

Datum des Datum des

Genant

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Den

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Bezirkshauptmannschaft

Graslitz

*Püchner*

125







Graslitz, postcard of 1912

I am Gabriele Nilsson-Püchner and together with my brother Gerald we are the fourth generation of “J. Püchner Holzblasinstrumentebau” (Woodwind instrument manufacture), founded in 1898 in the Bohemian town of Graslitz, which was then part of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. The history of our family and firm reflects the political events and fate of the Sudeten Germans, which I would like to go into here with the help of my father Walter Püchner’s recollections.

### *50 Years in Graslitz – 75 Years in Nauheim*

After Püchner had left Graslitz in 1948 – which was from then on only called Kraslice – our woodwind instrument workshop was resettled in the Hessian municipality of Nauheim.

The codes of “Dahamm” (home) managed to remain alive even up to the generation to which I belong. For me, Graslitz is so much more than just a place, it is the simultaneity of experiences of several generations, the basis of shared values, a synonym for our collaboration with excellent musicians and it paves the way towards the future. The past isn’t dead, and doesn’t even seem over...

I wish to thank my father for the many conversations we had over the years about our Sudeten German roots and about the power of music. This booklet is for him.

## Chronology

**1870**

**Vinzenz Püchner (1870–1948)**  
born in Graslitz

**1885**

to 1890: Apprenticeship as a woodwind instrument maker at at "Vinzenz Kohlerl's Söhne", Graslitz; Musician with the Infantry Regiment band in Eger under Wendelin Kopetzky.

**1895**

Vinzenz Püchner marries  
Antonia Langhammer

**1897**

Birth of Josef Püchner (1897–1988)

**1898**

Registration of the company  
of Vinzenz Püchner

**1908**

Residential building and  
workshop erected in Graslitz,  
Am Graben 543

**1924**

Marriage of Josef Püchner  
and Paula Ubl

**1927**

Birth of Gerta Püchner  
(called Gerti)

**1930**

Birth of Walter Püchner

**1945**

Appropriation of Püchner after  
World War II according to the Beneš  
decrees. Under national administra-  
tion until 1947

**1947**

Liquidation and incorporation into  
the Czech State Enterprise Amati

**1948**

12 April: Departure into exile  
from Graslitz to Germany without  
Josef Püchner

**1948**

19 July: Permission for Josef Püchner to leave Kraslice and follow his family;  
Death of Vinzenz Püchner

**1949**

First improvised workshop at Bleichstrasse, Nauheim

**1955**

Workshop and residential building at Beethovenstrasse 18, Nauheim, the first of several construction phases takes place

**1963**

Walter Püchner obtains his master craftsman's diploma in Koblenz

**1967**

Foundation of Josef Püchner OHG with Josef, Walter and Gerta Püchner as partners

**1988**

Death of Josef Püchner

**1988**

Reorganisation of the firm into a GmbH with Walter, Gerta, Gabriele and Gerald Püchner

**1992**

Gerald Püchner obtains his master craftsman's diploma in Munich

**1997**

Püchner celebrates its centennial jubilee

**2000**

Gabriele Nilsson-Püchner and Gerald Püchner become managing directors

**2020**

Death of Gerta Püchner

**2021**

New annex and extension of the building



Vinzenz Püchner (1895)

Vinzenz Püchner was born in 1870 in Graslitz, which was then part of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. He lost his parents early on during a tuberculosis epidemic and went to live with the Gessner family, where he came into early contact with the making of wind instruments. He learned to play the oboe, clarinet and bassoon. He served an apprenticeship as woodwind instrument maker in Graslitz at the reputable firm Vinzenz Kohlert's Söhne, which was founded in 1840.

### *Vinzenz Püchner*

After some years of journeyman's travels, which led him to the Pfaff Company in Kaiserslautern, among others, Vinzenz returned to his home in the Ore Mountains. During his military service, he became a musician in the Infantry Regiment band in Eger under the composer and director of music in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Wendelin Kopetzky.

"While Vinzenz did his military service in the band of the Infantry Regiment, Kopetzky asked my grandfather to collect folksongs from the Egerland region for him. This he did and it led to Kopetzky composing the 'Egerland March'. Between the World Wars it was forbidden to perform this march, as it had become a kind of freedom march for us Egerland people. It was often played as an encore at concerts, also at those of the orchestra of the Graslitz Music Society, where I recall the audience's frenetic cheering", Walter Püchner remembers.



Vinzenz Püchner with his family (1910)

# V. Kohlert's Söhne

(Gegr. 1840.) Musik-Instrumenten-Fabrik. (Gegr. 1840.)

Graslitz in Böhmen, den

18

# Lehr-Zeugnis!



Wir erteilen hiermit das Zeugnis, dass Herr  
V. Kohlert's Söhne aus Graslitz  
bestätigen kann, dass Herr  
Püchner besoldet, und  
seiner Tätigkeit in der Zeit  
vom 1. November 1885 bis 30. Mai 1888  
bei uns ordnungsgemäß unterzogen,  
und nach vollendeter Lehrzeit bis  
dato alle Pflichten zu unserer  
Zufriedenheit bei uns erfüllt  
hat. Da Herr Püchner zu seiner  
weiteren Ausbildung nach anderer  
Hauptstadt zu befehlen gedacht,  
so müssen wir keinen Aufwand der

Vinzenz Püchner's apprenticeship certificate at V. Kohlert's Söhne (recto), September 1889

allein dieper Zuzug zu er-  
halten und daher immer bei  
meinem Vater, Fleiß und mit  
solichem Fleiß zu arbeiten  
Ordnung beizubehalten.  
Während dessen meine  
und meine Zuzug zu er-  
halten. Mein Vater hat  
dies voraus festgesetzt.

Graslitz am 4. September 1889.

