







Ninety years of

THE SOUND OF THE ALPS

If you care about perfect sound, you have to venture out into the forest. In the upper regions of the Alps. Only in these exposed locations will you find the rare spruces, their growth predestined for high-quality tonewood. 90 years of experience have sharpened our focus. We have been cultivating and perfecting the craft of its preparation for three generations. Completely in harmony with the expectations and desires of the instrument makers, as you can hear.





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Our roots lie deep in the Bohemian Forest, which is where my grandfather founded the company in 1929. Back then he supplied wood to local instrument makers. While he had a passion for fine craftsmanship, reliability and trustworthy business relationships were just as important to him. The same things matter to us today.”

Ing. Christoph Kölbl, President and CEO of KÖLBL European Tonewood GmbH

WOOD QUALITY MEANS SOUND QUALITY

Different types of wood, different characteristics. When choosing the ideal tonewood, the most important question is which instruments and components will be made from them. The quality of the wood is just as important. This applies to alpine spruce as well as sycamore, pear wood and hornbeam. Tonewood becomes truly virtuoso when the type and quality are in perfect harmony.







A close-up photograph of a person's hand, wearing a watch, touching the rough, textured bark of a large tree trunk. The background is a blurred forest scene.

YOU NEED AN EYE FOR THE SOUND

MUSIC THRIVES ON TALENT -
AND ON THE CHOICE OF TONEWOOD

It is knowledge that has been passed down from generation to generation: The wood that sets the tone in instrument making comes from the Alps and the foothills of the Alps. Even here, in mountain forests 800 metres above sea level or more, there is often only one trunk in 100 that has the right characteristics.

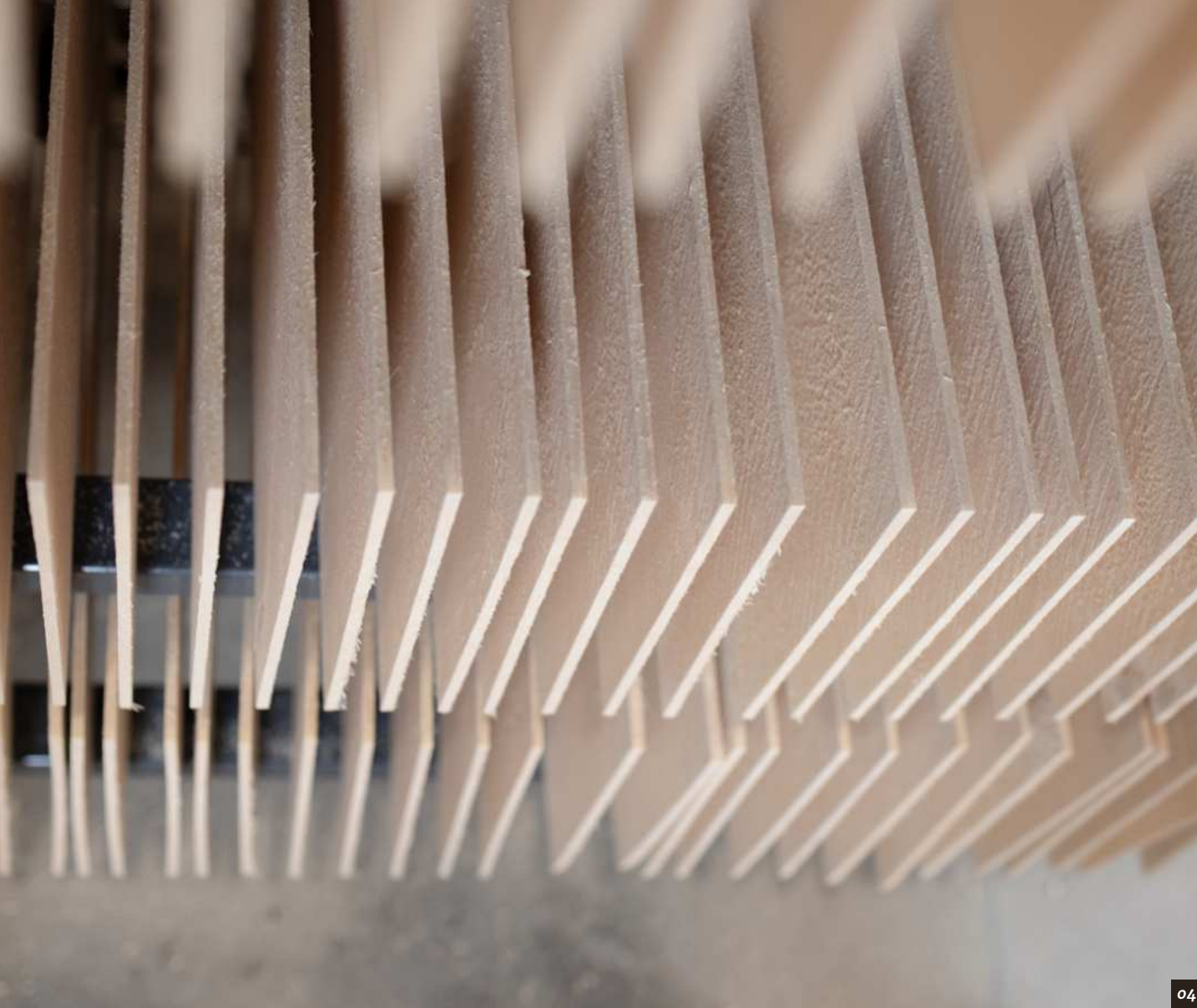
Generally, the cool temperatures and the short vegetation period favour the development of the sound we are looking for. It is known as fine-grained wood. The trees grow slowly, recognizable by narrow and even annual rings. To become the soundboard of a piano or a guitar top, however, it needs something more.

