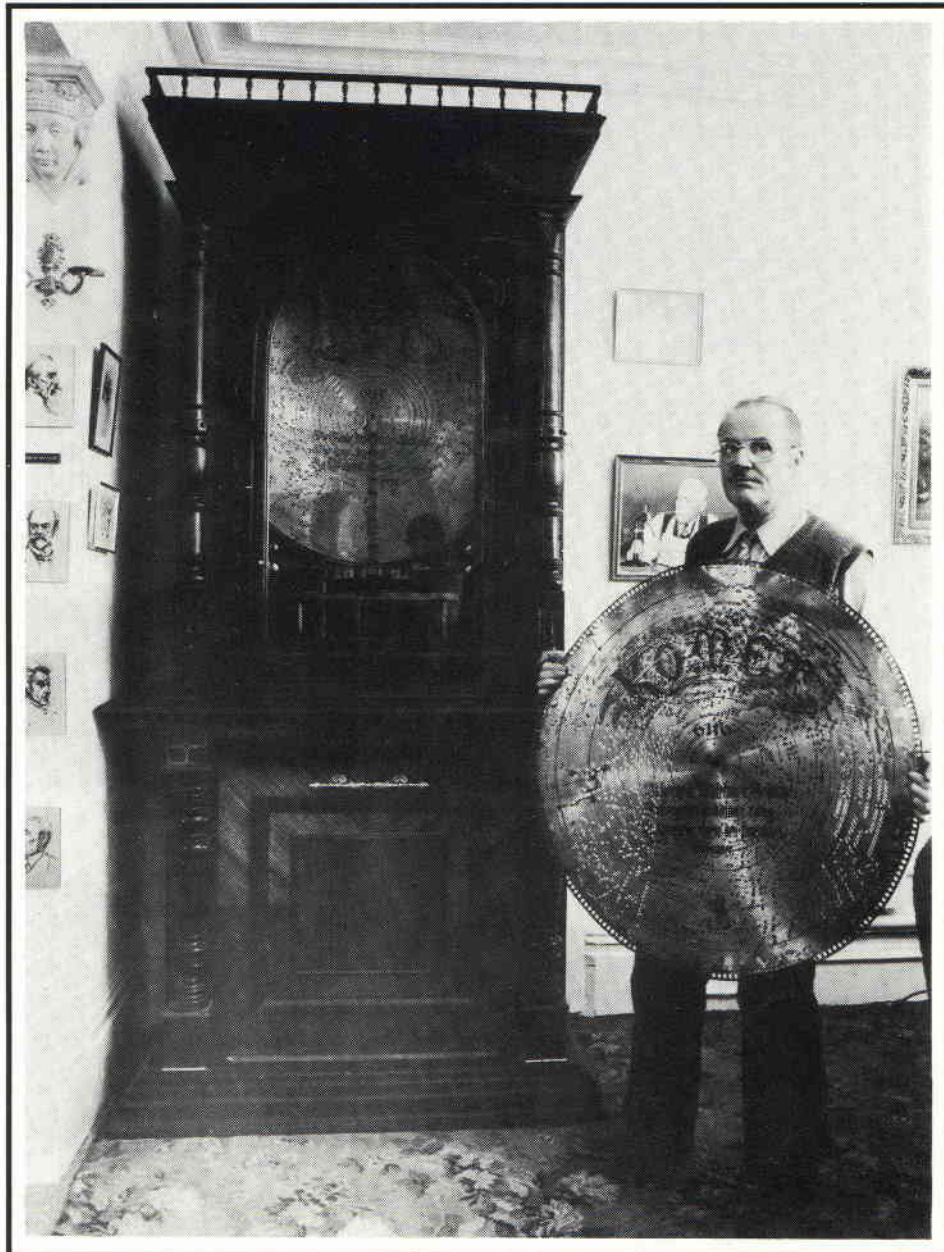


# THE MUSIC BOX

an international magazine of mechanical music

THE JOURNAL OF THE MUSICAL BOX SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN

Volume 11      Number 7      Autumn 1984

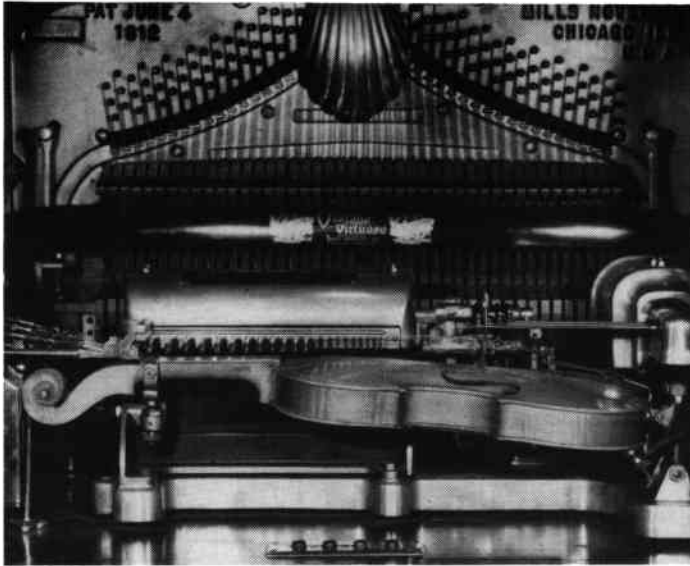


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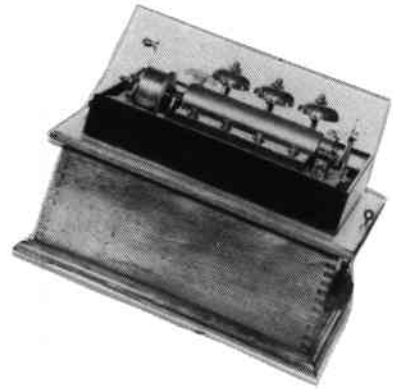


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**FRONT COVER**

**Geoff Worrall** poses the question, "Is the KOMET the biggest music box in the world?". He is seen on the front cover standing by his prized possession.

It has taken 17 years to put this mighty instrument into working order, and many of our members have helped **Geoff** on the way:- **Q David Bowers, Keith Harding, Cliff Burnett, Brian Clegg, Doug Berryman, Mr W Grecke, Jan Bravers, Jon Gresham, Terry Lee, Jan Brauers,...**

At last **Geoff** can report, "... is recarused and PLAYS well. The only playing one in the world? Looks like it... but if you see another this size, please let me know".

But first of all read **Geoff's** article on page 284.

**Dem bells, Dem bells!**

Our series on Carillons was very popular, but reading is silent. The sound of bells is not always well received. In Cerenzia, near Naples, the town clock struck every quarter of an hour... or rather it did until someone stole the striking mechanism. One local said, "It drove us up the wall. Now we can enjoy sleeping".

The police are looking for the person who stole the mechanism, but the police chief stated that "the town seem to be sticking together on this one!"

Also in Italy. A travelling comedian was telling blue jokes, so every time he started another blue joke the village priest rang the church bell so no-one could hear. When someone asked the priest how he knew which jokes were "blue" he replied, "It is my job to know such things", adding under his breath, "Why should the Devil have all the best jokes".

Still in Italy. The bells *did* ring in Naples on July 1st 1984 because Diego Maradona signed on for Naples Football Club. The fee was £5½ million, and his salary, for kicking a football, almost £1 million a year for five years. Also - a luxury villa for Diego and his girlfriend.

**PLYMOUTH MEETING**

A wrong telephone number was given for the DUKE OF CORNWALL HOTEL, the correct number is:- (0752 266256).

The PLYMOUTH MEETING is 7 to 9 September 1984, and will be held at The Duke of Cornwall Hotel, Millbay Road, Plymouth PL1 3LG. There is a weekend package for £39.00 per person. Don't forget the £5 booking fee to be sent to **Alan Wyatt**, The Willows, Landbeach, Cambridge CB4 4DT Tel: 0223 860332.

Alan asks all organ owners to bring them along, also organettes. He calls the weekend a FUN FOR ALL meeting. Sounds great. You Must Come!

**Christmas Meeting**

This is to be held at The Press Club, 76 Shoe Lane, near Ludgate Circus, London, on Saturday DECEMBER 1st, 1984. John Powell, Peter Howard, and Reg Lord have agreed to speak.

**Rhine Trip**

Another Alan Wyatt Spectacular! By the time you read this it will all be over. (July 8 to 16, 1984), but if it is anything like last year's trip to Switzerland, then our members will have had a wonderful time.

**Chanctonbury Ring, March 1984 Meeting**

At this very enjoyable meeting Clive Jones displayed a 15½" Polyphon which, although unrestored, was in excellent condition and played well.

Peter Howard then displayed and spoke about his 17¼" Stella Disc Box, which he bought at a local auction. The machine played reasonably well but the base supporting the box was not good. Peter told us how he intended to make a new base, veneering it, and keeping the same pattern as the box itself. Everyone was fascinated by his account of the art of veneering. He also told of the pitfalls. Peter laced his interesting talk with tunes from the Stella.

Lilian Byron played a major part in the preparation of the lunch.

During the afternoon there was a discussion about the items to be presented by the Chanctonbury Ring at the forthcoming Littlehampton Meeting.

Ted Brown talked about one of his music boxes, and then other guests played and talked about the instruments they had brought to the meeting.

It was a most enjoyable day, with interesting talks and plenty of boxes to listen to.

Thanks were given to John and Kay Mansfield for their kindness and wonderful hospitality.

Cyril Hess (Secretary to C R).

**Robbery**

Alan Ridsdill rang me up to report a robbery at his cottage. The police have the matter in hand, but it is all very distressing for him. Members living near to Alan might like to pop in and have a cheery word with him. Alan has not been too well. Neither has Frank Holland. He rang me from hospital just before he went on convalescence. By the time you read this he will be back at work at his famous museum. Frank is always pleased to receive letters and, be sympathetic, don't expect one back immediately. He already works far too many hours a week.

**Christopher Proudfoot**

Christopher, with Philip Walker, has written a book, *Woodworking Tools*. It is due out in July 1984, price £15, from Department CS, Phaidon Press, FREEPOST, Oxford OX1 1BR.

Christopher is a Director of Christie's, South Kensington, and his book is a well illustrated, practical guide to tool-collecting. The accent is on collecting rather than history. There are 152 illustrations, and 160 pages. He is also Editor of the *Hillandale* magazine, and for members who want specialised articles and information on gramophones, the address of the "City of London Phonograph Society" is:- Sec D R Roberts, 80 Boltons Lane, Pyrford, Woking, Surrey.

