

## The Seewen-*Britannic* organ and its associated rolls

by David Rumsey

It was probably within a year of Titanic's sinking in 1912 that the shipping company, White Star Line, ordered the largest *Philharmonie* organ available from the German organ-building firm of Welte in Freiburg, Germany. The *Philharmonie* (*Philharmonic* in England and America) had been developed by "crossing" orchestrions with console-played organs. They were thus playable either by an organist or through an in-built roll playing apparatus, similar to a player-piano. This mechanism operated through the medium of perforated paper rolls which bore pre-recorded performances.

When Welte listed their player-piano clients it was clear that such customers were amongst the richest and most musically-educated of society in an impressive variety of lands and cultures. Sultans and Noblemen, Winston Churchill, or Lady Colgate were amongst the many dignitaries listed. Some ships had them installed - especially those of Lloyds. The *Philharmonie*, being an organ, was even rarer and less affordable - only individuals or corporations with superior wealth could ever hope to possess one.

Extremely wealthy private yacht owners began to install *Philharmonies* in their vessels as soon as they were available. By late 1912, White Star Line were under serious competition for "luxuries" in their ships - then the most up-market mode of travel. Player pianos had hitherto predominated aboard large passenger liners and Lloyds, in particular, were formidable White Star rivals. In 1912, after Titanic had met her fate, even greater pressure came to bear on White Star to introduce new luxuries; any distraction from Titanic's much-discussed fate was always going to be useful in that connection.

Early references to organ installations aboard boats are found with the calliopes on some American river boats in mid-19th century. They were a "health and safety in the workplace" nightmare, burning their players' fingers and destroying their hearing. A calliope could even use so much steam that it slowed the boats' progress! Later, the *Pocahuntas* was known to have had a Welte orchestrion made in New York. It was Jules Verne's 1869/70 novel *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea* that really introduced the concept to large ocean-going vessels and captured the public imagination. Aeolian in the USA and Welte in both USA and Germany, were amongst the main contenders to later realize this dream. From fiction to fact took little enough time: Welte's finely illustrated catalogues around 1913/14 depict a number of installations of *Philharmonies* aboard yachts and ships. This included one for the *Britannic*, direct successor to *Titanic*.

Of the White Star Line's three great "Olympic" class ships - *Olympic*, *Titanic* and *Britannic* - all three had space enough for an organ of consequence. Their designs around the great First Class stairwell were near enough to identical for these purposes. Neither record nor rumour nor claim exists for *Olympic's* ever having had an organ. Speculation abounds, however, as to whether an orchestrion or even a *Philharmonie* was intended for *Titanic* - it would seem a logical step, since player-pianos had long been installed on prestigious passenger vessels. *Titanic* is known to have had four uprights and one grand piano. Lloyds' ships also sported player pianos.

The *Deutsches Musikautomatenmuseum* at Bruchsal in Germany is one of a number of claimants to possessing an orchestrion that was "delivered too late" to go on *Titanic's* fateful

voyage. The Bruchsal story goes that Karl Bockisch, leading figure in the Welte firm, accompanied it to Southampton, but arrived just too late to get it aboard. Owing to the serious illness of one of his children, it is said, he then had to hurry back to Germany. The only hard evidence supporting this claim so far found is an undated letter written by his second wife. Since they were only married 20 years after the event, and Bockisch died in 1952, then the letter must have been written over 40 years later. Judging by the widow's shaky handwriting it may have been well beyond that. This letter became associated with the Bruchsal organ after that instrument was acquired by the museum. Its previous owner knew nothing of this history.

*Britannic*, on the other hand, clearly had an organ intended for it - extant plans placed it occupying both storeys of the great First Class stairwell, opposite the grand staircase. Records also show that an Aeolian was originally mooted. Welte, however, ended up with the contract and their catalogues from c1913-14 show the organ in place in a very finely-detailed illustration. On careful investigation it turns out - unlike the other illustrations in these catalogues - to be a rendering, not a photograph, although the organ is so detailed and accurate that a photograph seems almost certainly to have been used as its basis. *Britannic's* fitting out was never completed and the ship was converted to a hospital ship, serving in the First World War until she was sunk in 1916. The wreck remains near the Greek Island of Kia in the Aegean sea.

The organ never traveled with her, although it is quite possible its case did. It is unclear whether the instrument ever left Freiburg bound for Belfast. It was certainly ordered, planned, built and probably finished during 1913, allowing plenty of time to transport it and install it after the ship's launching on February 26<sup>th</sup> 1914, although fitting out would first have to proceed to a point that the organ could be installed. Interesting historic footage of *Titanic's* fitting-out leaves no doubt about the speed with which this could be achieved by a whole army of laborers. The remaining window of time from March to July was sufficient for installation and, indeed, de-installation. The outbreak of war in late July of that year would certainly have sent the German builders, if they were in Ireland, scurrying back home, with or without organ or casework.

Reports of Jacques Cousteau's divers in 1976 could point to the organ case being present, remaining in place and now lying some fathoms under the surface. They identified "an organ" and reported "metal organ pipes". The value of these reports has been questioned - indeed the rendering published by Welte in their catalogues hints at wooden pipes or just simple slats in the facade. If the Cousteau reports turn out to be true, then that could hint that the organ was at least partially installed when hostilities began. I visited an impressive exhibition in Kiel, Germany in mid-2007 where, amongst other things, the *Titanic's* stairwell was accurately reconstructed. Given that the three ships' designs were essentially identical here, it was clear that the organ could have been installed or removed with its facade in place. Being a totally enclosed instrument the facade was purely decorative. To that extent there was never any need to keep them together. Simon Mills (Britannic Foundation, England <http://www.thebritannicfoundation.org.uk/>) has undertaken more recent dives to the *Britannic* wreck. He is currently planning another about mid-2008 when currents are favorable. The area where the organ was to be placed will then be very closely investigated. We remain in close contact about these matters.

No records of the fate of this organ survived the first world war and all trace of it was effectively lost. A sale of *Britannic's* fittings took place in 1919 but no mention of it has yet

been traced in that connection. Nor is there reference to it in records of the insurance and government compensations for *Britannic's* loss. We may assume therefore, that the instrument was not in Belfast after 1914.