Alpine spruce for tonewood must be straight, free of visible branch scars and resin pockets, and have a diameter of at least 45 cm. When searching for and selecting a suitable tree, you need local knowledge, a feel for the inside of the tree, and a good eye. We rely on the soundness of our 90 year family tradition.

A FULLY COMPOSED WORK

There is an old saying in German: craftsmanship has a golden base. In our case, this saying can be transferred to the quality of the soundboards that are created from our tonewoods. We know exactly how finely tuned our material handling and each process phase must be in order to achieve high-quality results.





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01_Log storage

The starting point of the process for our tonewoods. The tree trunks selected by us for instrument making are carefully stored, sorted and prepared for further processing.

02_Sawing technology

The quality of the wood later on is mainly determined by the way it is cut. This requires a lot of know-how and experience. The cut is a fundamental step towards producing the perfect sound.

03_Sawn wood

Right after the cut, our wood comes out into the fresh air – to breathe. Here it has the time it needs to continue to relax and settle down.

04_Drying

The right drying and storage process gives the wood those additional characteristics that are essential for instrument making.

05_Quality control

After the dried wood has been processed, we check each board individually according to strict criteria. By hand and with a keen eye.

06_Shipping

We then give tonewood that has passed the quality control check a longer time to mature. Only if it fulfils our requirements 100% is it ready for dispatch, to leave us and be sent out to customers all over the world.



A RARE ABILITY: TO DO THE RIGHT THING AUDIBLY

A finely-tuned manufacturing process geared to the highest quality is one thing – traditional knowledge and a special touch is another. With us, the one leads to the other. Beginning in the forest and continuing through the way we work, acting in harmony with our raw material supplier: nature.



01_Wood selection

The spruce trunks for our tonewood are always felled in winter. Before the sap rises in spring, which would discolour their white wood.

02_Saw blades

Our precision is due not least to the special saws that we designed ourselves. We keep them in perfect condition even after many decades. We sharpen and repair saw blades in our own workshop.

03_Splitting and sawing

It all depends on the right technology and the right feel for the grain. That explains why, despite having the most modern machines, working by hand remains our craft. We still split logs for guitar tops by hand – and also the handling of the saws requires special knowledge.