**Sue Holden reports on the 1984 AGM**

**Annual General Meeting**

The Annual General Meeting took place at the London Press Club on 1st June, 1984.

The minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting held on 10th June 1983 were read out to the meeting and adopted. There were no matters arising therefrom.

**Hon President's Report**

The Hon President, Jon Gresham, thanked the Committee for their support to him during the year.

**Hon Treasurer's Report**

The Hon Treasurer, Bob Holden, reported that the Society Auction had been extremely successful in 1983 and had helped to make the Society's position stable. This situation would continue provided the membership does not fall in 1984. The treasurer proposed a vote of thanks to the Society's auditor, Stephen Cockburn, for the time he devoted in auditing the Society's books.

**Hon Secretaries Reports**

The Correspondence Secretary, Membership Secretary, Meetings Secretary and Subscriptions Secretary gave their reports on their work throughout the year.

**Hon Editor's Report**

The Hon Editor, Bob Leach, thanked all the contributors for articles submitted to him for publication.

**Nominations**

The following offices were elected to serve for one coming year. Hon President: Jon Gresham, Hon Vice President: Stephen Ryder, Hon Treasurer: Bob Holden, Hon Editor: Bob Leach, Hon Archivist: Peter Howard, Hon Membership Secretary: Reg Waylett, Hon Subscription Secretary: Ted Brown, Hon Meetings Secretary: Alan Wyatt, Hon Correspondence Secretary: Roger Kempson, Hon Recording Secretary: Sue Holden, Hon Auction Organiser: Roger Kempson, Committee Members: Keith Harding, Reg Mayes and Christopher Proudfoot, co-opted Committee Members: Ken Dickens, John Powell.

**Hilary Kay**

The President reported that Hilary Kay had resigned from the Committee and recorded his thanks to her for the sound common sense she had brought to Committee Meetings.

Keith Harding has resigned his post as Hon Archivist but the President was delighted he could remain as a Committee Member. He thanked Keith Harding for his work during his term as Archivist.

Dr Peter Whitehead proposed a formal vote of thanks to the Hon President, Officers and Members of the Committee for their hard work throughout the previous year.

Sue Holden,  
Recording Secretary.

**Sue Holden Reports**

More than eighty members and friends attended the SUMMER MEETING, held at The London Press Club on Saturday June 2nd, 1984. The President, Jon Gresham

extended a special welcome to **J. Van Witteloostuyn** (Netherlands), **Mel Weener** (Ohio) and **Andrew and Peggy Kahn** (Larchmont, New York).

Between 9.00 a.m. and 10.15 a.m. there was Registration, entries for the auction, and coffee and biscuits.

The first speaker was **Freddie Hill**, who spoke on "Barrel Organ". The London Press Club is in Shoe Lane and Freddie pointed out that Shoe Lane used to be very much the centre for the small barrel organs which went into musical clocks, circa 1870, or, about 10 years before the Press Club was formed (the first club, however, was in Fleet Street). Freddie mentioned Charles Clay, and James Croft whose workshop was at 103 Shoe Lane. The musical clocks of that period were incredibly accurate. The lecture was illustrated by the use of slides and recordings.

Freddie then went on to chamber barrel organs. His interest began in 1950. Finally, he showed his great knowledge of church organs.

It was an entertaining, instructive and intensely interesting lecture, and it was well applauded.

Then **Graham Whitehead** told us of the latest development at his remarkable museum at Napton, telling us about the "largest barrel operated organ in the world".

Referring to **Ray Ashley's** lecture last Christmas on "atmospheric railways", Graham told us about the "atmospheric cinemas" of the 1930's (how can the lad remember!?!), when there were artificial stars twinkling in the roof (he should have seen the garden cinemas in Cairo!) and buildings painted on the walls, so one thought one was sitting in space.

Speaking of his career as a newsreel boy and his promotion to relief operator, Graham told us an amusing tale of a man in a mackintosh. The film, daring for its day, had Carol Baker running naked through a wood. Graham spotted this mackintoshed man lying across several seats in the stalls, and as Carol did her naked streak through the trees, this man made odd noises and writhed about in a most odd manner. Graham gave him several "Shut up or get out"! warnings, to no avail. Finally, on getting no response when he asked the man his name, Graham said he'd send for the police. Still the man writhed and moaned. Carol Baker had long since disappeared into the darkness of the forest. "Where have you come from?" Graham asked. "From the circle"! the man in the stalls managed to gasp.

Another story from the ebullient Graham concerned the Belgian organ repairer who spent months on a simple job, picking up information from the Nazis and passing it on to the Resistance, in World War Two.

There is wonderful entertainment to be had at Graham Whitehead's Napton Museum. One of the latest acquisitions is "The Largest Barrel Orchestration in the World" — 13' 6" high, 9' wide, and 5' deep, with barrels 5' long. This monster was built for The Crystal Palace Exhibition, and it was then owned by Lord Hastings who bought it in 1852. (The Exhibition was actually held in Hyde Park, 1851 — the palace being moved to Selhurst, S.E. London, later. That's where Ray Ashley's secret railway ran. They still haven't found the underground station).

The orchestration is 1½" too wide to go through the door, and too high for the Napton ceiling. "We'll crack it"! said Graham confidently.

He also, very wisely, said, "I see mechanical music as an entertainment".

It was a great lecture, and Graham Whitehead and Freddie Hill both deserved the lauding applause of the members, and the vote of thanks from the President, Jon Gresham.

Then followed lunch, and convivial conversation at the Club bar.

After a delightful lunch, served by our usual ladies at the Press Club, we all settled down to listen with great interest to our President's wife **Pat Gresham** give a tale cleverly entitled **Re-collections, A Wife's View of a Maggie**".

Pat illustrated her talk with slides and began by saying how much she enjoyed giving it because it was the only occasion on which our President, Jon, was not able to answer her back!

Many amusing stories were related on Jon's schooldays and on his early days in Music Halls and Circuses. Jon was billed as "Europe's Youngest Fire Eater" and it was at this time he dropped the "h" from John and Jon, because of his likeness to the Scandinavians.

When Pat met Jon he was travelling up and down the East Coast, appearing in pantomime, side-show illusions and building up do-it-yourself shops. They became engaged and Pat insisted upon a normal wedding — for that day only — at the end of April, as all the side-shows were due to open at Whitsuntide. We saw with interest some slides of a perfectly normal wedding, but Pat assured us that was the end of normality and the return of Jon's eccentricities.

Pat soon became involved as "one of the girls" when she would have to appear as a living half lady and even as the headless lady. Needless to say, some members of the audience fainted during the latter performance!

Life carried on in a flat where Pat entertained many strange friends of Jon's, not to mention Dr. Death who weighed 32 stones and Klondike Bill, who was a wrestler. At this time, their son Maxwell was born and Jon then promised Pat a normal, ordinary house. Pat became quite excited at this prospect, and proceeded to show us a slide of the promised house. It was indeed a challenge, complete with ghost, and needed much work to bring it to a normal state. However, Pat managed to cope, the house now looks normal from the outside and the ghost has vanished.

Inside the house is not quite so normal! The bedroom contains an old fashioned whip fitted on a long raised hearth, but we are positively assured there are no long black boots! After Jon had been given his first coin slot machine, many more such machines arrived on the scene and were sited on the landing, in the back entrance hall, the dining room, the library and even in the stables. Furniture obviously was not a priority on Jon's list!

By this time, their daughter Lindsay had been born and completed the family.

Pat then looked for an unusual Christmas present for Jon and bought a musical box for £100. She did not bargain for the numerous

books Jon would buy on the subject and how a new collection would be started. The side to the collecting of musical boxes became apparent and Jon then realised that Pat's patience could be fading and a museum was desperately required.

It wasn't quite as simple as that. Jon bought a local run down cinema instead. The local council asked that the premises be kept as a cinema, so the museum was placed in the stalls and the cinema continued by means of a roll up screen. A second cinema at Beverley was then purchased, so watch out Odeon, Leicester Square! Pat told us all about the museum, called Penny Arcadia, which some of us were fortunate to visit during the Autumn 1983 meeting.

The talk was completed by sharing a film made by B.B.C. television in 1974, showing Bernard Falk of the B.B.C. investigating the house and collection of slot machines etc. We are indebted to Tony Martin of the Beeb for making the film available to the meeting, and to Graham Whitehead for bringing his projector along.

It was my pleasant duty to thank Pat Gresham on behalf of the members and guests for her stimulating and fascinating talk about her life with our President. She was invited back for a future instalment in about five year's time!

After tea had been taken, everyone settled down for the **Annual Society Auction** under the supervision of our expert auctioneer, Christopher Proudfoot. Our thanks to him for all his hard work. There were 116 items, which Christopher rattled through in his customary manner and grateful thanks are due to Roger and Ann Kempson, our Hon Auction Organiser and his wife for the tremendous effort they both contributed to the success of the Auction. The Treasurer, Bob Holden, also had a busy time and managed eventually to balance the books.

The Press Club, by courtesy of Bob Leach, again proved to be an excellent venue. The meeting over, everyone dispersed to examine their various purchases and we look forward to the next meeting in September.

#### Footnote

Frank Holland, who is now recovering from a recent operation, issued an open invitation to members of the society, to visit his museum, The British Piano Museum at Brentford, on Friday, 3rd June. Best wishes for a speedy recovery, Frank, from us all.

Sue Holden,  
Recording Secretary.

#### Spring Meeting, Littlehampton, Sussex

This meeting, 27-29 April, 1984, was the hottest April since weather records were kept, and **Frank Holland** was able to confirm that it was certainly the hottest April he could remember over the past 150 years. As usual, the credit for the wonderful weather was given to farmer **Alan Wyatt**, who chose the date. The Beach Hotel where we stayed, had a self-heated open-air swimming pool. On the 150 square yards of roof area there are matt black micro tubes which absorb the sun. They are fitted together and the stored heat is fed into the swimming pool below. This heating arrangement is to be supplemented with a heat pump. This is really a refrigerator in reverse. It will be over the kitchen where the

excess heat will be trapped and stored when there is no sun. The cost of running the pump is minimal, and it will work 24 hours a day. Its output is turning cold air into hot water, its input, hot air into cold water. Mechanical heating for mechanical water music, while we were there.

