

CLASSIC DRIVER

A Grand Mercedes for Erik Charell's dance on the volcano

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Erik Charell was among Berlin's most dazzling personalities in the Roaring Twenties, thrilling audiences with his revues and operettas and, as a director, discovering talents including Marlene Dietrich and the Comedian Harmonists. Now, his magnificent Mercedes-Benz 770K is for sale...



In the 1920s, in no other European city were celebrations more excessive than in Berlin. In order to forget the horrors and hardships of the First World War, the fun-crazy city dwellers in jazz clubs and at dance revues certainly made the most of their nights. Among the most defining characters of these wild years was the actor, dancer, and director Erik Charell. He brought the world-famous Tiller Girls to Berlin, discovered later stars such as Marlene Dietrich, and staged some of the most successful operettas of the time with *Casanova* and *The Three Musketeers*.



Charell's glamorous appearance was also facilitated by the most elegant car you could buy at the time – the famous 'Grand Mercedes', with its Goliath 7.7-litre engine. On 18 August 1931, he climbed behind the wheel of his Mercedes-Benz 770K Cabriolet D for the first time. It was one of just 18 examples handcrafted in Sindelfingen, for which he'd paid the princely sum of 47,500 Deutsch Marks.



Alas, his joy didn't last long. The bubbling volcano on which Charell's ever-changing dance ensemble had blitzed through the nights erupted, ending the revealing era. When the Nazis seized power in 1933, Charell – whose real name was actually Erich Karl Löwenberg – fled to the USA and from then on directed films in Hollywood. It wasn't until 1950 when the director returned to Germany, where he celebrated further success with his musicals and comedies. Meanwhile, his 'Grand Mercedes' remained in America and did not return across the pond until 2004, when it was painstakingly restored. Now, [Erik Charell's Mercedes-Benz 770K Cabriolet is for sale with Thiesen in Berlin.](#)

Photos: Thiesen / Getty Images

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