04_Selecting the best

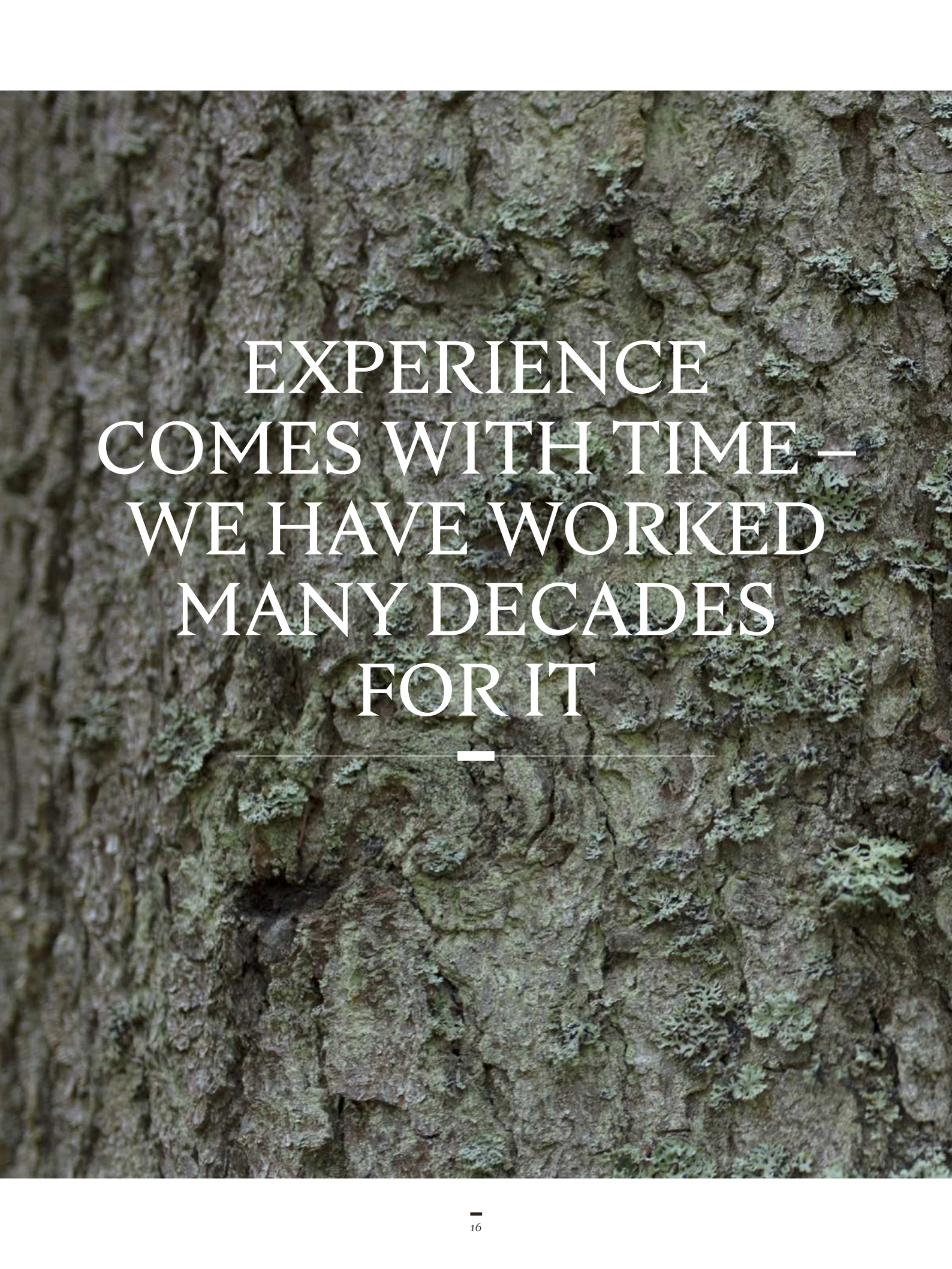
Quality control is not a one-off thing for us. It takes place all the time, at every step. And just like 90 years ago, the human eye combined with expert knowledge is the measure of all things.

05_Modernisation

We are open to innovations that lead to quality improvements. That is why we constantly invest in new technologies and expansions to our site.