On Saturday morning two coaches transported us to Clive and Enid's museum. It was great. A very popular museum with the public at large, and Good Luck to Clive and Enid in their enterprise.

We went to the Royal Dockyard, Portsmouth, in the afternoon. Great stuff: HMS Victory, The Mary Rose, and The Royal Naval Museum. Only sad point, Alan Ridsdill got left behind. He returned by bus. It was one of those human error situations where no-one was really to blame..... combination of errors.

Peter Jansen van Rensburg from South Africa, John Haas and Bernice from America, were present.

Reg Waylett had a vested interest in The Mary Rose, being a founder member of The Mary Rose Society, and was present, with Prince Phillip, when the timbers of the sunken ship finally rose from the bed of the sea.

David and Lesley Evans gave a magic lantern display which drew gasps of astonished surprise from the audience.

On Sunday Ted Brown gave an amusing talk on "security" and "magic marking" of valuable goods (reported previously from a talk he gave at The Chanctonbury Ring last year).

Bill Summerbell gave a memorable talk on how automata was made. I remember John and Margaret Miller telling me about Bill Summerbell during the trip to Thun last summer, so it was particularly interesting to hear the talk he gave at Littlehampton.

Then the popular Ted Bowman gave an excellent talk on the cutting and arranging of paper rolls for organs.

Jack Shaylor had a hand in arranging the meeting, and so did John Mansfield. Alan Wyatt was well served by these two stalwarts of our Society.

Keith Harding found time to attend despite the pressures of an intended move to other premises. That is why he has given up the job of archivist, but he is still a committee member we are pleased to report.

Roger Brooks was there, all the way from Ayrshire, and he promised to help David Snelling and Jack Shaylor with translations from the German. Is there anyone who can help Alison Biden with Spanish and French translations?

Those who were at the Kendal meeting, in the Lake District, last year will remember Jim Hall's son talking about mountain climbing. Jim writes to say that his son, Brian, was injured recently in the Himalayas and had to return home.

The following cutting is taken from the Buxton Advertiser, and it gives some information about Brian and his wife Louise.

#### Down to Earth Catering

Mountaineer Brian Hall will return from a climbing expedition in the Himalayas in June to find that his home in Hayfield has been transformed.

Because during his absence his wife, Louise, has been hard at work converting their house in Church Street into the Kinder Kitchen cafe which officially opens its doors today, Thursday, May 3rd, 1984.

Brian helped with the early stages of converting the premises but was committed to leaving the UK on April 14 to join a ten-man Anglo-Nepalese climbing project.

The team, who include Doug Scott, are attempting to climb Makalu the fifth highest summit in the world, standing at 27,790ft.

#### Helpers

Since his departure, friends have taken over to help Louise get the cafe ready in time. "The place has been transformed since he left. He probably won't recognise his own house when he returns", she said shortly before opening day.

Louise had a trial run for the cafe over Easter but she had to then close again to complete the final stages of the preparation work.

"This certainly threw us in at the deep end as the place was packed but I am used to serving 400 meals at a time as a former British Airways stewardess", she said.

During her five-and-a-half years as an air hostess Louise flew around the world on Boeing 747's. At that time she sampled many different culinary tastes which has given her plenty of inspiration for her cafe.

She wants to provide good home cooked food at a reasonable price with several more unusual dishes for the more adventurous. Bombay in India was Louise's favourite "stop-off" point in her flying days and Indian cooking is her forte.

#### Specialities

"I would eventually like to sell some of my

specialities in the frozen form for the housewife to take away and use at home - handy for impressing friends at dinner parties without having to do any of the work", she said.

Louise is brimming full of ideas and some of her other possible schemes for the future include providing children's parties on Wednesdays, developing Sunday morning breakfasts with newspapers for the customers, and preparing packed lunches.

She is hoping particularly to appeal to rambblers and tourists with hearty appetites. As both she and her husband are climbers she has no objection to walkers with heavy packs and large boots using the cafe.

#### Society Ties

These MBSGB ties are royal blue with the Society logo in red and yellow. You can obtain one from Sue Holden; 3 Cathedral Close, Guildford, Surrey GU2 5TL. The price, including postage and packing is:-

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Look smart, two ways, order now and look well-dressed.

#### Chanctonbury Ring

On Sunday 24th June, 1984 members of the Chanctonbury Ring provided music for the Strawberry Tea, arranged by John and Kay Mansfield for, and on behalf of, The Wildlife Fund. It was a most charming and successful occasion.

#### Clive and Enid Jones

Any time you're Chichester way, call in and see Clive and Enid at their museum: Church Road, Portfield, Chichester. Tel: Chichester 785421, or Emsworth 2646. Superb Family Entertainment.



M.B.S.G.B. Meet the Press.

Jo Whitehead, Bert Pack, Peter Dacre (both Sunday Express), Judith Howard.

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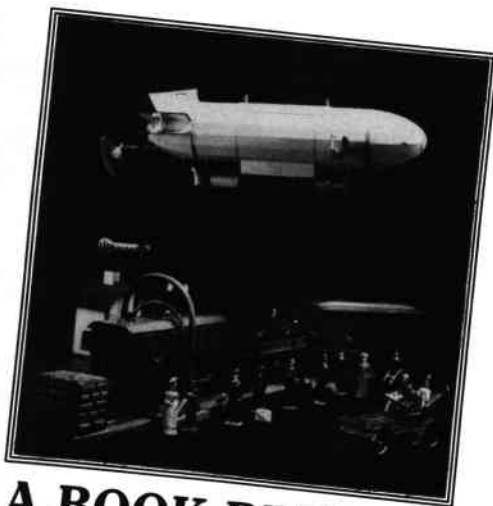
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At the Clive & Enid Jones museum, Church Road, Chichester.



Enid Jones.



Van Witteloostuyn (Netherlands) explains a point to John Powell.  
"So I said, 'Look, I'll give you ten pounds, take it or leave it!'"



Graham Whitehead.



Lindsey Gresham, at Littlehampton.



Peter Murray and Ron Benton.



Freddy Hill.



Mel Weener, Ohio.



Andrew and Peggy Kahn, U.S.A.



Paul Tuck.

# THE CASE OF THE CASE FOR A GIANT KOMET

by Geoff Worrall

(Picture on front cover)

THOSE readers who browse occasionally through that comprehensive "Encyclopaedia of Automatic Musical Instruments", by David Bower, will on page 112 come across a rather peculiar Disc Box of massive proportions. The Box has two Victorian piano legs at the front, and two straight plain legs at the rear.

This is the famous KOMET, with a very large disc placed vertically, and bears the proud caption – "The largest Disc Musical Box ever made. Disc size 33<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches (850cms)".

It has ten combs, and 198 teeth, 14 of which operate 14 bells. The case is not original. It is pictured on the pavement in Portobello Road, about 1965, outside Mr Barham's shop (now gone).

Nobody at the time was interested in it and, believe it or not, no one wanted it. Perhaps the peculiar case put them off. It was transferred to Keith Harding's Emporium and he had trouble selling it even at a reduced price. It was still there when I happened to call, in January 1967, and I stood there thinking about the instrument.

As I contemplated, Keith said, "If it isn't sold soon it will have to go to America!" I said. "Let me go back to Sheffield to consult my bank and my family".

Need I add more?

I sent Keith a cheque for £350 on 19 February 1967 (a lot of money in those days!). It was delivered free by Keith and his partner Cliff Burnett, by van, the 170 miles to Sheffield on the following Sunday morning. As they huffed and puffed with their burden up two flights of stairs, I was living above my own chemist's shop, they cursed not, rather did they praise me.

"We're glad you've bought it, Geoff, so that it can stay in the country. As far as we know there is no other Komet, anywhere in the world, with this size disc.

While it rested on my attic floor I began work on the movement and by January 1968 I had thoroughly restored it myself (except for the teeth). It included a new gantry rod (119 thou) and the replacement of 8 badly worn star wheels, rebushing two or three bushings on the massive clockwork motor, and replacing and adjusting 6 dampers. This latter job was surprisingly easy, as this particular Komet's dampers were merely plain thin spring pieces that damped on the side of each tooth.

The job had been far easier to set up than any Polyphon or Symphonium.

The 3 comb teeth which had been repaired locally were not too well done, but they at least filled one eye-catching gap on a top comb.

I had seven discs and, as is usual with large discs which operate bells etc on the periphery, many of the teeth, or projections, were missing. I understood from Keith that the instrument had been in a Fairground where it had got some real "bashing". So, patiently, I replaced the missing projections using the usual "Soldering of a split pin in" method. (This method was described in *The Music Box* many years ago, by the late Mr Greenacre).

Three discs were rusty and damaged and our own great Disc Copier, Brian Clegg, volunteered to copy three on his new machine in Norfolk, and at a most reasonable charge. He must have spent hours doing it, and I know he had to wait 3 months for the special size plates first. Brian did a perfect job.

But there was still the problem of the missing case.

Thanks to some research on Doug Berryman's part he discovered a paragraph in the "Musical Times", No 253. 1st October 1898, which reported that a Mr W Grecke had imported this particular Komet, at 8 and 9 Goring Street, Houndsditch, in the East End of London, and the case was the biggest ever seen, being **ELEVEN FEET HIGH!**

Keith Harding had repeatedly tried to find a similar case, but without much success, until early in 1975 when Keith rang me to report that one had turned up in The Musical Museum in Baden-Baden, Germany.

I immediately arranged to go to Germany where I met the owner, Jan Bravers, who welcomed me into his home. It took a full day to photograph every detail of the giant Komet.

The case was riddled with woodworm, and my ebullient host suggested the use of cyanide gas, but after a conference we decided against the use of poison gas. After all, we didn't even go that far in World War Two.

When I returned home I decided to re-design the whole instrument on the Baden Baden pattern. The top cabinet, anyway, did not seem to be original and we thought it had possibly come from an old "penny in the slot" machine, similar to one in Jon Gresham's Museum – Fireman running up ladders!, or, graveyard scenes with coffins opening revealing their gruesome contents!

Work on the case began in October 1974, "a friend" accepting a gift of a duplicate 19<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" polyphon in exchange for materials and labour on the new Komet.

It took **EIGHT YEARS AND THREE MONTHS** to get this done, plus **TWO Court threats**, and a constant barrage of pestering letters and calls before it was delivered to my house. In the end, he did an excellent job, but, more than eight years!!! Perhaps the moral is, don't pay in advance!