VINZENZ KOHLERT & SÖHNE  
Musikinstrumenten-Fabrik  
GRASLITZ, BOHMEN

Karl F. Köster  
d. Z. Graslitz

V. Kohlert's Söhne



Adolf Hamm  
Franz Traugott.

Vinzenz Püchner's apprenticeship certificate at V. Kohlert's Söhne (verso), September 1889

Potvrzení, že se živnost opověděla.  
Befähigung der erfolgten Anmeldung.

Číslo položky  
Post-Nr.  
18584

C. k.  
k. k. Bezirkshauptmannschaft  
Graslitz

Jak se jmenuje strana a kde bydlí:  
Name und Wohnort der Partei:  
*Vinzenz Püchner Graslitz Nr. 453*

Jaká jest živnost (změna), jež se opověděla:  
Bezeichnung des angemeldeten Gewerbes (der Veränderung):  
*Holzinstrumentenmachergewerbe*

Místo, kde se živnost provozuje:  
Standort der Gewerbsausübung:  
*Graslitz Nr. 453*

Den, kdy se živnost opověděla:  
Tag der Anmeldung: *Graslitz, am 27. September 1898*

Jakého kóliku se k opovědi užilo:  
Auf die Anmeldung verwendeter Stempel:  
*4 Kronen Stempel*

*27. September 1898*  
Der k. k. Bezirkshauptmann  
*Hofer*



Registration of Vinzenz Püchner's trade (date of registration 27 September 1898)

After marrying Antonia Langhammer in 1895 and the birth of their firstborn son, Josef, in 1897, Vinzenz finally registered a business in 1898. His company very soon gained a notable reputation and won gold medals at regional exhibitions. "His experience as a performing musician meant that the Karlsbad orchestra called on him again and again to help out when a woodwind player was ill", Walter Püchner recalls from the rich store of family lore.

### *Vinzenz Püchner Registers a Business Making Woodwind Instruments*

In Vinzenz Püchner's employment record book of the German Reich, issued in 1949, the registration date for his trade is given as 10.10.1897. It turns out, however, that the original registration certificate from the town of Graslitz states 27.9.1898. "Now we finally know the actual founding date. The original documents, which have been preserved thanks to my sister Gerti, have finally revealed this error which had persisted for decades", says Walter Püchner with a smile.



Residential building and workshop Am Graben in Graslitz, circa 1920

“Vinzenz Püchner also enjoyed great personal respect within his city community.

He occupied several honorary positions, for example as a member of the governing council of the Credit Bank, as Chairman of the Guild, as a member of the Municipal Committee and as a member of the poverty department of the Mayor’s Office, which concerned itself with social issues”, states Dr. G. Joppig.<sup>1</sup>

In 1908, Vinzenz had the house and workshop built on the site Am Graben 543. They were rebuilt in 1928. Later, additional factory buildings were purchased.

### *Residential Building and Workshop Am Graben 543 in Graslitz*

“A private garden next to the so-called ‘Winkelhöferhaus’ served as a valuable source of ‘nutritional support’ in times of food rationing.”

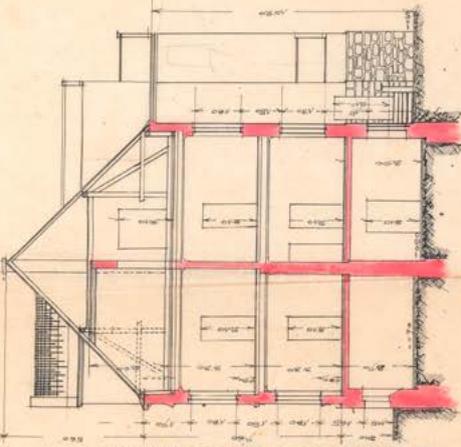


Residential building and workshop Am Graben, circa 1928

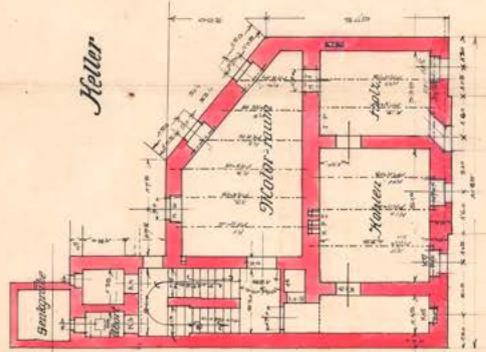
Plan  
über das bestehende Wohnhaus  
für Herrn Vinzenz Püchner,  
in Graslitz.



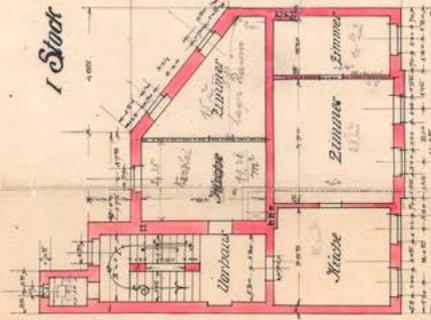
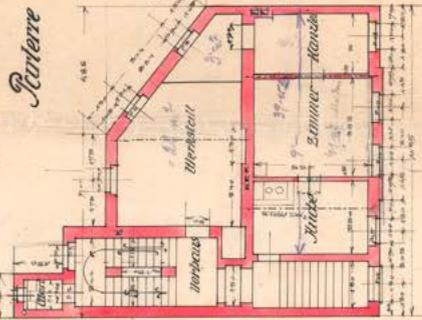
Schnitt



Situation

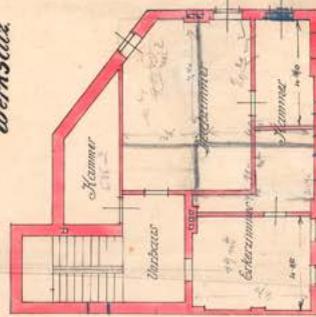


Graslitz, am 23. Juni 1922.