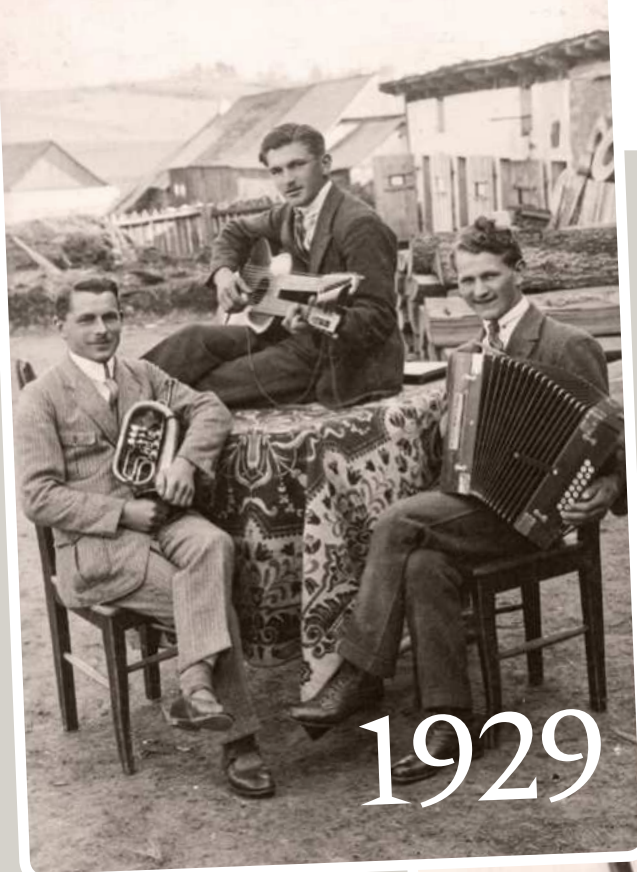
06_Sustainability

The claim is what it says: even from ideal tree trunks only the best parts become tonewood. Everything that is left over during production is an important resource in the operating cycle. In our heating plant, they become the energy source for our drying chambers and supply the entire plant with heat. Over the long term, we want to cover our own power requirements using photovoltaic systems.



EXPERIENCE
COMES WITH TIME—
WE HAVE WORKED
MANY DECADES
FOR IT





1929

1929 – For company founder Rudolf Kölbl (on the right) music has been part of his life since childhood.

1953 – The Kölbl family in their new home. In the middle Rudolf Kölbl and Adolf Kölbl.



1953

1947 – Following expulsion from the village Sarau in the Sudetenland, as a result of the second World War, the Kölbl family settled in Aigen in the Mühlkreis, only 5 km away.



1947

1956 – The newly built residential and factory building at Karl-Zeller-Weg 4 in Aigen im Mühlkreis.

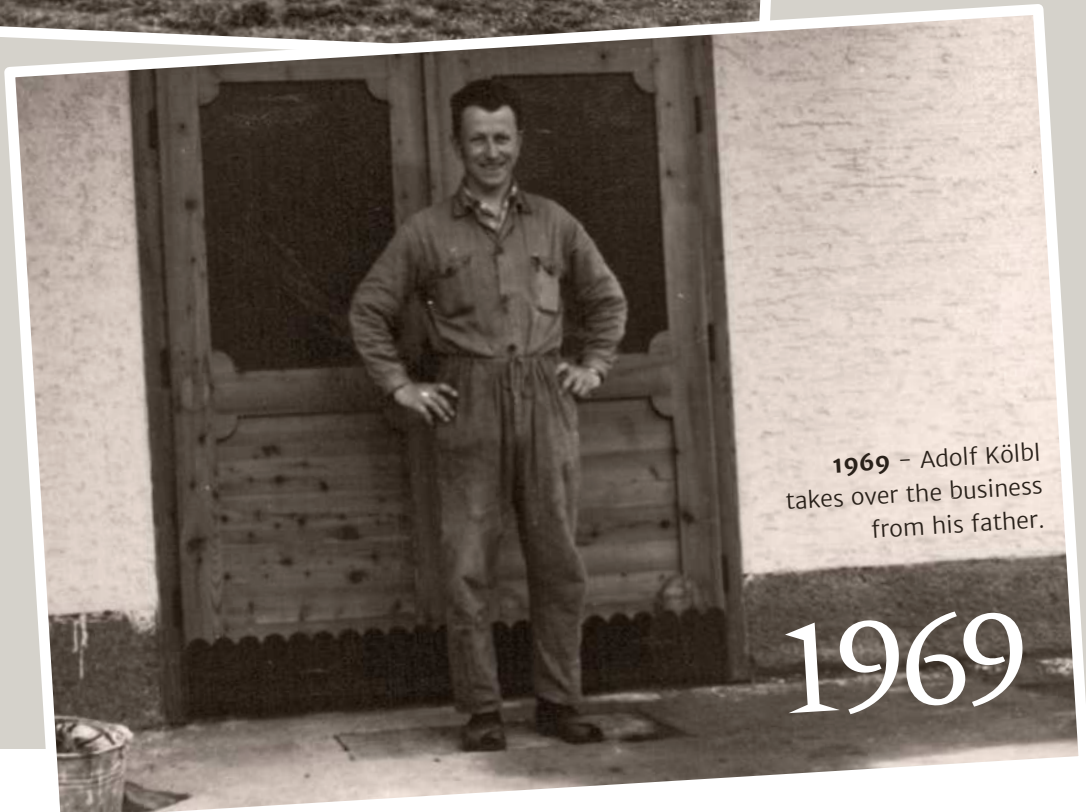


1956

THE SCORE OF THREE GENERATIONS



1964 – The construction of the second residential and office building at Karl-Zeller-Weg 5.