From November to January, 1984, I added further mouldings and other Victorian embellishments so that it really was a faithful replica of the Baden Baden model. It stands eight feet high. That still leaves three feet to be accounted for. What occupied the space in the 1898

original is still a mystery. Another balcony or rail would look ridiculous, and, in any case, my ceiling is only 11 feet high, so the case stays as it is.

It is now restored to its former glory, after 17 years of work and worry, and it plays *almost* perfectly. I always let the super size spring down after each session, to prevent breaking – the cost of a specially made one-off replacement spring would be prohibitive. (The Sheffield Tempered Spring Company have made many a polyphon spring for me in the past, and still have just one workman left who specialises in any size). The spring measures 9" across, 3½" wide, and 1/20" thick.

Incidentally, the Komet star wheels are exactly the same size as polyphon springs, 7/10". The thickness, however, is different; polyphon being 25 thou, but the Komet is only 20 thou, but that is packed out with a 5 thou dished washer which acts as a brake. I imagine that there was liaison between the two Leipzig factories for parts, especially near the time when the Gramophone Industry began to take over.

I still want to make one improvement to the Komet. The sounding board at the back is faced block board, and the resonance is poorer than it should be. It needs to be replaced with piano board, or an old piano sound board of spruce, but it's got to be big!!!

Member Terry Lee, from Leicester, told me that a couple of years ago he visited Jan Brauers private museum, "für mechanische musikinstrumente", and saw a Komet. It is not played any more, requiring a lot of work to be done. The German guide referred to "ze brokken von" in Sheffield, England – well, at last I can say that it is not "brokken" any longer – it is re-cased, and it is playing well.

Is it the only one in the world which still plays?

Looks like it.... but if you see another this size, please let me know.\*

Geoff Worrall.

\* It is not our policy to give addresses so, if you do not know Geoff's address, please write to him c/o our Membership Secretary, Reg Waylett, or our Subscription Secretary, Ted Brown – addresses at front of the journal.



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- 1918 PJ Van Rensburg, South Africa House, London
- 1919 MD Tuck, Chichester, W. Sussex.
- 1920 SM Holden, Guildford, Surrey.
- 1921 F Servidio, Cetraro, Italy.
- 1922 Mr & Mrs C Berman, Rockville, USA.
- 1923 Mrs D Franks, Cheadle, Cheshire.
- 1924 F W Larnie, Evesham, Worcestershire.
- 1925 M James, Stevenage, Herts.
- 1926 D A Vipian, Bourne, Lincolnshire.
- 1927 M Ranicar-Breese, London.
- 1928 R J George, Sevenoaks, Kent.
- 1929 A Kahn, New York, USA.
- 1930 E Coulentianos, Isando, South Africa.

**CHANGE OF ADDRESS**

- 0025 A Ridsdill, York.
- 0416 W G Brown, Quorn, Leicestershire.
- 0537 Dr N H Gale, Iffley, Oxford.
- 0886 P R Burrige, Axminster, Devon.
- 0915 Mrs D R Dalton, Croydon, Surrey.
- 1137 D Secrett, Diss, Norfolk.
- 1194 L J Brown, Scarborough, N. Yorks.
- 1431 I Alderman, Beaminster, Dorset.
- 1458 D W Porter, Rhoose, Glamorgan.
- 1610 W C Visser, Gilze, Holland.
- 1630 I Rutherford, St. Albans, Herts.
- 1595 W H Caswell, Newport, Isle of Wight.
- 1825 A Sonneveldt, Rotterdam, Holland.
- 1895 R J Moore, Liskeard, Cornwall.
- 1900 Jan M Lincoln, Sharon, USA.
- 1910 K P J Janse, Amsterdam, Holland.
- 0911 G J Cooper, Kilsyth, Glasgow.

# TIT-BITS

by Roger Booty

(\*After sending his article to me Roger rang with the news that *Tit-bits* magazine, founded 1881, had closed. How sad that a popular magazine which has delighted its readers for over a hundred years should have to cease publication. This unfortunate news adds a poignant touch to Roger's article. Also to my late father and to myself – many years ago we both had articles accepted by *Tit-bits*. Ed.).

\**TIT-BITS* magazine is still available and must recently have achieved one hundred years of publication. It was, and I believe still is, a weekly, and in 1890 contained extremely few pictures or diagrams and very few advertisements, so it must have funded itself from its seemingly prodigious sales. I recently had a chance to look through two bound, indexed volumes, nos XVII and XVIII which covered the period from October 1889 to October 1890, and all of the following snippets come from that period. Practically all subjects were covered from, "Are policemen clothed healthily?" to "Why the sun looks red in a fog" and "How birds make love". There was also an answer column to readers queries but here some subjects were apparently taboo. When "Only Twenty Two" asked an unpublished question the answer given was, "The subject is too delicate a one to be dealt with in public print!"

Mechanical music usually reared its head in the form of the organ grinder and his instrument. This erstwhile gentleman even occasionally appeared in the humour columns; "There is an organ-grinder who is so suspicious that he compels his monkey to carry a bell-punch", or, "That was a surprised dog which, when about to attack an organ-grinders monkey, saw the latter lift his hat and politely salute him. He suddenly bethought himself of some business he had in the next street".

The April 1890 edition carried an interesting piece on musical establishments. It was stated that in London there were over 170 piano-forte factories and that over 1,300 shops and factories were devoted to supplying musical goods of all kinds. There were also at least 37 newspapers in the country dealing exclusively with music.

Personalities were also discussed

at times with Adelina Patti being one of the favourite subjects.

"The home to which Madame Adelina Patti has lately returned, after her sojourn abroad, is a beautiful castle built in a Gothic style of architecture and familiar to most people by its name only, Craig-y-nos. It stands in the heart of black mountains, and is six or seven miles distant from any other habitation; the road to it, as well as the very modest railway station, have both been built by the gifted cantatrice for the convenience of herself and friends. Within the castle we got two glimpses of Mme Patti's taste. One is her fondness for birds; any number of parrots, who shrilly imitate every word they hear, are installed at Craig-y-nos, whilst in the billiard room there is one of the most remarkable musical boxes in the world. This huge mechanical toy is built in the wall, and when it is going represents all the various instruments which together form a full orchestra, and when one listens to it with closed eyes it seems as if an excellent band were engaged in discoursing these sweet strains". (To learn the fate of this Welte orchestron see † *The Music Box* Vol 5, p 296).

Another view of Patti was given when it was noted that she strongly objected to having her voice reproduced by phonograph at concerts in America. She rather naturally thought that she was entitled to a monopoly of her own notes, and that people who heard her in that way would not pay to hear her in person.

Talking dolls were also popular at this period and two of the tit bits I noted were; "Mr Edison's talking dolls have been on view in London. When wound up, these phonographically adapted play things recited, 'Twinkle, twinkle, little star', 'Mary had a little lamb', and other ditties. One doll gabbled the Lord's Prayer', and, "It is stated that over

70,000 dolls have been manufactured at Sonnenberg, in Thuringia, and sent to America to be charged with the phonograph".

Other novelties noted included a mechanical decoy-rat with a piece of cheese on a little spear projecting from its nose. When a real rat nibbled the cheese the spear would shoot forward and impale the unsuspecting creature! But wait, what about a clockwork hat from France which had a little door opening in its side. The figure of a young man would appear from it and make a polite bow, thus saving the wearer the inconvenience of removing his hat each time he met an acquaintance in the street.

Sarcasm was frequently levelled at different classes and creeds with of course the poor old organ grinder receiving his fair share. A question in November 1889 brought forth the following response; "Organ-grinders do not require any license. – unfortunately". The answer to another obvious query ran, "A barrel organ has one stop. It commences early in the morning and it stops last thing at night", echoes of 'Punch' I think! Some sympathy can be given towards the writers though, when you read that about 300 organ grinders arrived in London every June from Italy and left again in October. The Nov 2nd 1889 edition gives us a clear insight into the reason for some of these summer visitors.

"Earnings of Organ Grinders. – In the course of an action for damages to a piano-organ, heard in the Court of Passage, Liverpool, an Italian, who owns a number of these instruments and sends them out with girls, said they earned on ordinary days in winter 6s to 10s and on Saturdays 12s to 20s, while in summer ordinary days they earned 10s to 12s, and on Saturday 20s to 28s. The instruments cost £25 each".



"Little Fritz, hearing his parents speak of Beethoven, asked:

"Mamma, who is Beethoven?"

"A composer", replied his mother.

"And what is a composer?"

"A man who makes music".

The next morning an organ-grinder struck up a tune in the street.

"Mamma", exclaimed Fritz, eagerly, "there is Beethoven".

*The Original Organ-Grinder.*  
(from Nov 2nd 1889, edition).

"When barrel-organs, once the usual accompaniment of the magic-lantern came into use, a native of the province of Tende was one of the first who travelled about Europe with his instrument.

In his peregrinations he collected money enough to enable him to purchase from the King of Sardinia the title of count of the country where he was born, for which, probably, in time of war, he did not pay above a thousand guineas.

With the remainder of his money he purchased an estate suitable to his rank, and settled himself peaceably for the remainder of his days in his mansion.

In the entrance-hall of his dwelling he hung up his magic-lantern and his organ facing the door, there to be carefully preserved till they mouldered to dust; and he ordered by his will that any of his descendants who should cause them to be removed should forfeit his inheritance, and his patrimony revert to the next heir, or, in failure of a successor, to the hospital of Tende.

Within a few years the organ and lantern were still to be seen carefully preserved".

Lastly I have removed tit bits from a *Tit-Bits* article entitled, "How Dance Music is Composed. – What composers earn, and how they earn it". It names tunes found on many a cylinder, disc or roll, and the sums of money involved show clearly why there was agitation, on behalf of writers and publishers, when discs and rolls were starting to be manufactured in their thousands, with no royalties being paid.

"There are two ways of disposing of the composition to the publisher: either selling it right out, or receiving a royalty on the number of copies sold. Royalties range from 2d to 3d a

copy, and in exceptional cases even more than that. A good man, like, say, Bucalossi, would find it no difficult matter to make a contract with a publisher to score so many dances per year for a stipulated sum.

The prices paid to the composer vary considerably. One season a man might receive £40 or £50 for a waltz which made a big hit and set everybody's feet going. This would double his prices for the next season. Today composers are paid for their popularity, and a dance is, to a great extent, valued like a picture – it all depends whose name is attached to the work....