In May of 2007, organ builders restoring an otherwise unidentified *Welte Philharmonie* belonging to the Swiss National Museum at Seewen, needed to look into some details of the pneumatics associated with it. An internet search was part of this, and they noticed in passing a reference to such an instrument once being built for *Britannic*. Soon afterwards, while cleaning beams supporting some off-note motors, the word “:Britannik” was found inscribed on one of them (the “k” is a normal Teutonic adjustment to an English “c” in such a context, *vide* Helikopter, Krystal etc.). The builders immediately sent photos with the question: “could this be the lost *Britannic* organ?” Two more inscriptions were found in the following few days, and at least three more have since turned up.

The Director of the Museum, Dr. Christoph E. Haenggi, and I immediately set to work to try and answer this question. Every aspect we subsequently explored increasingly led us to an unequivocal “yes.” Firstly the pre-1920 history of our instrument had been totally shrouded in mystery, so there were no competing claims. I had made an “educated guess,” that it had been built in 1913, based on the style of the organ, its specification, the technology of the rolls which it played, the organists who recorded them and their dates of release. Previously others had estimated anything from 1912 to 1920 so this aligned well. Facts gradually led me to eliminate virtually anything but 1913:

- \* the *Philharmonie* was not fully developed or even on the books being offered for sale until late 1912, so there was scant possibility of this organ dating pre-1913;
- \* the recording organ in Welte's plush carpeted studios was modified, around 1913, seemingly partly on E. H. Lemare's advice (his first recording session is dated September 2<sup>nd</sup> 1913), after which tracker-bars, specifications and related systems were all fairly standardized;
- \* the basic Seewen organ typifies this form exactly;
- \* some undated rolls exist, but dated organ rolls of the kind needed for this instrument were produced only from about 1912-13 onwards;
- \* apart from some early rolls transcribed from already-existing piano or orchestration rolls, the very first known recording session was Enrico Bossi in September 1912.

So 1913 looked very likely. This fitted the *Britannic* story like a glove.

Investigation of *Britannic's* surviving plans gave us the dimensions of the space allowed for the organ. The original instrument - especially the space needed for its windchests - is still very clearly defined and everything fits exactly. There were some additions or changes to the Seewen organ in 1920, and again in 1937. The earliest of these is evident from two small additional windchests which stand in front of the original ones. Together with the organ builders and conservators we examined the wood which bore the “:Britannik” inscriptions, comparing it with the original woodwork from the oldest part of the organ. We wanted to be certain that these beams had not come from another instrument or were otherwise “strays.” They all matched.



Key to illustrations 1-3: Organ builders, *Kuhn Orgelbau*, contractors to the *Museum für Musikautomaten*, Seewen, discovered these clues to the provenance of the *Welte-Philharmonie* instrument under a layer of dust which had covered them for nearly 100 years.

The organ's history had hitherto been well known from 1920 onwards when the German camera manufacturer, August Nagel (1882-1943), installed it in his sumptuous Stuttgart villa. A great music lover, he indulged himself in an instrument by the world famous *Welte* firm from nearby Freiburg. Around 1935 Nagel returned it to the manufacturer for unknown reasons. In 1937 it was moved to the reception room of the *Radium* electric light company in Wipperfürth, Germany. The organ builder Werner Bosch (1916-1992) was an employee of *Welte* and worked on the organ at this time. It received a new Trumpet register, some extensions to the pedal and a few concessions to organ reform ideologies were made as additions. A new console was needed, possibly in 1920, but what seems now to be a 1937 console survives without significant change. The organ's original Wienerflöte was replaced by a Harmonieflöte at some stage, but by a fluke of circumstances both have been preserved. The Wienerflöte has now been returned to its original "Britannic" roll-configuration while also being available as a non-intrusive option controlled by a now-disused console switch. In spite of their names and traditions, neither is a full-compass "harmonic" rank.

In Wipperfürth the organ remained in use until the 1960s. After the second world war it once again came under Werner Bosch's care. In 1961 it was used to make an LP-recording issued under various titles, possibly best remembered in English language circles now as *Reger plays Reger* (*Electrola* Company of Cologne, Germany 1C 053-28925). This was produced using *Welte*-rolls dated 1913 from collections held in Seewen and at the Max-Reger Institut in Germany. The organ was selected as the best available for this purpose, having the same basic tonal resources as the original Freiburg recording organ. In fact it was by then somewhat larger, but the basic stops were mostly intact and the changes - including adaptation of the roll replay registration system to a larger instrument - were all made by *Welte* themselves, thus bearing their imprimatur.

A change of Radium company ownership led to the Wipperfürth reception room being re-consigned as a storeroom. The organ now became superfluous to requirements and was offered for sale, but this generated no interest and the instrument's fate was heading quickly towards the scrap heap. This situation was drawn to the attention of Heinrich Weiss, founder of the *Museum für Musikautomaten* Seewen, who quickly acquired it. Weiss then invested some 1,500 working hours in installing it and had Werner Bosch come to do the final regulation. They were aided by Basel organ builder Bernard Fleig. On 30<sup>th</sup> May 1970 its completion and re-inauguration was celebrated in Seewen. In late 2007 its restoration by *Orgelbau Kuhn* was completed.

Two specifications follow. The first is the original recording organ at the *Welte* Freiburg premises in 1909, based on that given by Kurt Binninger in *Acta Organologica* 1987 Vol. 19. Some corrections have been made as a result of now-known oversights. This instrument was

a prototype, used during the development period of the *Philharmonie* before these instruments were commercially offered in 1912. The second is the *Britannic* Seewen organ, as modified 1920-1937 and restored in 2007. It will be seen that the core of the 1909 organ remains, bearing in mind the changes the firm made around 1912-13 when most of the 1909 pipework was re-made or re-utilized. Later production instruments essentially replicated these, although it is evident that the firm undertook a degree of tailoring in given situations. The “old” pipework in the 2007 instrument is much the same as described in the report on the 1909 organ.