1969 – Adolf Kölbl takes over the business from his father.



1975- A sawmill is rented from the former Mühlviertel region wood industry to increase production.



1978 - Perfect alpine spruce trunks have always been the essential raw material for our company.





TODAY

Christoph Kölbl has been running the company in the third generation since 1990. Since the days of his grandfather, the number of clients has expanded considerably and now also includes customers in China, Japan and North America.



THE STAGE BELONGS TO THE VIRTUOSO TYPES OF WOOD, ABOVE ALL THE GIFTED ALPINE SPRUCE



The talent for acoustic virtuosity is different in each type of wood. But only very few are considered for instrument making. Because the fine-grained wood of the alpine spruce resonates easily with little effort, it has traditionally been the first choice throughout the centuries for the production of high-quality wooden instruments with resonating bodies. The masters of their trade have always regarded this wood as the real secret of sound.



RESONATING WOOD, STRUCTURAL RIBS AND KEYBOARD WOOD

What makes the fine-grained wood of the alpine spruce unsurpassed in piano construction is that the ratio of elasticity to density is ideal. Although it resonates easily, it still has sufficient resilience.

GUITAR TOPS

The narrow, evenly-spaced annual rings of fine-grained spruce are the best conductors of sound. This is especially important for acoustic guitars. It produces a warm, penetrating sound.

We offer materials that always produce the best sound for every form of guitar – from beginner models to concert or western guitars.



OTHER HIGHLY GIFTED TYPES OF WOOD ARE ALSO WAITING TO BE USED

In violin making it is fine-grained **Alpine spruce** (*Picea abies*) that goes without saying for the top, as well as for much of the mystic. Other types of wood are also used, however, in the back plate, the ribs and the neck. For recorders and other woodwind instruments, completely different characteristics are required. Our carefully stored selection of products therefore includes all common and domestic wood species.



HORNBEAM (*Carpinus betulus*)

Extremely wear resistant and therefore a guarantee for strength. This is especially important for use in piano mechanisms. Hornbeam is produced by us using a special cutting process followed by a complex drying process.

SYCAMORE (*Acer pseudoplatanus*)

As a multiple role tonewood, sycamore is used for the backs, necks, ribs and bridges on violins and cellos as well as for recorders and bassoons. Its advantage is that it is relatively hard at the same time as being flexible. We also offer grades with an attractive wavy grain.

PEAR WOOD (*Pyrus communis*)

Alongside sycamore, this is the preferred choice for recorders. While it is dense and hard, it is its harmonic timbre that is the outstanding characteristic of this tonewood.

COPPER BEECH (*Fagus sylvatica*)

The comparatively hard copper beech wood is ideal for various parts in piano construction.

ALDER (*Alnus glutinosa*)

The wood of this deciduous tree is soft and uniform. Due to its low weight it is the ideal choice for guitar necks.

OUR OTHER TYPES OF WOOD ARE:

Cherry, plum, lime and ash.



WOOD LOVERS – AND WHY WE PRAISE THEM IN THE HIGHEST TONES

It's not something that happens overnight. The products of KÖLBL European Tonewood stem from an enormous amount of human know-how. **Our employees achieve what even the most innovative machines will never manage.**

Certain work steps and decisions cannot be automated – that is part of the nature of our high-quality tonewoods. And because the pursuit of excellence depends on every single move, the importance of experience and especially trained skills is key. Without an affinity for the task, our precision work would be inconceivable. And that applies to all areas and activities. It is the shared objective that connects us. Not only with each other, but also with the company. Many of our employees have been with us for decades. At the same time, we think it is important to bring in new impetus to provide a fresh perspective from time to time. This is good for the products overall. You can't learn to assess and process tonewood overnight. Being able to rely on people who have applied their knowledge with a sure hand for ten, 17, 18, 21 or 40 years is undoubtedly the greatest strength of KÖLBL European Tonewood. The appreciation of our employees always resonates in our products. Cultivating the right tone when dealing with each other means hitting the right note when it comes to wood quality. That is something of which we are convinced.