1 Stock

Werkstatt



*Handwritten notes and a circular seal.*



**PÜCHNER**  
Holzblas-Instrumente

bevorzugt seit 1897

**Vinzenz PÜCHNER** Graslitz  
Graben 543

The advertisement features a central illustration of nine woodwind instruments: a flute, two oboes, a clarinet, a bassoon, a saxophone, and three different models of flutes. Above the instruments are five circular exhibition medals. The text is arranged in a classic layout with the brand name at the top, the product name in a curved font, the instruments in the center, and the company name and address in a dark banner at the bottom.

*Püchner catalogue of 1920*

The catalogue issued in 1920 lists 144 models that could be ordered in various tunings and configurations. The catalogue listings were in German, English, Spanish and Portuguese. "The Püchner company has always catered for international musicians and has always had a high proportion of exports", Walter Püchner remarks.

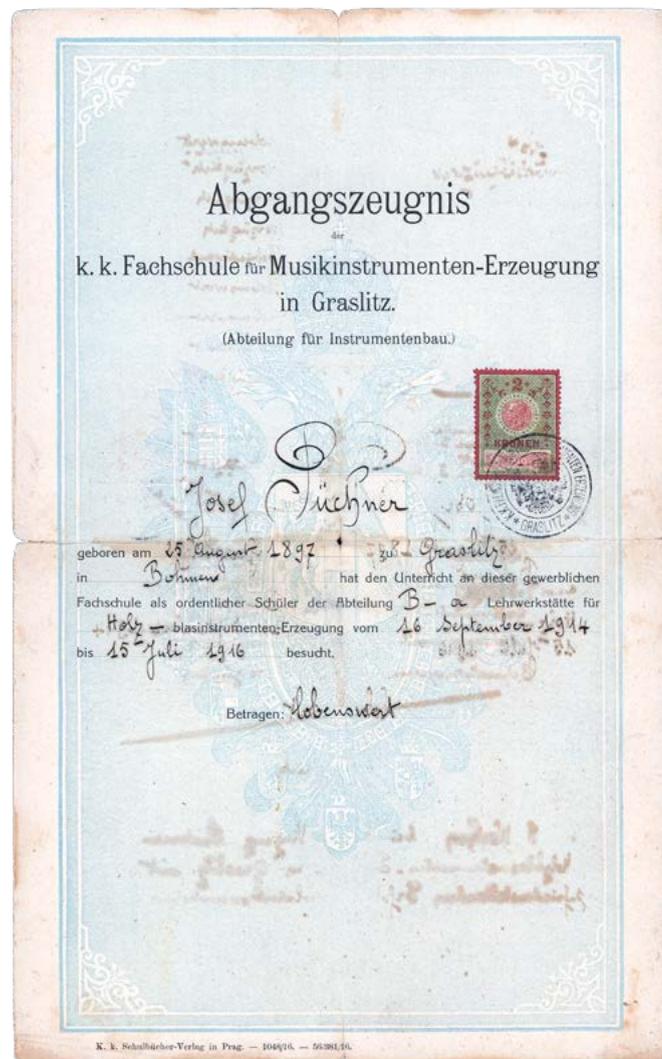
Vinzenz Püchner's firstborn son, Josef, was born in 1897 and was to follow in his father's footsteps. He was apprenticed to his father's workshop from 1911 to 1914.

He simultaneously attended the Imperial-Royal Technical School for Music Instrument Production in Graslitz, where he completed his training with a master craftsman's diploma in 1916.

## Josef Püchner

Josef took over the management of the company when he was only 17, but he too was drafted into the Austrian military service during World War I.

After the end of the war and the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, Graslitz was known as Kraslice and was assigned to the newly-founded Czechoslovak Republic.



Diploma of the Technical School for Music Instrument Production in Graslitz



Business Cards

“The small linguistic updates on the business cards of my grandfather Vinzenz Püchner's company reflect the political tension in our border town. At first it was Austrian, then Czech, then German and then finally Czech again”, explains Walter Püchner.



Josef Püchner's apprenticeship certificate from his father's company

From an early age Walter had keenly observed everything going on in the workshop: "I knew who could do what and who couldn't", which is how he sharpened his awareness and developed his acumen in young years. His father Josef expected no less of him: "I had to be able to do everything right away. Very early on, I found myself in the situation of having to explain things to much older employees... it wasn't an easy position", Walter recalls.

That certainly gave him a lot of strength and led him to be the driving force behind the decision to leave Graslitz already at the age of 18.

### *Learning by Watching*

Walter Püchner recalls: "As a boy I came into contact with the microcosm of the firm under whose roof I grew up. I witnessed the efforts of my grandfather's family, as well as my father's, who always geared everything according to the interests of the company. I saw the light in their eyes when good wind players and important customers were so pleased with our instruments that they wanted to purchase them. I pricked up my ears when production problems were solved. I saw the helplessness and desperation in their eyes when changes were brewing in our country's tense political climate and when events swept over us."<sup>1</sup>



Gerta Püchner (born 1927) and the newly-born Walter (born 1930) with their parents Josef and Paula



F.l.t.r.: Walter, Vinzenc and Josef Püchner, 1938



Walter attended the commercial school in Klingenthal in Saxony, but it was closed towards the end of the war, as all the teachers had been drafted into the 'Volkssturm', a mass conscription campaign imposed by Germany in the last days of World War II. This ended Walter's school days abruptly. In the municipal music school, he had lessons on the clarinet, the violin and also on the piano. But this school was also closed due to the events of the war.

### *Walter's School Days and Apprenticeship as a Woodwind Instrument Maker*

Walter commenced his apprenticeship as a woodwind instrument maker at the age of 14 in the Püchner workshop, which counted 50 employees at that time. However, the vocational school had also been closed due to the conscription of the teachers. Although Walter had just finished his apprenticeship before the end of the war, there was no possibility of having his journeyman's certificate issued. "There was no competent authority at that time. The guild master couldn't issue a certificate during this period".