Dance composers are often teachers of music. D'Albert taught dancing as well as fitted the feet with pretty steps, but it is probable he never received more than £20 for a waltz, whilst Caroline Lowthian (Mrs Cyril A Prescott) made £500 out of her "Bitter Sweet" waltz, and as much rewarded her for her "Lullaby..."

In order of popularity the waltz comes first, polka second, and schottische third, whilst square dances – usually arranged on a string of well-known airs and seldom composed – bring up the rear.

The prices which some dances have realized are simply fabulous. Mr Charles Coote, conductor of the band which plays at Her Majesty's State balls, wrote a piece called the "Prince Imperial Galop" some sixteen years ago. It only contained about forty-eight bars of music, and took him half an hour to compose. Yet after 100,000 copies had been sold, the copyright of the piece was put up for auction and realized £1,000. Since then another 100,000 copies have been sold. This same composer's "Great Eastern Polka" sold to the tune of 150,000 copies, and then fetched £750 at a sale.

This reminds us that the choosing of a title for a dance is regarded by some as a very important item, whilst others scarcely give it a thought. For instance, the last-named polka was written without the faintest idea as to what it should be called. The "Great Eastern" was about to be launched, and its name was on everybody's tongue. Hence the name of the piece.

The composer of "Ehren on the Rhine" tells how carefully he went to

work about his title. He was anxious to get one which nobody would copy, so he hit upon this. Everybody who saw it told him that the title would be fatal to the music. The curious ones searched in vain and could find no place mentioned on the banks of the beautiful river. The truth is, as he admitted to the writer, he borrowed it from a spot known as Ehrenbreitstein, but as that is much a mouthful, he cut it down, and nobody was the wiser. In spite of the momentary trouble of settling on a title, the song and dance realized £14,000; 280,000 copies being sold.

A word about this composer, Mr W M Hutchison, who, by-the-by, is a great dancer himself and a good huntsman, dividing this time between riding to hounds in the season and scoring notes. He realized the greatest amount ever obtained over any single piece – "Dream Faces" – some seven years ago. It sold at the rate of 40,000 copies a month, and together with the song of the same title reached a grand total of 320,000. £16,000 was netted over this. Yet the refrain of the £16,000 "Dream Faces" was written on the back of an envelope whilst returning from bathing one morning in the summer of 1882, when staying in Scotland. He offered it to a publisher for £75. It was not taken.

He wrote the song and waltz of "Ehren on the Rhine" one morning, after a restless night, between the hours of seven and eight – one of the most profitable hour's work on record.

One curious whim about the writers of dance music is that they will often write under two or three different names. One appears to a waltz, another is appended to a galop, and so on. This is readily understood, as they become associated with a particular class of composition by a certain name. The names adopted generally have a foreign flavour about them, for the lovers of dance have yet to be convinced that the home composer can set their feet tripping as merrily as can the composer who hail from other countries.

Thus Mr Hutchison is also known as Josef Meissler and Oscar Seydel. Leonard Gautier, who wrote "Idyllen", 50,000 copies of which waltz were sold, teaches music, and his real name is Von Tugginer; "Aigrette" is Mrs Harrison Blyth, a

well-known resident of Brighton, and Max Frühling is the adopted "dance" name of an Englishman who was written several operas, and succeeded in beating all records in the sale of a single schottische, by reaching 100,000 copies with his "Marie Stuart".

It is possible that we shall be pleasing all those who love the dance when we say that Caroline Lowthian is admittedly the writer of the sweetest waltz music of to-day. Three hundred thousand copies of her "Myosotis Waltz" have been sold, 100,000 of "Bitter Sweet"; and her other dances at equally great figures...

We believe, as her name suggests,

she is of Scottish birth and resides at Liverpool. She commenced writing ten years ago when well in her teens, and by the time she had composed four waltzes was famous. She often designs her own title-pages, and the airs of her waltzes are so sweet that many a well-known writer of verse has turned them into songs".

© Roger Booty, 1984.

(† For the benefit of the many MBSGB members who do not have VOL 5, p 296, referred to by Roger, here is a reproduction of the article in question, by Q David Bowers. Graham Webb was our editor at the time. Ed.)

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# BOWERS IN BRITAIN

by Q David Bowers

(Reproduced from *The Music Box*, Autumn, 1972)

FIRST, some introductory words might be in order: While I have known a number of dealer members of our Society, I have not had much communication with collector members. From 1967 until my resignation earlier this year, I was co-owner of Hathaway & Bowers, Inc - leading American dealers in automatic musical instruments. During that time I was a familiar visitor to the premises of Graham Webb, Keith Harding, and others in the trade. I also had occasion to visit private collectors from time to time. I have especially fond memories of a visit with Dr and Mrs Cyril De Vere Green one New Year's eve!

Since my resignation from Hathaway & Bowers, Inc I have become co-owner (with Claes O Friberg) of the Mekanisk Musik Museum located at 150 Vesterbrogade in the heart of downtown Copenhagen, Denmark. Claes and I have endeavoured to gather together a wide representation of automatic musical instruments - including a number of American pieces which are seldom seen in Europe. MBSGB members are cordially invited to visit the museum.

This is the first of several articles I plan to write for "*The Music Box*" at the invitation of your editor, Graham Webb. Hopefully you will find the articles interesting, even informative.

London holds many fond memories for me. In fact, I have spent more time there than in any other major city in the world - excepting, of course, cities in which I have lived. The reason for all of this has not been music boxes but, has been my business in the field of rare coins. While music boxes have been my hobby for many years (and during the 1967-1972 Hathaway & Bowers affiliation, a business) it has been dealing in rare coins that has furnished my livelihood. London is a centre in the rare coin market - and many important sales have been held in the rooms of Christie's, Sotheby's etc. These sales have attracted international participation. In addition, as America was once a former British colony there was a great interest on behalf of British numismatists (coin collectors) to assemble sets of American coins during the 19th Century. America, with its wild west, unsettled frontiers, and all sorts of other escapades, seemed to be a rather romantic place - and collecting coins from there was quite popular. At the same time during the 19th century Americans themselves were too busy carving a

nation out of the wilderness to engage in the armchair pursuit of collecting rare coins. So, many of the finest American coins known today have been secured from English cabinets - and trace their origin to English collectors who had the foresight to save them a century ago. Although the intense interest in rare coins in the past five to ten years has exhausted the English lode somewhat, such was not the case in the very early 1960's. It was then that I spent quite a bit of time in London.

Sometime around 1961 or 1962 I located in an antique shop in Portobello Road a fine upright Polyphon with matching base cabinet. The instrument basement used the 24½" disc - the largest regular Polyphon size. It was a really superb specimen and the original ornate top railings intact and had a beautifully polished walnut case. The price, as I recall, was all of 50 pounds - and this included a large supply of gleaming discs! So enamoured was I of my newly-acquired prize that I mentioned the purchase a day or so later when I visited Michael Millward at his coin store in Great Portland Street. Mike knew nothing of music boxes, but he did have an interest in things old and curious. When I described my purchase to him he thought he would like to have one just like it. So, I took him to Portobello Road. While

there were no other 24½" Polyphons there at the time, we did find a 19<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" upright Polyphon for which he paid 17½ pounds.

Last year I stopped in to see Mike Millward, and he reminded me of our trip to Portobello Road a decade earlier – a trip which I had nearly forgotten. "Do you remember that Polyphon you had me buy for 17½ pounds in Portobello Road many years ago?", Mike queried. "Well, you might be interested in knowing that I just turned down an offer of 200 pounds for it!" Mike then went on to say that after our initial visit to Portobello Road he picked up four or five other Polyphon music boxes. They all have done very well as investments over the years.

I have always had a great personal interest in large orchestrions. Whenever the opportunity has presented itself I have acquired old catalogues, serial runs of musical trade magazines, and related items. In a way these are just as interesting to me as the instruments are themselves – for these old publications furnish a never ending stream of interesting and previously-unsuspected information.

Acquired along the way have been many catalogues and sales prospectuses issued by the noted firm of M Welte & Sons of Freiburg, Germany. Welte catalogues of the 1895-1910 era featured many instruments in many different locations. However, the most prominently featured of all was the magnificent Welte Orchestrion owned by Mme Adelina Patti, renowned opera diva who lived in splendor in Craig-y-nos Castle in Wales. An 1892 edition of Strand Magazine featured a visit to the Patti castle. Mme Patti was quoted as saying that the Welte was one of her favourite possessions.

After having read so much about this famous orchestrion I thought it would be interesting to try to locate it! I wrote many letters on the subject – and, as might be suspected, all resulted in dead-ends. Finally I did learn that the instrument had been dissembled and moved from Craig-y-nos Castle shortly before 1929 and had been relocated at a summer camp near Douglas on the Isle of Man. At least the trail was getting warm – and, hopefully, I soon would learn that the instrument was still there on the Isle of Man just awaiting my rediscovery of it!

Alas, no such thing was to happen. I learned from Mr Shorrocks, a piano tuner who serviced the summer camp that (in his own words), "I have tuned the pianos at the holiday camp for over 30 years and I am sorry to say that the orchestrion in question is no longer in existence. It met with a series of accidents. First it was flooded. Then it caught fire because of the lighting system. The cost of repairing it was too much. After many meetings the directors of the camp had it broken up. The whole orchestrion was burned in the boiler house furnace shortly after World War II".

The firm of Keith Prowse is, of course, well known today in England as a purveyor of theatre tickets, travel bookings, etc. In 1965, when talking with Eugene DeRoy in Belgium, I learned that Mr DeRoy had been an employee of the Prowse firm in London during the World War I era. I knew that Prowse had a connection with automatic musical instruments years ago, for I had earlier seen the Keith Prowse name on several pianos – but I did not realise the extent of the Prowse activity until I talked to Mr DeRoy. Prowse, it seems, was an active agent for many continental European firms, particularly for Ludwig Hupfeld of Leipzig. Perhaps not wanting to reveal the German origin of its instruments (for English-Germany feelings were not always the best during the early twentieth century), or perhaps not wanting to reveal its trade sources, or perhaps a combination of both, led Prowse to retouch stock Hupfeld illustrations and use them in a specially prepared catalogue featuring the whole line of Hupfeld instruments – a line ranging from small keyboard type pianos to mammoth Helios orchestrions. Ignoring Hupfeld model numbers, Prowse assigned their own designations to the various Hupfeld instruments. A merchandising effort was made through many pieces of well-prepared literature – most notably an embossed-cover catalogue entitled "Skating Rink Orchestrions".