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01_ Tanja

Accounting and administration,
more than 10 years at the company

02_ Erwin

Saw technician,
more than 6 years at the company

03_ Bruno

Logistics and
log preparation,
26 years at the company

04_ Alexandra

Management assistant,
recently joined the company

05_ Heiko

Lead supervisor
keyboard wood,
17 years at the company

06_ Sepp

Head of mobile debarking,
4 years at the company

07_ Heinz

Saw technician,
20 years at the company

08_ Bernhard

Saw technician and
mobile debarking driver
3 years at the company

09_ Roland

Deputy site manager
and lead band saw technician,
17 years at the company

10_ Jan

Keyboard wood specialist
recently joined the company

11_ Christian

Responsible for
wind instrument squares
more than 40 years at the company

12_ Klaudia

Cleaning,
recently joined the company

13_ Anton

Lead supervisor for
wind instrument squares
21 years at the company

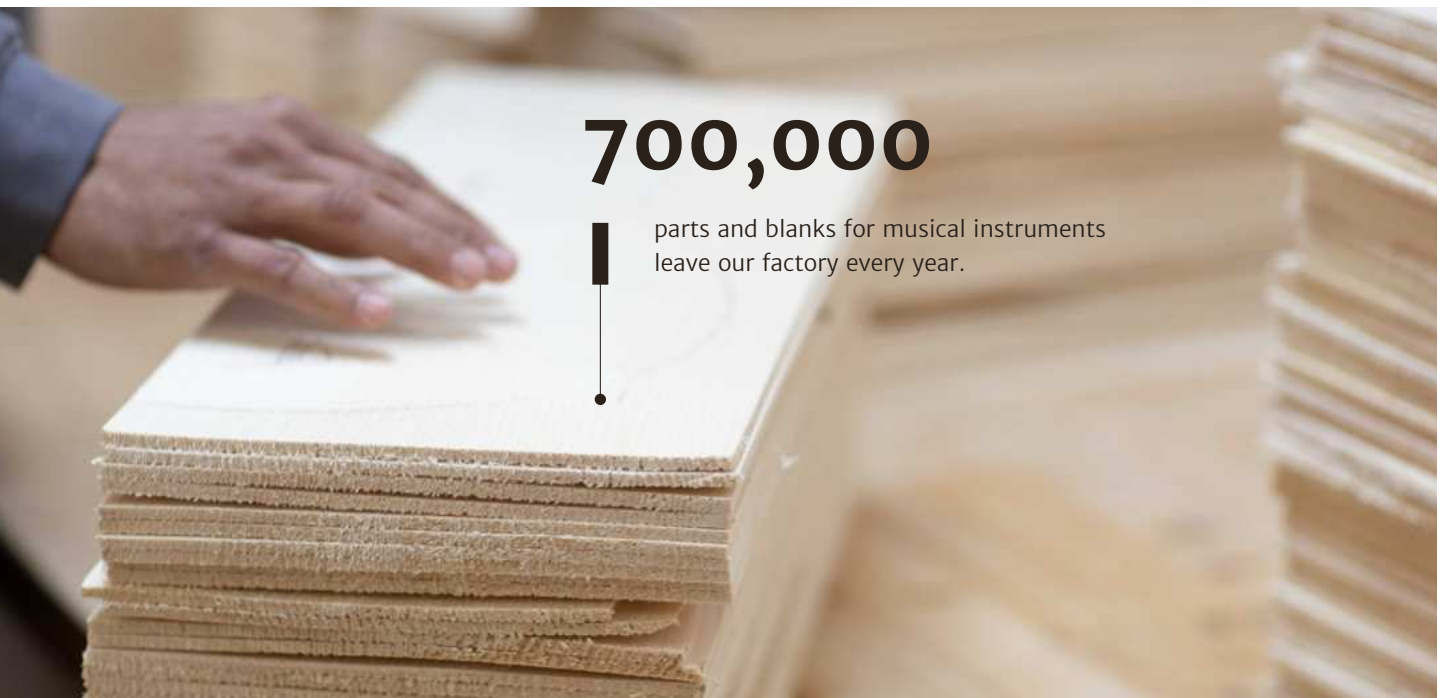
14_ Peter

Site supervisor
more than 19 years at the company

15_ Peter and Mario

Plant manager and deputy plant manager,
both at the company for more than 4 years

THE FACTS SAY A GREAT DEAL ABOUT US



700,000

parts and blanks for musical instruments
leave our factory every year.