#### The 1909 recording studio organ

<b>Manual</b>	<b>I</b>	Cello <sup>12</sup>	8
Principal <sup>1</sup>	8	Posaune <sup>13</sup>	16
Traversflöte <sup>2</sup>	8	<b>Manual</b>	<b>II</b>
Viol d'orchestre <sup>3</sup>	8	Viola <sup>14</sup>	8
Gamba <sup>4</sup>	8	Wienerflöte <sup>15</sup>	8
Vox coelestis <sup>5</sup>	8	Aeoline <sup>16</sup>	8
Fagott <sup>6</sup>	8	Bourdon <sup>17</sup>	8
Flöte <sup>7</sup>	4	Horn <sup>18</sup>	g <sup>0</sup> - 8
Harfe <sup>8</sup>	G-	Klarinette <sup>19</sup>	16
Glocken <sup>9</sup>		Oboe <sup>20</sup>	g <sup>0</sup> - 8
<b>Pedal</b>		Posaune <sup>21</sup>	C-f <sup>20</sup> - 8
Violon <sup>10</sup>	16	Trompete <sup>22</sup>	g <sup>0</sup> - 8
Subbaß <sup>11</sup>	16	Vox humana <sup>23</sup>	8

*Compass:* Man I: C-a<sup>3</sup>; Man II: C-g<sup>3</sup> (sic!); Ped: C-f<sup>1</sup>.

*Action:* Pneumatic (pouch/membrane)

*Location:* To the right of the playback organ.

*Pipework:*

<sup>1</sup> metal; "gentle singing tone"

<sup>2</sup> wood; "internal lips C-f<sup>#0</sup>; g<sup>0</sup>- overblowing, typical flute tone; wedge-shaped “rollers”

<sup>3</sup> metal; "beautiful string-tone"

<sup>4</sup> metal; "stronger than the viol d'orchestre"

<sup>5</sup> metal; “keen tone” - tuned as a beat ing rank to be used with the viol d'orchestre"

<sup>6</sup> papier-mâché resonators; C-b<sup>0</sup> free reed with long wooden boots and covered resonators, very similar to the orchestral instrument; c<sup>1</sup>- flue pipes with Fugara scaling.

<sup>7</sup> wood; C-b<sup>0</sup> resonators tapering front to back; c<sup>1</sup>- very wide scaling giving a round flute tone.

<sup>8</sup> metal plates placed over wood or papier-mâché resonators and hit with pneumatic hammers.

<sup>9</sup> C-g<sup>0</sup> metal tubes, sounded as per Harfe.

<sup>10</sup> open wood

<sup>11</sup> stopped wood

<sup>12</sup> often borrowed from the Violon 16.

<sup>13</sup> wood or metal

<sup>14</sup> metal; tonally very similar to a Geigenprinzipal

<sup>15</sup> wood; harmonic flute, bass only (not harmonic in the trebles) scaled 2 semitones narrower than Traversflöte in Manual I with wedge-shaped “rollers”

<sup>16</sup> metal; somewhat more gently voiced than the Man I Viol d'orchestre

<sup>17</sup> stopped wood; voiced to sound full and round

<sup>18</sup> wood; Flue rank of special construction: it was not harmonic and possessed a very carrying tone;

<sup>19</sup> papier-mâché; free reed, similar to the Fagott, but with wide-scaled, open resonators. Very similar to the characteristics of the orchestral instrument.

<sup>20</sup> Plays from C in the Tutti. Beating reed, full-length resonators, lengthened tops and turning caps.

<sup>21</sup> conical tops

<sup>22</sup> extension of the Posaune

<sup>23</sup> built as a Silbermann Vox Humana

The specification on completion of the current 2007 restoration will be:

<b>Manual I</b>	<b>I</b>	Bordun	8
Bordun	16	Blockflöte	4
Principal	8	Quinte	2 <sup>2</sup> / <sub>3</sub>
Traversflöte	8	Terz	1 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>5</sub>
Gedeckt	8	Quintzimbel	1
Gambe	8	Sesquialter draws 2 previous together	
Viol d'orchestra	8	Clarinete	16
Vox coelestis	8	Trompete	8
Flöte	4	Horn	8
Rohrflöte	4	Oboe	8
Nachthorn	2	Vox humana	8
Mixtur		<b>Pedal</b>	
Trompete	8	Violonbass	16
Fagott	8	Subbass	16
Harfe	20 bars	Stillgedackt	16
Glocken	51 notes	Gedackt no stop-tab, controllable only by rolls	8
For extensions see <i>Werk</i> below		Cello	8
<b>Manual II</b>	<b>II</b>	Posaune	16
Viola	8	Trompete	8
Wienerflöte roll- and switch- controlled	8	Clairon	4
Harmonieflöte	8	Singende Cornett	2
Aeoline	8		

*Compass:* Manuals: C-a<sup>3</sup>, Pedals: C-f<sup>1</sup>

*Couplers:* I/Ped (coded white-green), II/Ped (coded pink-green), II/I (coded pink-white)  
II/sub(octave)-I, II/super-I (pink-white); II super (pink);

*Accessories:* *Stop-tabs:* Vox Humana Echo (opens/shuts Vox Humana's separate box lid); Tremolo. *Left key-cheek:* Voltmeter. Switch to select hand-registration or automatic (player-roll registration); Hand-switch to control Wienerflöte (the rolls automatically play the original Wienerflöte). *Right key-cheek:* Slow/Fast regulator controlling the player-roll speed mechanism; *Great key-slip left to right:* II/sub-I; II/super-I; II super; I-Pedal; II/Pedal; II/I; Freie Komb I; Freie Komb II; Cancel; Tutti; Handreg. ab (switches off hand stop control); Regschw. ab (Rollschweller function off); Zungen ab; Mixturen ab; Pedalpiano; *Above pedals left to right:* crescendo pedal; swell pedal; toe studs for Harfe and Glocke.

*Wind System:* Manuals: 97mm (3.82 inches); Pedal: 115mm (4.53 inches). Suction wind: 263mm (10.35 inches). 2 Schwimmers under the manual divisions, one near the Pedal blower. The suction wind bellows is found in the motor room.

*Tuning:* Equal tempering. A=438Hz. at 18°C.

*Action:* Pneumatic at and around the console, Electro-Pneumatic to the chests and pipes.

*Console:* detached but immediately in front centre of the organ. Rocking-tabs: Pedal coded green Manual I coded white Manual 2 coded pink

*Werk:* The entire organ is enclosed. A number of off-chests and extension chests are involved.