Mr DeRoy, a native Belgian, was employed in London by Prowse at the time. It seemed as though the Germany products of Hupfeld, Popper and others sold well in England – but that there was a problem with the music rolls. The

Germany manufacturers did not have the production facilities or the ability to keep up-to-date with the latest fashion in English popular music. So, to further the sale of instruments Prowse decided to establish its own music roll perforating facilities. During his stay of several years in England Mr DeRoy kept busy arranging new tunes for the Hupfeld Helios, Phonoliszt-Violina, and other instruments – tunes which reflected the latest in popular stage hits, and other melodies.

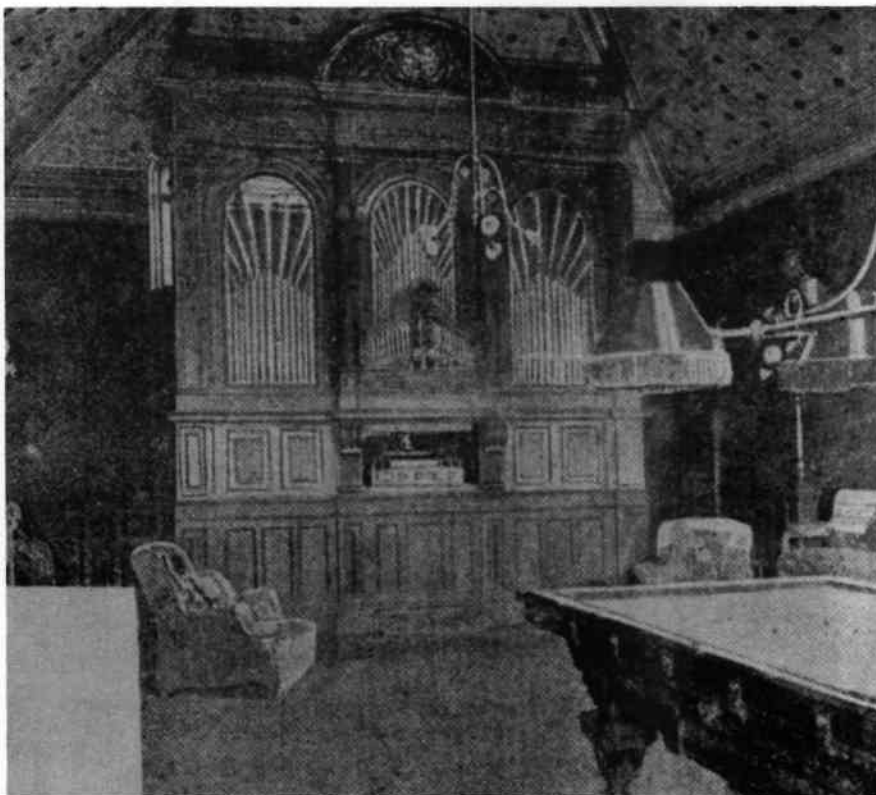
It is interesting to note that in America the Rudolph Wurlitzer Company had the same problem. Beginning in 1903 and continuing until about 1914, Wurlitzer imported over 1,000 large orchestrions from J D Phillipps & Sons of Frankfurt, Germany. Sold under the "Pian-Orchestra" label by Wurlitzer, these large Phillipps orchestrions were immensely successful. However, there was a problem with the music. American patrons of amusement parks, restaurants, beer halls, hotels, and dozens of other locations which featured these instruments liked the latest in American tunes, not the latest German hits. For a while Wurlitzer sent sheet music to Phillipps in the hopes that Phillipps could meet the America music roll demand. However, inevitable delays resulted and the result was not satisfactory. Wurlitzer then set up its own facilities for manufacturing rolls for Phillipps instruments – and the problem was solved.

During one of my London visits a steady downpour of rain kept me in my hotel room all day. Not having any business appointments I thought I would check into the Keith Prowse firm – something I had been intending to do for some time. I must have spent an hour or two on the telephone, during the course of which I was switched from one person to another. I must have talked to almost everyone on the Prowse staff – or at least it seemed as though I did! The net result of all of this was zero. No one could remember the automatic music instrument phase of Prowse's history – and one gentleman, a director or official I believe, told me in no uncertain terms that Prowse never engaged in that type of business!

I shall leave it to my present English contemporaries to perhaps

re-approach the Prowse organisation, possibly using a different act this time, to see if there might be some interesting memorabilia lurking in the Prowse files! At one time Prowse imported large quantities of Hupfeld instruments – and it is conceivable that a few of these might be traced to the same addresses, if such are known, today.

A few years ago I received a letter from a Mr Martin who sent me pictures of a once-beautiful Hupfeld Helios 1/22 orchestration which he found located on a platform high above a skating rink. The Hupfeld, probably originally sold by Prowse circa 1910-1914, was missing some parts and in a rather decrepit-appearing condition – but not so hopeless that proper restoration could not bring it to life once again. Fortunately, Mr Martin expressed interest in-doing just this – restoring the instrument. Hopefully the project is well under way at the present time.



Adelina Patti's billiard room, complete with its model 10 Welte Orchestration. This picture is taken from "The Strand Magazine" in the collection of Richard Jefferies.



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# ROBERT-HOUDIN AND THE TIGHTROPE WALKER AUTOMATON

by S. H. Sharpe

ALTHOUGH Mr A J L Wright gives us a very clear explanation of the technical details of the Tight-rope Walker automaton in the Summer 1984 issue of *The Music Box*, he is in doubt about whom to credit for its invention, referring to Chapuis and Droz mentioning Alph Giroux, whose plate was on the model described by them. Alphonse Giroux was not a maker of automata, but a dealer in curiosities who purchased them from their constructors, one of whom was Robert-Houdin, who was then living in the Rue de Vendôme, Paris (c1840). Robert-Houdin wrote in his MEMOIRS, page 132 of the Dover Edition:

I had sold several mechanical toys to M G...., a rich curiosity dealer, who had always treated me with marked kindness. I went to him, and gave him an exact description of my new automaton, and necessity must have rendered me eloquent, for M G.... was so satisfied that he brought my automaton on the spot, which I bound myself to deliver to him within eighteen months. The price was arranged at five thousand francs, half of which M G.... agreed to pay me in advance, reserving to himself the right, if I failed in my promise, of recouping himself by purchasing several of my automatic toys.

This referred to Robert-Houdin's proposed Writing and Drawing Automaton, which was finished in 1840. He then completed two more genuine automata, one of which was a tightrope walker, surrounded by four other figures, as mentioned by Mary Hillier in her book *AUTOMATA AND MECHANICAL TOYS*, each playing an instrument; the other being *Le Leçon de Chant* (The Singing Lesson), described and illustrated at page 212 of *LES AUTOMATES* by Chapuis and Gelis.

Giroux exhibited both of these automata, in addition to the Writing and Drawing figure and Robert-Houdin's Mystery Clock which

appeared to go without any works, in his salon at 7, Rue du Coq, St-Honoré, Paris.

THE SATURDAY EVENING POST (Philadelphia) for March 26th, 1955, contained an article on "The Strange World of M Charliat", who is (was?) a collector, repairer, and dealer in antique automata, living and working at 46 Rue de Miromseine, on the Right Bank, Paris; and through whose hands many famous and unique pieces have passed since he opened his shop in 1937. One of these is Robert-Houdin's tight-rope performer, which the writer of the article, John Kobler, refers to in the following terms:

Automata are essentially mechanical imitations of life. Wind-up walking bears, and dolls that cry "Mamma", are automata of sorts, though far too crude to command Charliat's attention for an instant. More typical of the wares which have earned him an international reputation among collectors of the rare and the curious is a troupe of five Arab circus performers, each about three inches high. Four of them squat cross-legged or stand around the trunk of a tree, banging and tootling on exotic instruments, while the fifth, gripping a balancing pole, leaps up and down on a tight-rope in a series of delicate, twinkling *entrechats*. This masterpiece was constructed more than 100 years ago by, or after the specifications of, Jean Eugene Robert-Houdin, a celebrated French magician and one of the greatest designers of automata in the history of the craft.

Since the making of such wonder works requires months or even years, their production is pretty much a thing of the past. The surviving specimens that still function perfectly fetch thousands of dollars in the antique market. For his Arab performers, Charliat recently turned down an offer of \$5,000.

In 1850 Robert-Houdin summoned one of his employees called Legrand, a working clockmaker, for making and selling replicas of many of his inventions, for which he was convicted to two months imprisonment and ordered to pay all the costs and damages.

Robert-Houdin also incorporated this tight-rope walker automaton in series of magical effects for performance at his little theatre in the Palais Royal, which he called "Le Vase Enchanté" or "The Genie of the Roses"; which he described in his MEMOIRS as follows:

At the beginning of this little scene, which looked like fairy-art, one noticed on a table placed in the centre of my stage, an Etruscan vase ornamented with jewels, of exquisite workmanship and taste. It was surmounted with branches and leaves of a rose-bush.

I persuaded a lady to choose a card from the pack and to enclose it in a little box which I gave her. Immediately the card left the box, returning to my hands, and in its place was a charming canary.

I shut this little bird up in a cage. "Ladies", I then said, "this canary is so obedient, that when I give him the order, he will pass through the bars of his cage to go and perch on the bouquet which is on top of the vase.

"In order to make it more attractive, I will make the flowers on its foliage blossom".

I then pointed my wand towards the rose bush, and on it appeared little buds which grew before ones eyes, gradually opening, and developing into magnificent roses.

This wonder had hardly been accomplished, when the canary disappeared from the cage and perched itself on top of the rose bush, singing with all its might.