EUR 8,800,000

has been invested by Christoph Kölbl in state-of-the-art
facilities and buildings, technology and sustainability since
taking over his father's business in 1990.



45,000 m²

of company premises and
surrounding land enable large
storage volumes.



More than

1000 kg

of fruit provided – to stay fit and healthy –
is consumed by our employees every year.



CO₂

**1,500,000
air miles**

have been clocked up by Christoph Kölbl during
his time as Managing Director, keeping in close
personal contact with his customers.

1,439.69 t

of CO₂ is what we save every year
by using our own heating plant
on the company premises.

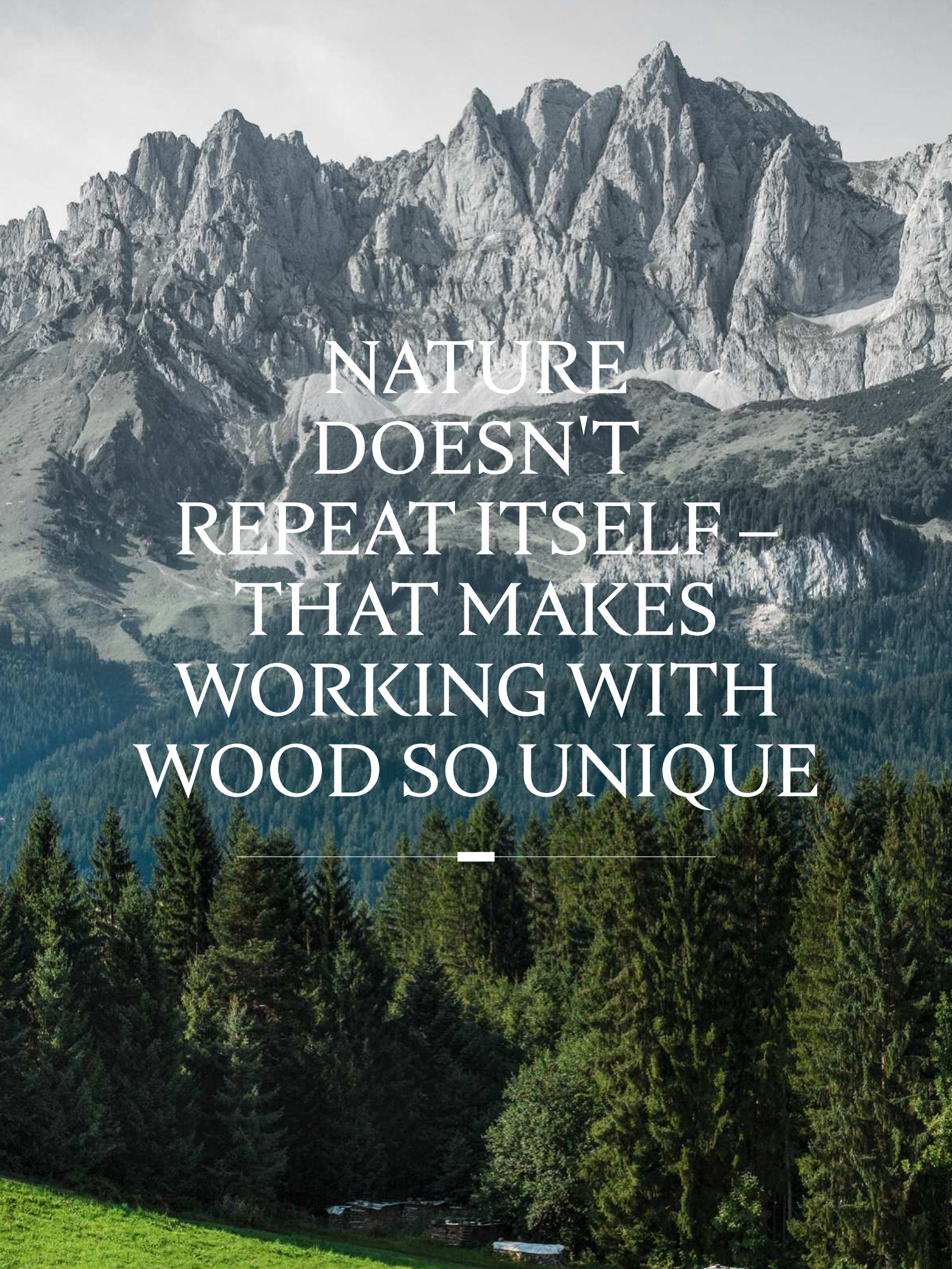


48%

of the power we consume
is generated by our own
photovoltaic installation.