Even during the war Püchner continued its instrument production, but part of the factory had been reassigned to war production and manufactured mechanical precision parts for the ME262 jet fighter, such as components for the tail unit. This was then assembled in Berlin.

Twenty-eight employees of the company fell in the war, never to return. Karl Püchner, the brother of Josef and Commercial Director, also passed away in 1943, leaving a painful void.

### *During Second World War*

“At the age of 15, during the last days of the war, I was called up, but tore up my conscription papers. The Russians were already in Karlsbad and the Americans in Plauen”, Walter remembers.

“I want to tell you about an event that occupied me for a long time and perhaps also marked me deeply”, says Walter Püchner. “Shortly after the end of the Second World War, I was on my way to a farmer in the mountains near Pechbach to get some milk for my family. Suddenly I encountered around 30 girls in uniform who had served with the air district command in Karlsbad. From their headquarters in the world-famous Hotel Pupp, these young women would warn of the approach of enemy squadrons by radio: ‘Approaching...’ At this point, the Russians had already occupied everything, whereas the Americans were on the outskirts of Saxony and also in Graslitz. It was therefore extremely risky to smuggle the girls through the forest between the Russian lines to Graslitz, safely and out of sight of the Russian troops. Luckily it all ended well.”

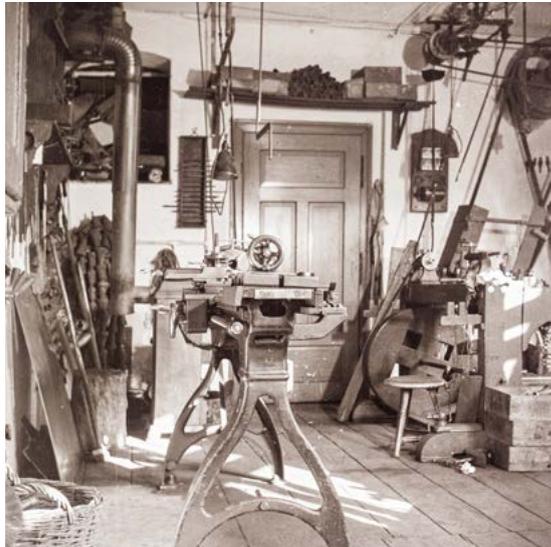


F.l.t.r.: Paula, Gerta, Walter and Josef in 1945

Immediately after the end of the Second World War, the company was expropriated by the state on the basis of the decrees issued by the Czechoslovak President Edvard Beneš (1884–1948) and placed under national administration.

### *Under National Administration*

Walter Püchner remembers this time: “My experiences during the period after the end of the war in 1945 – which to me as a fifteen-year-old felt like a total collapse – up till April 1948, when we were resettled, are the stuff adventure novels are made of.”<sup>1</sup>



Workshop at the time of liquidation in 1947

After the end of the war, Walter developed an active social life. He and his friends met for their regular evening stroll in Graslitz, sauntering together through the streets of the town.

## *Last Years in Graslitz*

“Our coterie, consisting of boys and girls, went to Eibenberg to go dancing, where we learnt and practiced the tango, waltz, foxtrot and slow waltz in the local hall.



Walter as a young man

However, we only dared going to the trendier Café Hess in Graslitz once we had become more proficient dancers. All of this came to an end in 1946 with the expulsion of the Germans, that is, of most of my friends.

As my friends had to leave Graslitz one after the other, my whole attitude to life changed. I had become a stranger in my hometown.”

“In 1947 a commission came from Prague and informed us of the liquidation of our firm. My grandfather removed his cap and said the following to the commission: ‘The Lord Giveth, and these Gentlemen Taketh Away’. I shall never forget the silence which fell over the group when Grandfather marched off”, Walter Püchner remembers.<sup>1</sup>

## *Liquidation of the Company*

Especially Walter Püchner, who had just managed to complete his apprenticeship, wanted to leave at all costs. “There is no future in Graslitz”, was Walter’s clear conviction. His father Josef tended to be more hesitant, since he had been assigned quite a respectable position at Amati. In contrast to the Sudeten Germans who had already been expelled in 1946, the Püchner family was retained because of their know-how and because Josef had a key position as a specialist and tuner at Amati.

Walter remembers the “rousing speeches” he gave in the forest during this period.

“The daily visits of my mother Paula Püchner to the official in charge of the expulsion programme, bearing him gifts, was finally bearing fruit”.

**„AMATI“**

*V. Püchner*  
SPOJENÉ TOVÁRNY NA HUDEBNÍ NÁSTROJE \* KRASLICE  
Telefon 36, meziměstský 299 . Telegramy: „Amati“ Kraslice . Bankovní účet: Pražská úvěrní banka, fil. Kraslice

Kraslice, dne 7. dubna 1948.

Odděl. účtárna/Zn

Potvrzujeme příjem následujících účetních dokladů, které jsme převzali dne 7. dubna t.r. od fy Vincenc Püchner v Kraslicích:

- 1./ Hlavní knihu do 31.12.1945,
- 2./ Pokladní knihu od r. 1941 do října 1946,
- 3./ Knihu investic a odpisů,
- 4./ Výpisy Záložny v Kraslicích od 1.1.45 do 30.1.46,
- 5./ Výpisy Úřadovny sociálního poj. v Kraslicích do 30.9.1945,
- 6./ Korespondenci z berní správou
- 7./ Dva svazky průpisů úbetek za r. 1946.

**„AMATI“**  
spojené továrny na hudební nástroje,  
KRASLICE  
Ústřední účtárna  
*M. Kucera*

Übersetzung:

" A M A T I " Zusammengeschlossene Fabriken der Instrumenten-Erzg.  
G r a s l i t z

Graslitz, den 7. April 1948

Abtlg.: Buchhaltung.