Then, according to the spectator's wishes, it sang any air they asked it. When everyone had heard their chosen piece, the musician flew away and re-entered the

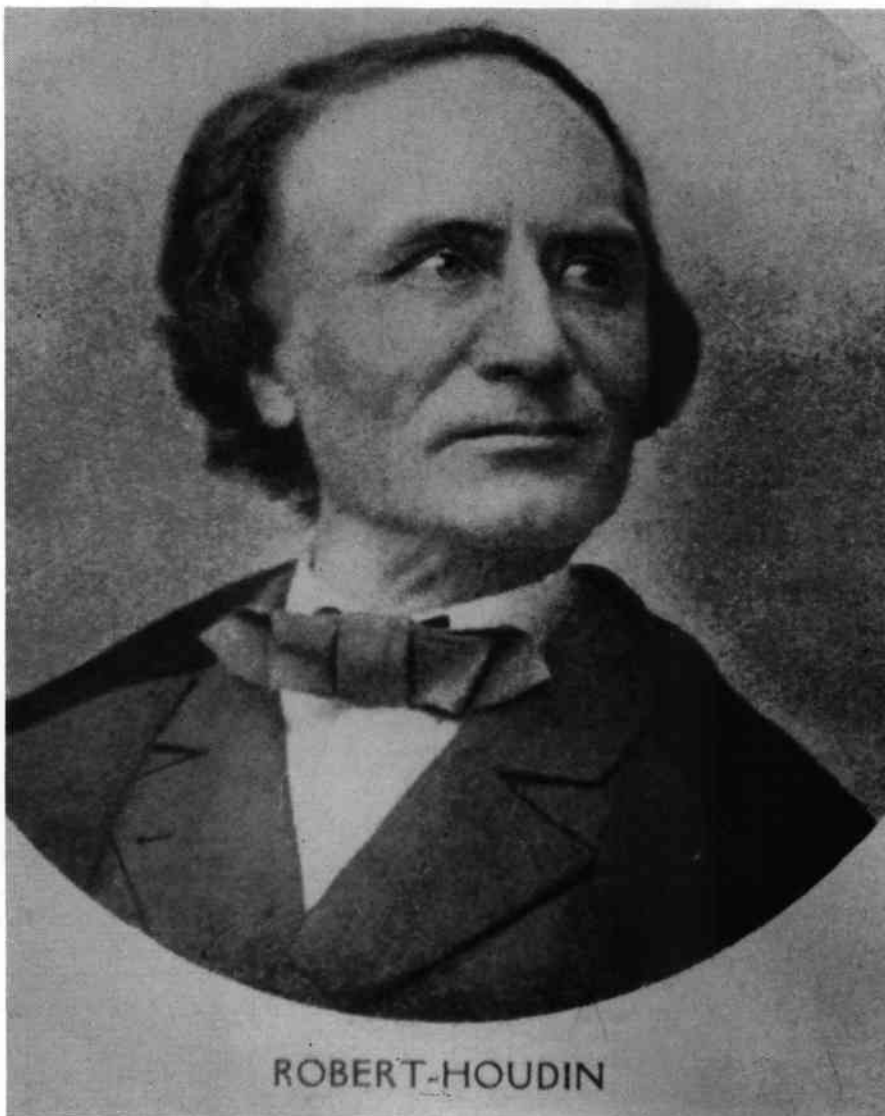


cage. To conclude this charming scene, the vase opened in several parts forming an elegant kiosk in which an Indian performer of exceptional skill danced acrobatics on a tight-rope.

I hope that the particulars given will help to re-establish Robert-Houdin as the actual designer and originator of The Tight-rope Walker Automaton; and to grant him the recognition he so richly deserves.

**References:**

*Memoirs of Robert-Houdin.* (Dover Publications Edn. 1964). *Les Automates.* Chapuis & Droz (Neuchâtel, 1949. English Edn. *Automata*, London, 1958). *Automata and Mechanical Toys*, Mary Hillier (Jupiter Books, 1976). "Remarkable Robert-Houdin", by S H Sharpe in *The Music Box*, Vol 8, No 6, Summer 1978. Reproduced with German translation in *Musikhistorische Gesellschaft*, Journal Nr 2, Hanover, 1978. *Solutions to Robert-Houdin: His Life, Magic and Automata.* By S H Sharpe. (Micky Hades International, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, 1983).



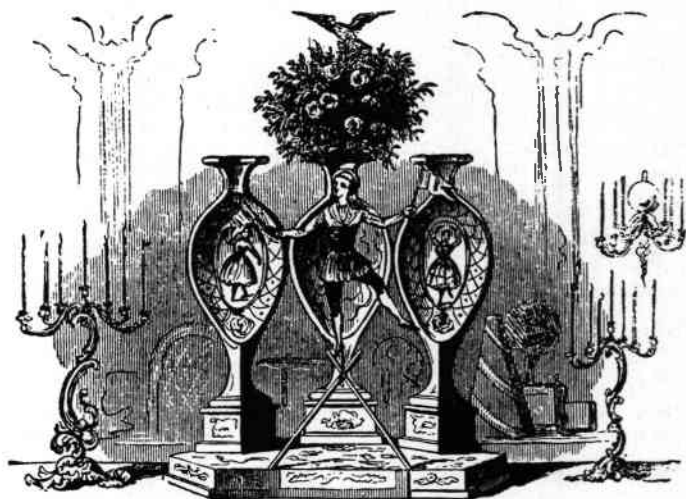
ROBERT-HOUDIN

*"Note the advance to the footlights of yonder artist, whose keen, intelligent, self-reliant glance goes straight to meet the eyes of the company. A relation of an almost mesmeric character is instantly established between all parties."*  
 - The Secrets of Conjuring and Magic.

This photograph, which was taken about 1860, used to hang in the box-office of the *Théâtre Robert-Houdin*, in the Boulevard des Italiens, Paris.

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Robert-Houdin's Theatrical Automaton of a rose-bush which bloomed, and from the top of which a singing-bird emerged. Then the Etruscan Vase opened into three parts, disclosing an Indian tight-rope dancer.

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# FROM CARILLON TO MAGNETIC TAPE (A BERLIN STORY)

## The Development of Sound Recording in Berlin. Dr. Walter Bruch.

*(Translated from the German by David Snelling)*

### Conclusion (Part Six)

(see Vol. 10 for parts 1,2,3. See Vol. 11 for parts 4 and 5)

#### Sound Film

ABOUT the same time as machines learned to talk pictures began to move. The combination of both lay only a short distance away; in the first instance as an attraction at fairs. Their predecessors were singers who sang horrible tales to still more horrible pictures at annual fairs. Subsequently visitors to these fairs were entertained by means of a phonograph cylinder played at the same time as the film was shown. The Projectionist was confined to a sound proof cabin with the infernal clatter of his film projector. The phonograph was placed before the screen. The Projectionist listened to the sound by means of a telephone and attempted to synchronise the film to sound by means of the handle of his projector. This amounted to little more than a gimmick associated with annual fairs. Discoveries and developments which brought us the technique of the synchronised sound film were made in various parts of the world. The development of the German sound film is, however, a purely Berlin story with world-wide influence. In fact, it consists of three Berlin stories. The first one was written by the Berlin film pioneer Oskar Messter (1886-1943). He demonstrated a solution for the reproduction of synchronised song by means of an electrical coupling between the gramophone and film for both recording and reproductions as early as 1903.

Just as the first "living pictures" were shown in a variety theatre, the Winter Garden, by the brothers Skladanowsky in Berlin in 1895, Messters first presentation of a synchronised sound film was given at a variety theatre, the Apollo Theatre on 29th August 1903. The Berlin Local Advertiser wrote about these "sound pictures" three days later: "experts and artists have worked at this problem for nearly ten years. A performance which was given yesterday before a packed audience proved that this work of art must be regarded as having been achieved in all respects. Oskar Messter has satisfactorily solved the combination of moving pictures with the gramophone and produced speaking photographs which completely deceive the viewer into believing that he is watching the original living event instead of photographic and acoustic recordings".

Messter had combined films with previously recorded

gramophone records. As he could not afford to spend much money he sought out cheap actors with an adequate knowledge of singing. The bandmaster at the Metropole Theatre, Paul Lincke, introduced him to out of work singers and to the actor Franz Porten who brought with him his two daughters Henry and Rosa.

One of the first films was called Meissen Porcelain. The two girls dance a gavotte as Meissen figurines with Henny singing the accompaniment. Nobody knew at the time that this would be the beginning of a firm career for Henry which would make her the first German star of "silent films".

In the introduction to her biography "From Kinema to Sound Film" we read how the first sound films were produced by Messter.

"The father of the Porten girls was commissioned to produce a series of such sound films. There was no manuscript. The first stage was to seek out a suitable gramophone record; a duet from Lohengrin sung by Caruso and Emmy Destinn. Then a suitably flowing landscape was quickly painted on a screen and appropriate costumes and, above all, the most important requisite, a swan were hired from a theatrical costumier. Then the filming began. The gramophone was wound up. The voices of Caruso and Destinn were heard and the actors mimed in sympathy with the voices. Henry Porten was Elsa, her father Lohengrin. When Caruso sang high "C" Porten senior stretched out so far with his arms and opened his mouth so wide as if he was expecting a roast pigeon to drop in. It was beautifully ghastly. The soulful youth of films. . . . all operas had their turn. It was possible to manufacture three to four in the course of one day. Art on the production line!

One sound film lasted from 2½ to 3 minutes. Messter, who had an agreement with the Grammophon firm produced approximately 500 and approximately 1,000 more were made by others, by firms which subsequently appeared.

The era of these sound films was over by 1913. Cinemas had become larger and the volume of the gramophone was no longer sufficient. In performances at the Apollo Variety Theatre Messter had already used five identical



Picture and sound were already synchronised 150 years ago by ballad singers.

gramophone records running in parallel through five horns.

In the cinema the piano and the violin now helped to work on the tear ducts as accompanying music. It was precisely the unconventional which had guaranteed the great success of the "Kinema".

It was possible to come and go when one wished in street or working clothes — whereas previously there had only been theatres and variety theatres for which one had had to dress up. Occasionally an old sound film was inserted in the programme. I still remember sound films which I saw at the beginning of the Twenties. The only evidence of the second Berlin story in the history of sound films today is an inscription on the wall of Babelsbergerstrasse 49 which reads:—

"In this house in the years from 1919 to 1922 the principles of the sound film were developed from the discoveries J. Engl, J. Massolle and H. Vogt."



Henny Porten (here with her partner Alfred Stein) began her sound film career with Messter.

There, in a former flower shop and in a coal cellar the three discoverers had got together under the name Triergon, inspired by Hans Vogt, to realise the principle of sound on film. In just the same manner as the picture on a film is created by light it was intended that the sound should be recorded on the edge of the film. Following tireless dedicated work the first small film of Heideroslein by Goethe, spoken by Friedel Hintze, was shown internally on 26th February 1921. They rented a studio in the Friedrichstrasse which was sound proofed with 500 rented potato sacks. In this location the sound films which were shown in the Alhambra on the Kurfursten-damm on 17th September 1922 were produced. The public performance was successful. For days on end the Berlin newspapers busied themselves with the sound film both praising it and criticising it. One newspaper reported "the pictures talk like somebody wearing a faulty denture or with a dumpling in his mouth" (compare also the remarks in Berliner Forum 8/79 "50 Years of German Soundfilm"). There was one successful production "Life in the Valley" the principal star of which was a crowing cockeral. The end of the Triergon associated was inevitable. Hans Vogt commented later "people will say that it was the typical fate of an epoch making discovery". The persons who had provided the finance sold the patents to America.

