky mechanisms can still continue to give good service today, even after 80 or more years of service, advances in modern technology now enable many additional features to be possible.

The **Uniflex Organ Control System** was developed in the United States by Dick Wilcox, whom Kevin came to know well through his installation of a number of Uniflex systems. Dick eventually offered Kevin the exclusive rights to Uniflex for the UK and Europe, so that new and existing customers could benefit from a closer point of contact for technical assistance, system upgrades and to service orders for new installations.

The Uniflex organ control system is perhaps the most comprehensive, flexible and reliable organ control system currently available, and is endorsed by several prominent organists. Designed for use with traditional (church or concert) pipe organs, theatre organs, small practice instruments or even virtual pipe organs, a Uniflex Organ Control System offers a wider variety of facilities than any other organ control system available today; it is not just a relay / combination action unit, but is a performance tool in its own right, offering the player a wide range of facilities that were simply unimaginable only a short time ago.

The new **Uniflex 4000 System** has many new and exciting features which are all included as standard: the ability to control multiple consoles; wireless or wired operation; iPhone or iPad integration; a remote tuning system; unlimited combination memories; multiple user definition files and record / playback studio, MIDI interfacing and much more.

Unlike many other relay systems, Uniflex uses only four standard hardware components: input cards, output cards, interface and system controllers. The system can be enlarged at any time and unlike numerous other systems, doesn't require individual circuit boards for functions such as couplers, reversers and record / playback operation. These are all included within every system.

**A C Pilmer Automatic Music Ltd.** is pleased to be currently working in association with Kevin Grunill and Uniflex Organ Control Systems on a number of theatre organ installations.

Find out more by visiting [www.uniflexorgancontrol.co.uk](http://www.uniflexorgancontrol.co.uk)

## SOME ORGANS USING UNIFLEX ORGAN CONTROL SYSTEMS

**Uniflex systems have been controlling some of the world's finest pipe organs for over 25 years. Here are some installations which are located in the UK and mainland Europe.**

Private Collection, Oosterhout, Netherlands:  
3 manual, 9-rank Compton

Kunkels Organ Museum, Haarlem, Netherlands:  
3 manual, 12-rank Compton

Netherlands Organ Federation, Boskoop Floragebouw:  
3 manual, 11-rank Standaard

North East Theatre Organ Association, Howden-le-Wear:  
3 manual-19 rank Wurlitzer

East Sussex National Hotel & Spa, Uckfield (Europe's largest theatre pipe organ):  
4 manual, 32-rank Wurlitzer

Theatre Organ Heritage Centre, Peel Green, Salford:  
2 manual, 6-rank Wurlitzer

Lancastrian Theatre Organ Trust, Stockport Town Hall:  
4 manual, 20-rank Wurlitzer

Penistone Cinema Organ Trust, Paramount Cinema, Penistone:  
4 manual, 18-rank Compton

Penistone Cinema Organ Trust, Astoria Centre, Barnsley:  
3 Manual 16-rank Compton

Scarborough Fair Collection, Scarborough, North Yorkshire:  
3 manual, 8-rank Wurlitzer;  
3 manual, 8-rank Wurlitzer