NATURE
DOESN'T
REPEAT ITSELF –
THAT MAKES
WORKING WITH
WOOD SO UNIQUE

“YOU CAN ONLY GROW WITH SOMETHING NEW.”

KÖLBL European Tonewood GmbH is a family-run business. This brings many special features with it. Tradition and innovation are equally important – and the value of personal customer relationships stands above all else. This is how Christoph and Bettina and their children Anna, Daniela, Fabian and Felix explain it in conversation.

The Kölbl family, from left to right: Christoph, Fabian, Felix, Daniela, Anna and Bettina



How does the love of wood pass from one generation to the next?

Christoph Kölbl: A preoccupation with wood is handed down from one generation to the next when you are still little. Although as a child, I was not aware of what it means to work with this material. Particularly in such a special industry, where wood is not just any kind of wood, but may later be heard in concert halls. My passion for it grew the more often I watched my father in the workshop. Then I began to realise how special his work is.

Fabian Fuchs: I recently completed my training at the Wood Technology College in Kuchl. When I compare the firms my former classmates work with our company, it becomes clear how special it really is. It is about quality rather than quantity. As Christoph says, this special position explains the passion that goes into it.

Christoph Kölbl: For me it is still the most beautiful thing when I see a beautiful tree in the forest. That gives me the greatest pleasure.

What did you learn from your father?

Christoph Kölbl: Patience and a certain stubbornness. I watched how he did business and how he dealt with people. He wasn't pushy, he listened very carefully to what customers wanted. If he was sure that he could afford it, he accepted the order. Otherwise he didn't. In addition, he always tried to explain what he did to his customers. He followed a course that he never undercut. I learned the same from him: that quality has to cost something.

Anna Kölbl: In my case, it's discipline and stamina. My father

always encourages me to do my best and to complete a task. Nothing comes from nothing, as he always says.

Fabian Fuchs: From Christoph I learned to work as precisely as possible from the very beginning. That's how it's most efficient in the end. He also taught me the importance of being down-to-earth. During my work over the past few years, I have seen how essential it is to Christoph to have a sound understanding with customers.

Christoph Kölbl: Even if a business is there to earn money, one must never forget the people with whom one does business. That's one of my principles. Both must always benefit from doing business. If that's not the case, you won't be successful over the long term.

It is part of the company's tradition to develop its own special machines.

Fabian Fuchs: Yes, and there is a sorting machine that I designed together with a school colleague for the diploma thesis as part of our apprenticeship. It features the latest scanner technology. This machine will actually be built in the near future.

Christoph Kölbl: There are things in our industry that only a human can see. We use modern technology, but the final decision is always made by a person, one of our qualified employees.

What effect does being a family business have?

Christoph Kölbl: The company has an impact on all areas of life. But my wife makes sure that health and spending time together also have their place. Health is the basis for responsible, entrepreneurial action.

Bettina Kölbl-Fuchs: Working together as a family is enormously important. A great deal of energy can be drawn from this, which can then flow back into the company.

Christoph Kölbl: The company and our house are next to each other. This means that my wife sometimes cooks for our customers and we sit with them as a family and enjoy good food together. We do not separate the two things. This also underlines our special togetherness.

Where is the development of the company going?

Bettina Kölbl-Fuchs: If I look at the company in that way, there has been a very steep increase in the last 30 years. A great deal has been invested, including energy and know-how. Development will continue in the future. But I also think it's very important to maintain what we have. So our achievements are well safeguarded.

Christoph Kölbl: Compared to my first year as managing director, we now have 25 times the turnover. This means we have already achieved the goals I set myself. I am now 51. When my father handed over the company to me, he was 50. During our 90th anniversary, it was doubly important to me to lay the foundation stone for the next generation. That is why we have once again invested in the future. To stand out further in terms of quality and be prepared for the coming years. I am convinced that our company will play a key role as a supplier to instrument makers for many years to come.



KÖLBL European Tonewood GmbH
Karl-Zeller-Weg 5, A-4160 Aigen-Schlägl
T: +43 7281 6317-0, office@koelbl.co.at
www.koelbl.co.at

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