*Status:* Restoration 2007 by Kuhn of Maennedorf, Switzerland. Consultant David Rumsey.

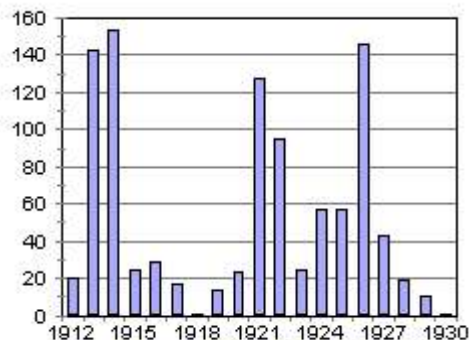
## The rolls

1912	20
1913	143
1914	153
1915	25
1916	29
1917	17
1918	1
1919	14
1920	23
1921	128
1922	95
1923	24
1924	57
1925	57
1926	146
1927	43
1928	19
1929	10
1930	??

The Welte firm engaged the most famous organists of the day to make player-rolls for sale with their *Philharmonie* and certain other models. This could include smaller orchestrions where the registration playback had to be adapted, although usually severely compromised. One of the Seewen organ's great advantages is that it is easily large enough to accommodate all the original organist's registrations with the caveat that Welte's own changes to it took into consideration a slightly larger instrument than these organists had had at their disposal. The original registrations are thus recorded "true" on the rolls, the adjustment of them to smaller and larger instruments is revealing and allows some interesting case studies.

The accompanying table and graph show the firm's yearly output of new roll-titles from 1912-1930. They are based on the Seewen catalogue. There were more rolls made than Seewen now possesses, but currently the full extent of production, not even just the titles much less the copies made, is not known. There are 271 undated rolls at Seewen aside from those forming the basis of these tabulated and graphed statistics. As can be seen, the wartime-affected 1915-1920 period was a poor time for Welte and a lapse in demand around 1923 seems to have presaged the final decline after 1926.

All records of the company's recording sessions with organists have disappeared except for the earliest seasons 1912-13. The first artist was Bossi in September 1912. The exact date has not survived but it is clear that it must have been between 1<sup>st</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>. Artists - and sometimes their families, as we know was



the case with Lemare - spent a good week or so "in residence" while their recordings were made. There appear to have been "seasons" of them. During the "organ seasons" recordings of piano rolls were to some extent curtailed. However, even in the periods covered below, Louis Diémer, Eugen d'Albert, Fanny Davies, Claude Debussy, Rudolph Ganz, Josef Hofmann, Serge Liapunow, and Enrique Granados were also at times present and making recordings. Organists' commencing dates (see detailed information on 25 of them below) were:

1912

September

? Bossi

9<sup>th</sup> Sittard

16<sup>th</sup> Breitenbach

30<sup>th</sup> Erb

November

26<sup>th</sup> Gigout

1913

February

6<sup>th</sup> Bonnet

20<sup>th</sup> R. Goss-Custard

July

8<sup>th</sup> Baldwin

14 <sup>th</sup>	Faulkes	September	
26 <sup>th</sup>	Reger	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Lemare
August		15 <sup>th</sup>	Walton
28 <sup>th</sup>	Hollins	26 <sup>th</sup>	Wolstenholme

The Welte company struggled on through the first world war - roll releases dwindled (judging by Seewen's acquisitions) to just 1 in 1918 and then recovered in the early 1920s. The firm began to face serious problems from the late 1920s. The last roll was dated 1930; it was possibly the only new roll-title released dated that year.

By the early 1930s Welte were coming very close to bankruptcy as general economic circumstances and the newly-developing radio and recording industry severely eroded their business. Later in that decade problems continued when the Nazis forbade collaboration with Welte, since Edwin Welte's first wife was Jewish. In fact this destroyed an interesting project in progress with Telefunken. The two firms had been developing an electronic organ, using analogue sampling of organ tone. Wave-forms were recorded onto glass plates for replay using the medium of an early photo-electric technology. It was a far superior system to the magnetic tone-wheels and oscillators which prevailed with their contemporaries, and a portent of modern digital sampling. Further setbacks for the hapless firm were still in store - a Luftwaffe mission in the early 1940s lost its bearings and managed to bomb its own city of Freiburg, missing intended targets in France. They hit the Welte factory. Hitler publicly blamed the English. This turned out to be typical politicians' misinformation, but lamentably rather good prophecy: allied bombs razed everything remaining, including the firm's records, just a few weeks prior to war's end in 1945.

When Werner Bosch was able to secure the preservation of this instrument in 1969 he brokered Seewen's acquisition of some 1,230 original rolls. These had come under his aegis when the tattered *Welte* business was finally wound up around 1950. Accordingly the Seewen Museum now not only possesses an exceptional instrument with a most extraordinary history, but also an extensive library of roll recordings - by far the most comprehensive holdings of any collection, by a factor of at least 2 to any other contender and about 10 to most. Furthermore the repertoire recorded on the Seewen rolls is mainly "classical" - other collections often exhibit a more "popular" musical taste. The USA branch of Welte's firm (closed down by the US government as an "alien enterprise" in 1917) produced a more "popular" catalogue.

Rolls were released by Freiburg Welte of French, English, Italian, German and American organists. We do not know how many rolls were eventually made or sold, but clearly well in excess of 1,300 titles were recorded. A slight allowance needs to be made for some rolls which were adapted from pianists' recordings, or simply mechanically "punched", as a temporary expedient in the very early stages of the system's development. Some 64 organists were involved. In the lists below details of titles are left as informally recorded in the Seewen catalogue - it will take some time after the organ's restoration is complete for rolls to be exhaustively played through and all of the recorded repertoire identified with certainty ("a" is frequently an abbreviation for "aus", i.e. "from"). However, most of it is clear enough and tells a very interesting story about the organists, who they were, what and how they played in those days. The "top 25" of the 64 were:

**Goss-Custard, Walter Henry [Harry]** - English organist. \*1871 Feb 7 St Leonards-on-Sea (GB:) 1917 became the first organist of Liverpool Cathedral †1964 Jul 6 St Leonards-on-Sea.