Wir bestätigen den Erhalt nachfolgender Buchhaltungsunterlagen, welche wir heute, den 7. April 1948 von der Fa. Vinzenz Püchner, in Graslitz übernommen haben:

1. Hauptbuch bis 31.12.1945,
2. Kassabuch vom Jahr 1941 bis Okt. 1946,
3. Inventarbuch und Abschreibungen,
4. Bankauszüge der Volksbank, Graslitz vom 1.1.45-30.1.46,
5. Kontoauszüge der A.O.K., Graslitz bis 30.9.1945,
6. Korrespondenz mit dem Finanzamt
7. 2 Bände Kontokorrent-Unterlagen der Durchschreibebuchführung 1946.

" A M A T I "

Verein. Fabriken für  
Musikinstrumente  
Graslitz  
Zentralbuchhaltung  
gez.: Kucera.

The Amati State Trust confirms the receipt of Püchner's financial records on 7 April 1948

In the workshop of Josef Püchner they worked with a little book in which all the dimensions of the various woodwind instruments built by Püchner were entered.

## *The Book of Measurements*

When the end of the war was foreseeable, the pressure was high, as it was of the utmost urgency to complete all entries in time. "We needed months to enter all the dimensions", Walter Püchner remembers. Back then our production included a wide range of woodwind instruments and certain special models, from clarinets using Viennese tuning to the tárogató.

When the deportation was imminent, it was up to Walter to hide this small book in a pouch with a carrying strap on his chest. "This was the most valuable object of all and a prerequisite for the restart we hoped to achieve elsewhere", as Walter was well aware. This smuggled item, hidden on his chest, remained undiscovered and the book would become the basis for a new beginning in Nauheim.



For the very last time Walter and his sister Gerta went hiking to the beloved places of their childhood, up the mountains and through the forests, bidding these places farewell. “And this farewell was an important inner process of detachment for both my sister Gerti and me”, Walter thinks.

The family had packed their crates, but not much could be taken along anyway, just 50 kilo per person. No instruments at all.

## *Leaving Home*

“I’d like to recount an incident from that time, one that I haven’t spoken about before, the story of Ram-bouski, a Czech member of the Revolutionary Guards, the radical ‘Revoluční gardy’, that patrolled the streets back then. After the Second World War, he often came to our workshop, leant his gun in the corner, listened to us fine-tuning the instruments and just sat there and watched. ‘Anyone who can work like this, couldn’t have done anything bad’, were his words to us. When he saw how thin the soup was that we were eating, he went to get us some hearty stew from his Revolutionary Guard barracks. Whenever he listened to my sister Gerti playing the piano, he would sit down next to her. Shortly before we departed, he came by again, because that night he had dreamt that we were leaving. He brought us a sack of flour in which – as we discovered only some time later in Nauheim – eggs had been hidden. Even after such a long time those eggs were delicious. Instead of using salt, we seasoned it with tears. That too is a story that has remained in our memory.”

Just prior to departure, Josef Püchner was refused permission to leave by Czech officials and was accused of “industrial looting”. “What would we do and what decision should we take? The concept of organized family reunification was unknown at the time”, reflects Walter Püchner. However, the 18-year-old Walter, Gerta and their mother Paula showed great courage in taking their decision. Despite the uncertainty about when they would be able to see Josef again, they did not hesitate about choosing to leave: “We’re going!”

Josef Püchner had to remain behind in Kraslice for the time being, as he still had to continue working for Amati for about six weeks. Only in June 1948 was he also able to emigrate to Nauheim. One day after his arrival in Nauheim, the currency reform took place and all the savings that he had brought with him lost their value.



Exit permit dated 13 April 1948, District National Committee Kraslice, for Vinzenz, Antonia, Paula, Gerta und Walter Püchner

After having spent some weeks in the refugee camp in Bensheim-Auerbach in the region of the “Hessische Bergstrasse”, the so-called Hessian Mountain Road near the slopes of the Odenwald mountain, the family finally moved to the Hessian town of Nauheim, where a number of Sudeten German instrument makers had already settled in 1946. The family lived under deprived circumstances in bad living conditions.

## *Refugee Camp and a New Beginning in Nauheim*

“Even in Nauheim, refugees were initially not welcome. After all, who would want to share their living space with refugees?”, asks Walter. “But by joining newly-founded clubs such as the ski club, the orchestra of the music society, or by going with others to paddle and swim in the Rhine, new friendships arose and old ones were rekindled.”

Shortly after settling in Nauheim, Walter’s sister Gerta obtained an administrative position at the Gross-Gerau employment office and her salary enabled her to provide for the family. “She made it possible for my father and me to have the freedom to initially do instrument repairs and finally, once we could again obtain seasoned wood, to again build new instruments. It was largely thanks to Gerti that we could start all over again here. After the first seven years during which the groundwork of the company was laid, she joined us full-time”.



Receipt for an acquired “Bed place in Nauheim”



Gerta Püchner 1954 at the construction site on Beethovenstrasse



MUSIKINSTRUMENT-IMPORT

MARNO SØRENSEN

TELEFON CENTRAL 11.636 - POSTGIRO 25086

SKOUBOGADE 5 - KØBENHAVN K. 10/12 48

Mr Joseph Puchner  
16 Nauheim b Gross Geran Hugelstrasse 2

With reference to my previous letter, I would like to inform you that I am pursuing the work on obtaining permits for you and your family to enter the country, but I would like to ask you about it, and inform you. The housing situation here is difficult and you will have to take that into consideration, but there are difficulties with the entry permits, we can't set up a factory all at once, but we will have to count on doing repairs at the beginning, would you mind? It is my idea that you should find a new home here and that we should both gain pleasure and business advantage from it, and in a sensible cooperation we should achieve something, you won't get permission as a self-employed person, but I'll do my best, so the employment relationship would be as close to being self-employed as possible.

My interest in manufacturing is great, and not just because of earnings, but out of interest, and I think we should be able to have a fruitful collaboration.

Please answer again, whether this offer is of great interest to you and I would then try to get permission as soon as possible for you, and the preparatory work has already been done.

With friendly greetings

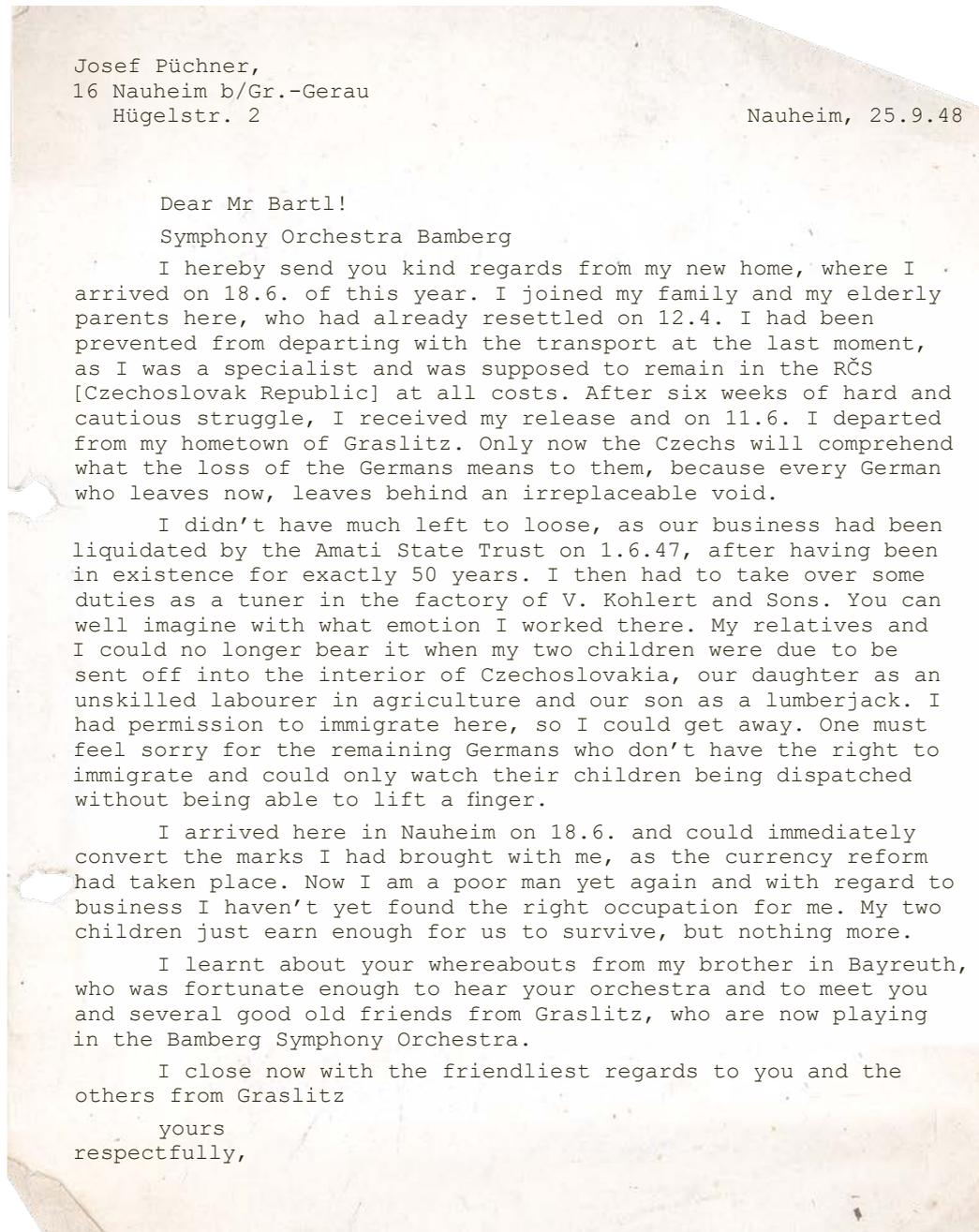
Business offer from the company Marno Sørensen, Copenhagen, 1948

*Marno Sørensen, Copenhagen, 1948*

The offer from the Sørensen company to set up their woodwind instrument department in Copenhagen at first seemed promising, but our family was hesitant. "When it became clear to me that we would have had to wait many years to start rebuilding a company of our own, and that this was dependant on obtaining Danish citizenship, I decided against it", declared Walter Püchner.

## *Josef Püchner Goes into Exile*

Josef Püchner describes his departure into exile in letters to musicians



Letter of Josef Püchner to Herr Bartl, bassoonist of the Bamberg Symphony Orchestra (1948)

As clarification: the newly-founded Amati State Trust was initially housed in the former factory building of the company V. Kohlert's Söhne, which had also been expropriated.



First workshop in Nauheim on Bleichstrasse

### *A Fresh Start*

Walter Püchner remembers the time when they restarted the company: “Our efforts to find customers among the orchestras in the vicinity and doing repairs and conversions of instruments were by and by successful. Our method of advertising was to win the trust of customers through the quality of our work; they in turn spread our reputation through word of mouth. The conversion of the oboes from the German to the French system in a solidly crafted way at the orchestra of the Hessischer Rundfunk was a start. However, the lack of seasoned wood prevented us from building new instruments. During this period, we fashioned a source of income for ourselves by building motorcycle horns, music stands and clarinet mouthpieces out of rubber.”<sup>2</sup>