He recorded at least 150 rolls for Welte dated 1913-27 (interestingly the World War I 1914-18 period accounted for the release of no fewer than 34 of his rolls "in enemy territory"). Composers represented include: Beethoven, J. S. Bach, Batiste, Borowski, Bossi, Braga, Bruch, Chopin, Drdla, Dreyschock, Dvorak, Elgar, Fletcher, Fricker, Gaul, Grieg, Guilmant, Haydn, Hofmann, Hollins, Humperdinck, Händel, Karg-Elert, Lefébure-Wély, Lemare, Lemmens, Liszt, Macdowell, Makenzie, Mason, Mendelssohn, Merkel, Meyerbeer, Moliqué, Nessler, Nevin, Rachmaninoff, Rubinstein, Saint Saëns, Schubert, Schytte, Sibelius, Simonetti, Smart, Somervell, Spindler, Spohr, Sterndale-Bennet, Sullivan, Taylor, Thomé, Tschaikowski, Vierne, Wagner, Watling, Wheeldon, Widor, Wolstenholme, d'Evry and some songs or hymns. He also recorded some of his own works: Evensong, Benedictus in A-flat major and Nocturne.

**Lemare, Edwin Henry** - internationally renowned organist, composer, arranger and compiler.

\*1865 Sep 9 Ventnor/Isle of Wight (GB:) 1888 was the year of first performance of his most famous work *Andantino in D<sup>b</sup>* - the song-writer, Charles Daniels, later pirated it and, under the pseudonym of Neil Moret, issued it as a "work of an old master" entitled *Moonlight and Roses*; 1895 organist and choirmaster at London, St. Margaret Westminster; 1900 Dec 27 left for a visit to New York and played a recital there on New Year's Day; 1901 Jun recital for the Glasgow Exhibition; Sep a 15-recital tour of USA; Mid-Dec took a post at the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh (62-stop Farrand & Votey organ); 1903 invitation to play a series at Sydney Town Hall; 1906 second Australia tour - included inauguration of Melbourne Town Hall organ and concerts in New Zealand; 1917 he held civic positions in San Francisco and Portland. †1934 Sep 24 Los Angeles (USA:)

Lemare recorded at least 89 rolls for Welte. Release dates were between 1912 and 1928. The repertoire is music transcribed from, based on or by J. S. Bach, Bach-Gounod, Brahms, Bizet, Bocherini, Chauvet, Chopin, d'Evry, Dubois, Dvorak, Elgar, Faulkes, Goldmark, Gounod, Guilmant, Händel, Hofmann, Hollins, Horseman, Humperdinck, Johnson, Mendelssohn, Mozart, Nevin, Offenbach, Rheinberger, Saint Saëns, Sandiford Turner, Schumann, Wagner, Weber, Wolstenholme and some popular songs. His own works are well-represented: Adagio patetico a Symphonie D moll Op. 50; Allegro pomposo; Andantino B<sup>b</sup> major; Arcadian Idyll (Serenade, Musette Solitude,) Op. 52; Bell-Scherzo Op. 89; Benediction nuptiale Op.85; Chant du bonheur, Op.62; Chant seraphique, Op.75; Frühlingslied ("From the South") Op. 56; Intermezzo "Moonlight" Op.83 No.2; Madrigale; Marche héroïque Op.74; Morning day Op. 94; Pastorale E major; Romance in D<sup>b</sup> major; Rondo Capriccio Op. 64; Scherzo a Symphonie d minor Op.50; Sonnenschein "Melodie"; Souvenir joyeux Op. 87; Stabat mater: Quis es homo (Rossini-Lemare); Summer Sketches: 1.Dawn 2.the bee 3 Cuckoo 4.Twilight 5.Evening Op.73; Sunset - Song without Words Op.69; Weihnachtslied Op.82; Wiegenlied Op. 81. His Opus 64 mentioned above is his famous "*Rondo Capriccio: A Study in Accents*". He recorded "Moonlight and Roses" but this roll is not contained in the Seewen collection. Finally there are 4 rolls with improvisations of his, one entitled "4.Februar für meinen Freund Karl Bockisch" (foreman at Welte, Freiburg), one noted in Seewen as "Improvisation mit Harfen-und Glocken-Effekt", one as "Improvisation on a given Theme tutti" and one as "Improvisation über ein Menuett".

**Nater, J. J.** - Swiss organist, teacher, fl. early 20<sup>th</sup>c. N played at Zürich, Jakobikirche and Zürich, Forum cinema. He recorded at least 84 rolls for the Welte company released between 1912 and 1929, with a repertoire ranging through Adam, J. S. Bach, Brahms, Chopin, Debussy, Dubois (22 rolls), Floridaia, Grieg, Guilmant (29 rolls), Händel, Jongen, Liszt, Mendelssohn, Rheinberger, Ropartz, Saint Saëns, Schubert, Schumann and Widor.

**Mania, Paul** - German organist, composer and styled sometimes also "harmonium virtuoso". \*1882 Sep 22 Tschöplowitz/Silesia (D:); Studied with P. Hielscher; 1906 fl. Köln; 1928-Berlin Cathedral organist; †1938 Aug 11 or 12 Berlin or Obernigk/Breslau (D:) Released an early 75-rpm (sic!) disc with Lotte Lehmann of Hummel's *Halleluja*; Recorded at least 76 rolls for Welte released c1920-9 with a repertoire including music by composers identified as J. S. Bach, Bizet, Bortniansky, Brahms, Burow, Chaminade, Chopin, Couperin, d'Albert, Delibes, Donizetti, Duon, Dvorak, Eulenburg, Franck, Fressel, Galuppi, Giordani, Gounod, Grieg, Gumbert, Hummel, Jensen, Kienzl, Kreisler, Leclair, Leoncavallo, Liszt, Mascagni, Mendelssohn, Mozart, Pirani, Rabaud, Radecke, Rameau, Saint Saëns, Scharkel, Schubert, Schumann, Sinding, Stojowski, Strauss, Thomas, Verdi, Vivaldi, Weingartner, Wolf, and some popular hymns and songs. He also recorded many of his own compositions. They are listed as: Weihnachtsfantasie; Fantasie, G-moll; Innsbruck ich muss dich lassen (arr.) Madrigal; Adagio D moll; 2 Lieder:a) von roten Rosen und Nelken, b) Märchen; Präludium Es-dur; Fantasie über altniederländische Lieder; Musette G dur; Paraphrase über das Lied: Still ruht der See; Paraphrase über Rheinlieder. One of his improvisation is also on roll.