This kind of reconstruction is hard to imagine today, but it was part of the post-war period. “The ruins of the destroyed cities showed that there was an urgent need for reconstruction everywhere. Places of cultural interest had been burnt down and operas were temporarily performed in improvised halls, such as the Orangery in Darmstadt, or in the hall of the Stock Exchange in Frankfurt. It was there that the two oboes that had been brought from Graslitz, smuggled out in a crate, found their new owners. The principal oboist performed ‘Madame Butterfly’ beautifully on it. After the performance he said that the opera could now be one act longer, as it was so wonderful to play on it. Such experiences not only gave us a sense of achievement and helped to inspire us, but also strengthened and expanded our reputation”, Walter remembers with obvious pleasure.<sup>2</sup>



Walter Püchner visiting orchestras on his NSU motorcycle

### *To the Orchestras at 82 km/h*

Walter Püchner summarizes what the shortage of seasoned wood meant: "When our timber importer, Karl Klier, offered us some seasoned grenadilla wood from 1936, my father turned it down as we couldn't afford to pay for it. Karl Klier brushed aside his objections with the words: 'Once you have money again, you can pay me.' Those were the words of a true friend, for which we are still grateful to this day."<sup>1</sup> The ties between our companies and families are as strong today as they were then.

"And thus Püchner could resume the production of music instruments. We could supply the whole oboe group of the Radio Orchestra in Frankfurt with Püchner instruments, as well as that of the Frankfurt Opera, Wiesbaden, Darmstadt, Mannheim, Cologne, the Berlin State Opera (which was then still East Berlin), the Berlin Philharmonic with Hanne Raft and Lothar Koch, the Munich Radio Orchestra, the Munich State Opera and the SWF in Baden-Baden, just to name a few. I was often on the road to visit orchestras with my NSU Fox motorbike, which produced 5.6 horsepower and had a top speed of 82 km per hour, when there was no wind."<sup>2</sup>



Construction stage towards the end of the 50s



Beethovenstrasse 18, still in the midst of a meadow with scattered fruit trees

### *Workshop and Residential Building at Beethovenstrasse 18*

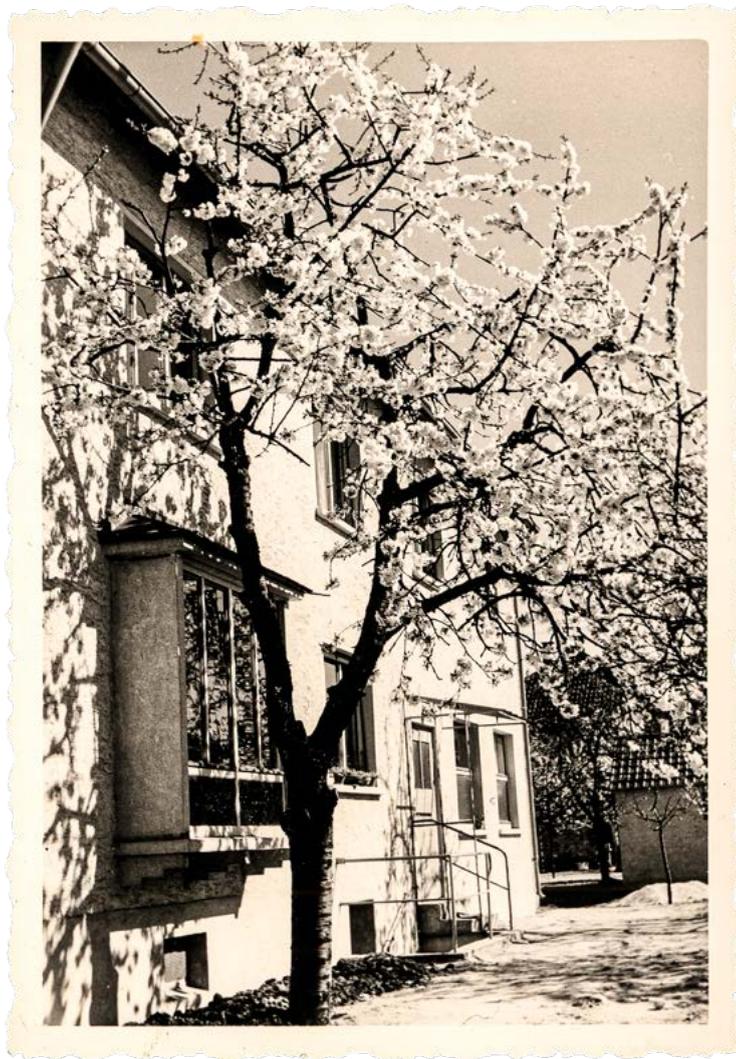
Finally, in 1955 a residential building and workshop were constructed. Through reliable work, the reputation of the company grew. Radio and symphony orchestras knew they could rely on us for excellent professional service and Püchner became the workshop of choice for woodwind players. This has continued to be the case to this very day. Musicians from near and far visit our workshop, select their instruments here and avail themselves of our reputable service. Over time many friendships have developed between musicians and members of the Püchner team.

## *Sunlit Mornings*

From Josef Püchner's letter to the oboist Alois Jan Simon in Prague in 1956:

"Thank you very much for your kind wishes regarding our move (to Beethovenstrasse 18).

I am pleased with the solution we have now found, as working here is more enjoyable due to the larger space. In the morning, the sun shines in and stays on the south side till noon. There is also an apple tree, which protects us from the greatest heat during the summer, whereas in winter it offers flocks of birds both refuge and good feeding."



## *Personal Memories*

Well into his old age, Josef Püchner was to be found in the workshop. He died in 1988 at the age of 91. "Musicians keep telling us about their very personal and emotional memories of Josef Püchner, especially pertaining to occasions where he was helping them choose their particular woodwind instrument," says Gabriele Nilsson-Püchner.