**Grosse [Große], Kurt** - virtuoso German organist, noted Reger interpreter.

\*1890 Feb 25 Berlin (D:); student at the "Kgl. Hochschule" (Royal Berlin Music Academy); 1914-1919 organist at Berlin, Garnisonskirche (Spandau); 1920- appointed organist and choirmaster Friedrichs-Werdekirche, Berlin; † after 1936 since he demonstrated the Welte Lichtton-orgel (an early electronic organ) there on Nov 6<sup>th</sup> of that year.

He released at least 58 organ rolls for Welte dated 1915-1928. Composers represented were himself (in 3 "Improvisations", one subtitled "Stimmungsbild"), J. S. Bach, Benoit, Brahms, Dayas, de Beck, Elgar, Franck, Haydn, Herberigs, Händel, Karg-Elert, Kistler, Kromolicki, Liszt, Moszkowski, Puccini, Reger, Reznicek, Ritter, Roger-Ducasse, Ropartz, Rost, Saint Saëns, Sjögren, Tschaiowski, Wagner and some popular songs and hymns.

**Hollins, Alfred** - blind English organist, concert pianist, composer/arranger. \*1865 Nov 9 Hull (GB:) 1878 *Jan* entered the Royal Normal College for the Blind. He studied organ with Dr. E. J. Hopkins, later, in Berlin: piano studies with Hans von Bülow; 1884 appointed as organist at Redhill, St. John's (GB:); 1886 taken to America, with a quartet of blind performers; studied at the Raff-Konservatorium in Frankfurt/Main; 1897 appointed organist at Edinburgh, Free St. George's Church; 1904 *Aug* and *Sep* gave organ recitals in Australia; 1907,9 two recital tours to South Africa

†1942 May 17 Edinburgh (GB:)

Possibly even before 1913 and up to 1925 Welte released some 47 rolls of his playing, containing transcriptions and original works by Bairstow, Clausmann, Cowen, Dvorak, Faulkes, Foote, Guilmant, Hall, Hesse, Hopkins Edwards, Hoyte, Johnson, Lemmens, Mendelssohn, Mozart, Paderewski, Rousseau, Sillas, Smart, Stewart, Sullivan, Watling, West, Whiting, Wolstenholme. He recorded some of his own works in the process - titles after the Seewen catalogue are: A song of sunshine; Andante in D; Andante poco tranquillo; Cantilène; Concert Rondo; Gebet und Wiegenlied; Grand Choeur in g minor; Grand choeur No.2; Morceau de concert; Pastorale and Communion; The silver cord; Theme with Variations and Fuge; Triumphal March. One improvisation of his is also listed.

**Bonnet, Joseph Elie Georges Marie** - French organist, composer. \*1884 Mar 17 Bordeaux (F:) 1904 student of Guilmant and Vierne

†1944 Aug 2 St. Luce-sur-Mer (CDN:)

1913-26 released 44 rolls for the Welte company including transcriptions and music by J. S. Bach, Debussy, Schumann, Gluck, Buxtehude, Grieg, Ropartz, Guilmant, Frescobaldi,

Mozart, Corelli, Berlioz, Boëly, Moussorgsky, Clérambault, Chauvet, Best, Martini and Marcello. There were also tolls of his own works: Angelus du soir; Berceuse; Clarie de la lune; Consolation; Dédicace, Op.7; No.1; Epithalase, Op.5, No.9; Lamento Op.5, No.2; Pastorale Op.7, No.9; Paysage; Poèmes d'Automne No.1; Lied der Chrysanthem; Romance sans paroles; Rêverie, Op.5, No.6; Songe d'enfant, Op.7 No.5; Moment musical; Stella matutina, Op.7, No.4; Zweite Legende and, fittingly in a connection with the Britannic organ, *To the memory of Titanic's heroes*,

**Wolstenholme, William** - blind English 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup>c organist

\*1865 Feb 24 Blackburn (GB:); Studied at the "College for Blind Sons of Gentlemen," Worcester; a pupil of Dr William Done (Worcester Cathedral organist) and violin with Edward Elgar.

†1931 Jul 23 London (GB:)

1913-26 Wolstenholme released 39 rolls for Welte with a repertoire including J. S. Bach, Bairstow, Boëllmann, Franck, Händel-Thorley, Lemare, Mendelssohn, Rheinberger, Saint Saëns, Salome, Schumann, Wareing, Wesley and d'Evry. In addition to this there were some 21 of his own works including: Méditation in G; Barcarolle; A Pastoral; Finale in B dur; Volkslied; Andantino in G moll; Melodie in B dur; Intermezzo a. Sonate Nr.1 F-dur; Sketches No.1, G-moll; Sketches No.3, G-dur; Pastorale in D u. Romanze A-moll; Prélude in A dur; Interlude in G; Sonate für Orgel im Stil v. Händel; Rondino; Allegretto in F dur; Prélude in B dur; Ballade in des dur; Melodie in C; He was a famed improviser and to 2 of his improvisations are recorded on rolls identified as "Improvisation" and "Impro. über Ich hatt' einen Kameraden."

**Fischer, Walter** - German organist and teacher

\*1872 Jul 10 Seibusch/Galizia (1868- (A:)/(H:) empire)

studied with Reimann; appointed as Berlin Cathedral organist

†1931 Jul 17 Berlin (D:). Recorded at least 37 rolls for Welte 1921-29 including original organ works and transcriptions of music by J. S. Bach, Saint Saëns, Händel, Godard, Strauss, Gottschalk, Weber, Liszt, Zipoli, Gade, Schumann, Moszkowski, Rubinstein, Chaminade, van den Gheyn, Herberigs, Duparc, Franck, Reger and some popular songs & chorales.

**Gigout, Eugène** - French organist, composer, teacher. The earliest-born of all Welte's organ recording artists, thus making his recordings particularly important, not only for those with an interest in studying his own musical performances, but also because he represents a mid-century French education flowering into the full late-19<sup>th</sup> century traditions of that country. He made no other known or surviving recordings.