Josef Püchner in the workshop on Beethovenstrasse during the 1950s



Josef Püchner with apprentices in the 1960s



*Workshop and...*



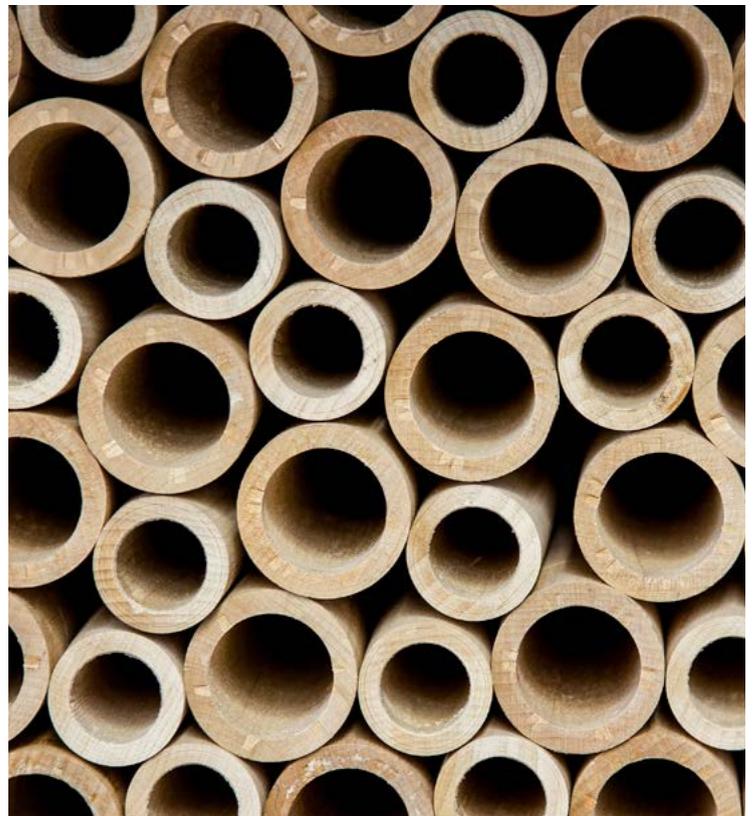
All photos: Shi Li



*wood storage*



Grenadilla wood for Püchner oboes, seasoned for more than 20 years



Mountain maple wood for Püchner bassoons, seasoned for more than 20 years

## Master's Certificates



Master Certificate of Walter Püchner



Master Certificate of Gerald Püchner

Walter Püchner passed his master's examination in woodwind instrument making in Koblenz in 1963. The company was re-organised in 1967 as a general partnership with Josef, Walter and Gerta Püchner as partners.

The company was restructured again in 1988 under the name "J. Püchner Spezial-Holzblasinstrumentenbau GmbH", which Walter's children, Gabriele and Gerald, joined as fourth-generation partners.

After her final school-leaving examination, Gabriele Püchner studied piano at the Academy of Music in Darmstadt and also studied oboe in Darmstadt and Frankfurt. After graduating, she taught piano at the Academy's Music school in Darmstadt, before joining the company management in 1983.

Gerald Püchner completed an apprenticeship as a woodwind instrument maker and passed his master's examination in Munich in 1992.

At the beginning of the millennium, the management of the company was entrusted to them.



Photo: Bernd-Ulrich Deutschmann

### *The Experienced Püchner Team*

The many years of experience, sound skills and a passion for instrument building characterize the well-coordinated Püchner team and master craftsmen. Many of the approximately 30 employees have been with Püchner for decades. "Our entire success is based on quality, professional skills and vast experience. You can only achieve this with a team that is committed to quality and has a sense of responsibility and commitment," says Gerald Püchner.



The recently-constructed Annexe for Musicians 2021–2022, planning: lorenz architekten, Trebur

## *The Present*

Parallel to the renovation of the workshop, an extension was added to the company building on Beethovenstrasse and we are pleased to now have new rooms for musicians that are warm and welcoming.

Up to the present day, we are driven to combine the highest level of craftsmanship with tonal excellence and the best service for our musicians. In order to achieve this goal, we work together with outstanding soloists. Catering to their needs has always been a key element of our work. Woodwind players from near and far have always visited our workshop in Nauheim to try out and select their new instruments and to avail themselves of the proven services of our company.

“The exchange with outstanding woodwind players from all over the world has always been both an impetus and an incentive to refine our instruments. Thanks to our well-founded know-how, we can respond to the wishes of wind players and know how to implement them. We see this as a crucial service and as our core task,” says Gerald Püchner.

Gabriele Nilsson-Püchner is conscious of the fact that their rich legacy is alive and well: “Our work and attitude strive toward an authentic approach to the art of instrument building, so that our bassoons, contrabassoons, oboes, English horns and oboes d’amore are capable of inspired and lively expression in the hands of musicians.”

Our 125-year-long tradition has been marked by several generations, all with a commitment and passion for both music and instrument making. This tradition remains alive and relevant in today’s world.



Gabriele Nilsson-Püchner



Gerald Püchner

Photos: Co Merz

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## REFERENCES

- (1) Joppig, Gunther. "100 Years of Püchner Spezial-Holzblasinstrumentebau", Festschrift. Nauheim: J. Püchner Spezial-Holzblasinstrumentebau GmbH, 1997.
- (2) Walter Püchner's speech "60 Jahre J. Püchner Holzblasinstrumente in Nauheim", 2010.

Original documents and photos from  
the family's and company's collection.



Potvrzení, že se živnost opověděla.  
Befähigung der erfolgten Anmeldung.

Číslo položky

Post-Nr.

18584

Jak se jmenuje strana a kde

Wohnort der Partie:

K. k. Fachschule  
für  
Musikinstrumenten-Erzeugung

Jahr in Graslitz-Böhmen

Bezeichnung des angemeldeten Gewerbes (der Veränderung):

*K. k. Direktor*  
*K. k. Direktor*



Misto, kde se živnost provozuje

Standort der Gewerbsausübung:

Graslitz Nr. 453

Den, kdy se živnost opověděla:

Tag der Anmeldung:

1. September 1898

Jakého kolku se k opovědi užilo:

Auf die Anmeldung verwendeter Stempel:

4 Kronen Stempel