\*1844 Mar 23 Nancy (F:)

1857 studied at École Niedermeyer in Paris with Gustave Lefèvre, Clément Loret and Camille Saint-Saëns

1863-† appointed organist at Paris, St. Augustin (the organ was unfinished until 1866)

1911 Succeeded Guilmant as professor of organ at Paris Conservatoire

†1925 Dec 9 Paris (F:)

1913-1922 released at least 35 rolls for Welte. In 1926 one more appeared, posthumously. They contained works by J. S. Bach, Boëllmann, Boëly, Chauvet, Franck, Lemmens, Mendelssohn, and Saint Saëns. From his own oeuvre were also: Toccata; Grand Choeur dialogué; Minuetto; Cantilène; Marche de fête/Suite; Fughetta; Allegretto Grazioso; Marche religieuse; Marche des rogations; Lied/Suite; Communion.

**Hofmiller, Thaddäus** - fl. early 20<sup>th</sup>c. Recitalist and organist of Augsburg Cathedral,

Germany. 1912-1928 released at least 31 Welte rolls with transcriptions and works by J. S. Bach, Callaerts, Debussy, Dukas, Gigout, Johnston, Karg-Elert, Lalo, Malling, Massenet, Piernè, Renner, Rheinberger, Saint-Saëns, Salome, Wachs, Wagner and Widor.

**Walton, Herbert Francis Raine** - English/Scottish organist, composer

\*1869 Thirsk, Yorkshire (GB:); studied organ under Dr. Naylor, organist of York Minster 1887 studied composition, theory, organ and piano, under Walter Parratt, Hubert Parry, J. F. Bridge amongst others. 1896 Liverpool City Organist; 1897- competed for and won the appointment at Glasgow Cathedral; †1929

W was a recording artist on both the early electric gramophone and Welte rolls. He is represented by at least 30 rolls, released 1913-28. Repertoire included is: Arne, J. S. Bach, Barnitt, Best, Brassin, Buck, Chipp, Cowen, Flagler, Fuchs, Grison, Guilmant, Händel, Harwood, Haydn, Karg-Elert, Krebs, Liszt, Mansfield, Meyerbeer, Morandi, Mozart, Piernè, Pullein, Taylor, Widor and Wolstenholme.

**Faulkes, William** - British organist, composer

\*1863 Nov 3 Liverpool (GB:)-†1933 Jan 25 Liverpool (GB:). 1913-24 released at least 29 rolls for **Welte** including a repertoire encompassing works by: J. S. Bach, F. E. Bache, de la Tombelle, Friml, Gounod, Guilmant, Hatton, Henselt, Lefébure-Wély, Lemmens, Salome, Thomas, Tours, Wesley. From his own oeuvre are: Fantasie über "Urbs beata"; Sonata, A moll, Op.106, No.2, Finale; Rhapsody on old french carols; Berceuse in G major; Frühlingslied, D dur, Op.113, No.1; Festival Prélude:: Ein feste Burg; Cantilène A dur; Chanson nuptiale, Op.154, No.2; Fantasie, A moll; Prélude héroïque, C moll, Op.139, No.1; Nocturne A dur; Grand chœur D dur.

**Baldwin, Samuel Atkinson** - a leading American organist and teacher of his day.

\*1862 Jan 22 Lake City, Minnesota-†1949 Sep 15 New York. Released at least 26 roll recordings for Welte dated 1912-22. The recorded repertoire extends through J. S. Bach, Bartlett, Batiste, Beethoven, Borowski, Buck, Debussy, Fauré, Foote, Frysinger, Guilmant, Harker, Huntington, Kinder, Macdowell, Massenet, Nevin, Shelley, Thiele and Wagner. This included *The Star Spangled Banner* variations by Dudley Buck (roll dated 1915).

**Matthaei, Karl** - \*1897-†1960. 20<sup>th</sup>c Swiss organist, an early leader of historic organ consciousness. c1940 Winterthur, Stadkirche organist (a street there is named after him). He recorded some 17 rolls for the Welte company dated 1926-7 with an almost exclusive content of early music, including various works of J. S. Bach, 4 of Buxtehude, 1 each of Scheidt, Praetorius, Sweelinck and Hanff. Apart from these he also recorded 2 rolls of popular Swiss songs.

**Eddy, [Hiram] Clarence** - North American organist, teacher, composer and compiler- the leading US concert organist of his era., \*1851 Jun 23 Greenfield (MA:-USA:); 1867 studied with Dudley Buck; 1871-3 studies with Karl August Haupt and Carl Albert Loeschhorn in Berlin; †1937 Jan 10 Chicago (USA:). 20 rolls released for Welte between 1914-29. Eddy also recorded rolls for the Aeolian company. For Welte he recorded one of his own works ("Festival Prelude and Fugue"), some transcriptions and original works by Bossi, Buck, Clérambault, Couperin, Faulkes, Liszt, Mendelssohn, Reger, Saint-Saëns, and Wagner.

**Breitenbach, Franz Joseph** - Swiss organist \*1853 Apr 27 Muri (CH:); 1889- organist at Luzern Cathedral. †1934 Aug 30 Luzern (CH:). He was one of a generation of Swiss composers who followed the "Orage" traditions with at least one piece dedicated to the

genre, in this case giving it a dedicated Swiss content: *Fantasie pastorale sur des Motifs et Chansons suisses et Orage dans les Alpes* (4 movements: *Alphorn call with echo - folk-tune from French Switzerland - storm scene - song of thanksgiving after the storm*). He recorded at least 16 rolls for the Welte company releasing, 1912-26, works by J. S. Bach, Bossi, Gigout, Liszt, Lorenz, Maily, Saint-Saëns, Schubert and Wagner.

**Sittard, Alfred** - German organist, composer, editor

\*1878 Apr 11 Stuttgart (D:); studied at Köln Konservatorium; 1903 organist at Dresden, Kreuzkirche; 1912 organist at Hamburg, Michaeliskirche; 1925 organ professor at Berlin; †1942 Mar 31 Berlin. He made 78-rpm recordings and recorded some 15 rolls for Welte between 1913 and 1924, a repertoire including works by J. S. Bach, Franck, Händel, Liszt, Reger, Saint Saëns, and his own *Choralstudie: Wenn wir in höchsten Nöten sein*.

**Bossi, Marco Enrico** - Italian organist, composer; \*1861 Apr 25 Salo Lago Garda (I:); †1925 Feb 20 at sea. 1912-25 released 12 rolls for the Welte Company with works by J. S. Bach; Chopin, Debussy, Dubois, Franck, Haydn, Henselt, Händel and Schumann. Two of his own works are included: *Volkslied aus Ath*, and *Noël*, Op. 94, No. 2.

**Hindermann, Paul** - Swiss organist and teacher; \*1868 May 28 Zürich (CH:); studied with Rheinberger; †1925 Jul 24 Zürich. 1912, 1913, 1926 released at least 13 Welte rolls with repertoire by J. S. Bach, Brahms, Saint Saëns; Franck; Boëllmann; Schumann; Guilmant; Salome and Reger.

**Reger, Max** (Johann Baptist Joseph Maximilian) - \*1873 Mar 19 Brand, Bavaria-†1916 May 11 Leipzig. He recorded exclusively his own works. He seems to have made about 20 rolls, all of them released in 1913. 11 of them are in the Seewen collection. The Max Reger Institut in Freiburg Germany has a comprehensive collection and this has at times been used to supplement Seewen's when Reger playing Reger recordings or broadcasts were made in the 1960s. Seewen's holdings include his *Basso Ostinato Opus 92 No. 4*; *Benedictus Opus 59 No. 9*; *Canzone Opus 65 No. 9*; *Fugue in G Op 56 No. 3*; *Melodia Opus 59 No. 11*; *Moment musical Opus 69 No. 4*; *Präludium Opus.85 No. 3*; *Romance Opus 69 No. 8* as well as a number of Chorale settings.

**Erb, Marie-Joseph** - Composer, organist and teacher at Strasbourg (Alsace). \*1858 Oct 23 Strasbourg-†1944 Jul 9 Andlau (Alsace). 10 important Welte rolls of his exist, a long lived organist, deeply steeped in 19<sup>th</sup> century traditions. This is made even more important with his location being Alsace - where streams of German and French organ traditions met. Repertoire contained in the rolls, dated 1912-25, includes J. S. Bach, Debussy, Franck, Guilmant, Mendelssohn and Wagner

**Straube, Karl** (Montgomery Rufus Karl Siegfried) - German organist, editor, choral conductor and teacher.

\*1873 Jan 6 Berlin (D:) (his mother was English). 1895 deputy-organist to Reimann, Berlin, Kaiser Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche; 1897/8 beginnings of lifelong association with Max Reger; 1902 appointed organist at the Leipzig Thomaskirche (began duties 1903 Jan 6); 1918 appointed Thomaskantor (the 11<sup>th</sup> after Bach); †1950 Apr 27 Leipzig (D:) 1922-1928 he released at least 7 rolls for the Welte company of music by J. S. Bach, and Buxtehude, but appears never to have recorded any works of Reger for this medium.

**Dupré, Marcel** - French organist, improviser, teacher, composer, editor and arranger.

\*1886 May 3 Rouen (F:); student of Guilmant, Widor, and Vierne; 1906 assistant to Widor at Paris, St Sulpice; 1916 deputy to Vierne at Paris, Notre Dame;  
†1971 May 31 Meudon (F:)

His many disc recordings are enhanced with 7 rolls released for Welte in 1926-7. They include works by J. S. Bach, Daquin, Franck, and Widor, as well as his own *Prelude and Fugue in g minor* and *Cortège et Litanie*

**Ramin, Günter** - German organist, composer and choral director

\*1898 Oct 15 Karlsruhe (D:); studied organ with Teichmüller and Straube; 1918 appointed Thomaskirche organist; †1956 Feb 27 Leipzig (D:)

1922-6 released 8 rolls for the Welte company with works of J. S. Bach, Buxtehude, Händel, Lübeck, Reger and an improvisation on "Vom Himmel hoch, da komm' ich her"

-----

Now that the organ restoration is complete, the Seewen Museum is intending to arrange symposiums and release recordings of selected organists' and repertoire as the rolls can once again be played. As an aid to this, and their preservation, a computer control system (non-intrusive to any original Welte functioning of the instrument) is being attached to the organ. Seewen's rolls are still well-preserved, but some other collections are now known to be deteriorating, one currently threatened by mould. Daniel Debrunner is arranging the computer systems and this includes a roll-scanner which can digitize organ rolls and turn them into MIDI data. To varying degrees the outboard computer will enable playback options such as "Britannic" or "1937". It will also eventually allow software manipulation of various contingencies taken by Welte in the multiplexing of the Pedal and Great data which led to small imprecisions in playback - "correcting" this will give even more accurate rendition of the original performances.

For those wishing to follow this article with further reading, a relevant bibliography, full list of acknowledgements and other articles may be found on my web-site: [www.davidrumsey.ch](http://www.davidrumsey.ch). A detailed article is due for publication by "The Diapason" in 2008.

For more details of the rolls and their significance to performance practice issues see also David Rumsey: *Organists on a roll - the Welte organ's mechanically-recorded performances*, Conference Paper Arizona 2002 (published by GOART, Göteborg, Sweden).

For specific material relating to Max Reger see David Rumsey: *Reger und die Aufführungspraxis seiner Zeit - die Welte-Aufnahmen u.a. Regers aus der Sammlung des Museums für Musikautomaten Seewen (Solothurn, Schweiz)*, Referat gelesen an den Internationalen Reger-Tagen, Bruckner-Universität, Linz, Österreich, Mittwoch 13. April 2005. / *Reger and the Performance Practice of his Era - the Welte recordings, including Reger's own, from the collection at the Museum für Musikautomaten, Seewen (Switzerland)*, paper given at the International Reger Symposium, Bruckner University, Linz, Austria, Wednesday 13th April 2005. Published in German only in *Querstand II* (2006/7), house journal of the Anton Bruckner University, Linz, Austria. Also available in .pdf format in German or English with musical examples at [www.davidrumsey.ch](http://www.davidrumsey.ch).

-----

(Revision of November 5, 2007)

© 2007 David Rumsey