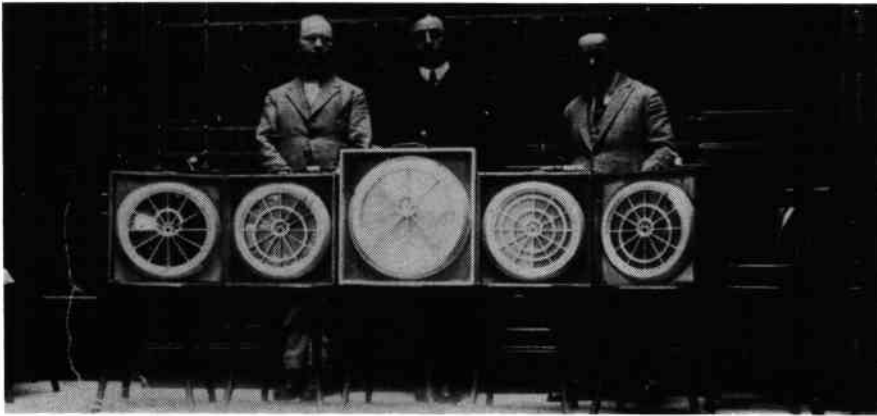


Sound film at the annual fair: phonograph cylinder and cinema projector are still at a distance from one another.

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Trierigon, the work of three: Dr Jo Engl, Dr Joseph Masolle and Dr Hans Vogt at one of their so called tele concerts (loudspeaker demonstration) in the Berlin High School for Music (about 1920).

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The three discoverers parted company. Dr Engl became a reader at the technical high school in Charlottenburg (where I participated in 1930 as a listener in a lecture on sound film technology). Later he went to America. Vogt, a tireless inventor, participated in high frequency developments for radio receivers. His final act whilst involved with sound films was to photograph heaps of half finished sound film projectors which had been consigned to the scrap heap.

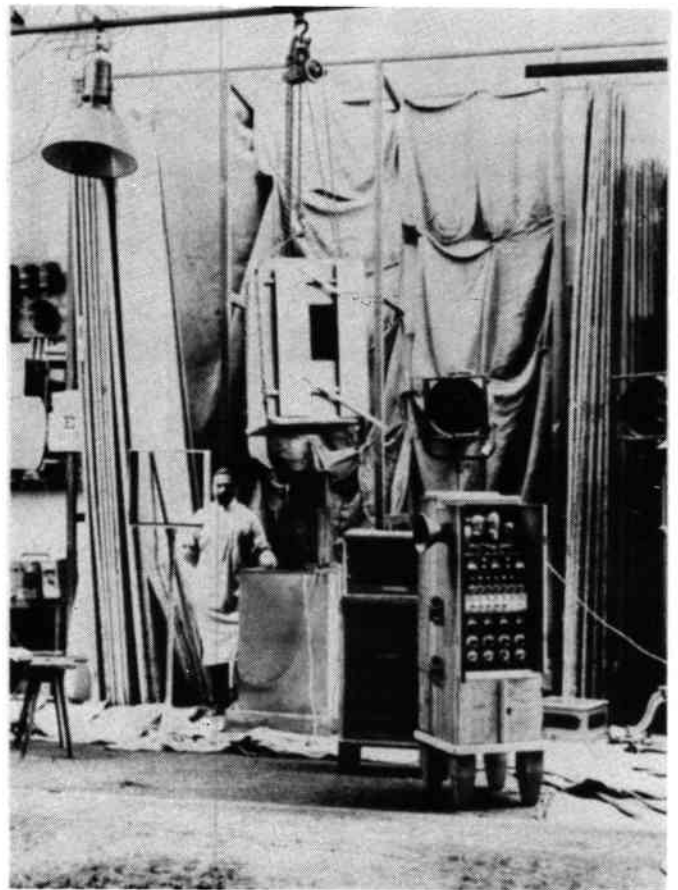
The era of sound on film was not over after the end of the Trierigon; further development was carried out in the laboratories of the large electrical companies – albeit only at a reduced level. Film makers were not interested in sound films. Mesmerised by the success of their silent films they did not see any future in sound films until everything was altered by a song, “Sonny Boy”, a lullaby for a small boy sung by Al Jolson in the American sound film “The Singing Fool”. On the grounds of a large number of German patents Telefunken succeeded in obtaining a temporary injunction against the performance of the film in Germany. This injunction was lifted on 3rd June 1929. The film had its premiere in the Gloria-Palast in the Kurfurstendamm on the same day. It turned out to be a sensation which exploded like a bomb in the film industry. In a newspaper article it was reported “the tempestuous reception of the public lasted over 30 minutes. Then the amazed audience stumbled out of cinema and threw themselves on the street in tears!”

The sound technology which was utilised in this film was in principle the same technology which Oskar Messter had once used: namely sound on gramophone records. It must have been painful for Messter, who had once owned the “Gloria” which lay opposite the Marmorhous Cinema in the Kurfurstendamm to observe this.

The technical realisation was, on the other hand, quite new. Americans had utilised electronic means which had, in the meantime, become available in their “Vitaphon” system. Instead of a recording horn the microphone was used which drove electro-magnetic recording heads via an amplifier. It was now possible to record much finer grooves which lay closer to one another and for the record to revolve only 33 revolutions a minute (instead of the usual 78 rpm). By enlarging the diameter of the record to 40 centimetres it became a long playing record. With fifteen of these records it was possi-

ble to provide the sound accompaniment for a two hour film.

The record player now stood in the projection room and was mechanically coupled with the projector. There were now no more synchronisation problems provided that the record and the pick up were both started together at the right point. A marker on the film actuated the start. The projectionist, who needed an assistant, always arranged for the next record to be properly set up on the twin turntable record player. (As a student I was such an assistant in a small cinema showing “The Singing Fool” for four weeks at one Mark an evening).



Sound-damping by the use of potato sacks in the first Trierigon studio.

**Al Jolson**  
singt und spricht  
in dem erfolgreichsten  
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*The Singing Fool*  
(Der singende Narr)  
MIT BETTY BRONSON & JOSEPHINE DUNN  
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6 9  
SONNABEND UND SONNTAGS  
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**GLORIA-PALAST**

Newspaper advertisement of June 1929.

The great success of this film woke up the German film producers. 300,000 Berliners saw and listened to Sonny Boy in the Gloria-Palast before the film was distributed throughout Germany.

The physicists and engineers had already developed the technique for sound on film and were now sent for. It is worth reflecting what would have happened to the Triergon if they had had Al Jolson as the star of "Life in the Valley" instead of a cockerel!

In five months the German ie the Berlin sound film was there; the Americans had not only been caught up but had been overtaken technically. Now the large number of patents also began to pay for themselves. With the help of those patents the so called Paris Sound Film Treaty of 1930 was agreed. All parties to this Treaty were now allowed in their own countries to make films under each system and to show the films in other countries. The foundation of Berlin as the sound film capital had been laid and the doors opened for exports. By April 1931, 137 sound films had already been produced of which 46 had been produced in foreign language (mostly French) versions.

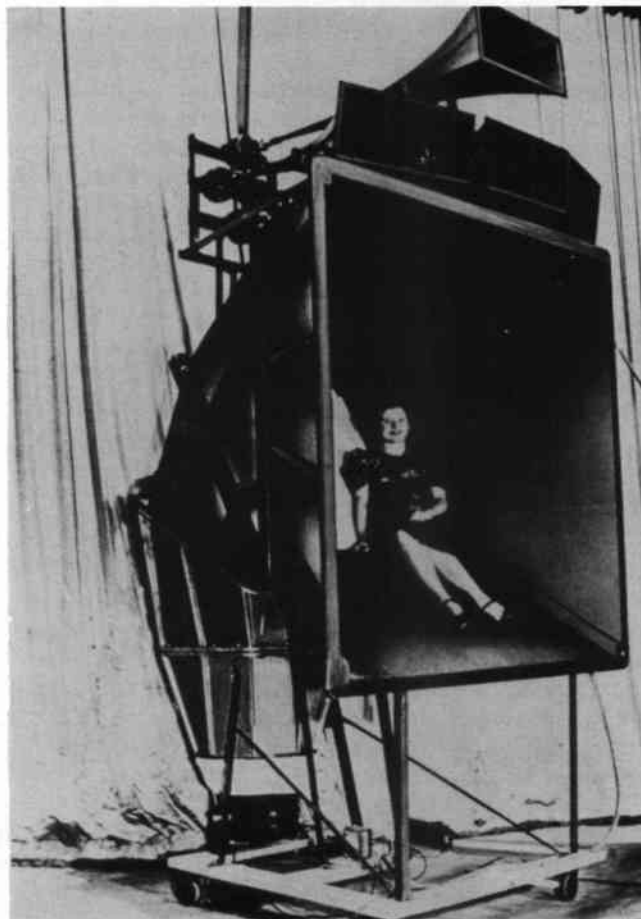
### Will there be competition between the Tape Recorder and the Digital Record?

It would take too long to spell out here the detailed history of the development of magnetic tape recording. However, it may be noted that the magnetic tape recorder came from Berlin. In Oberschöneweide (today in East Berlin) the first model was made by AEG utilising a paper tape with an iron powder coating. That was in 1933.

The first apparatus with the new trademark "Magnetophon" was publically shown two years later at the radio exhibition in Berlin in 1935. The two original apparatuses were destroyed when the exhibition buildings burned down (see Berliner Forum 6/79 S54 ff).

They already utilised the plastic tape invented by BASF which is used today in modern versions of the tape recorder.

The very latest development is the cassette recorder. The compact cassette, developed by Phillips, lives alongside the gramophone record. Every record manufacturer produces almost as many cassette versions as long playing records. Creative engineers and inventors continue to work to guarantee the existence and development of the magnetic tape, even if digital records start to compete with it because of their higher quality. One may look forward with enthusiasm to this further development which may well be history in ten years time.



Large cinemas needed large loudspeakers: a large loudspeaker for the Ufa-Palast at the Zoo (the young lady serves less for decoration than as a scale for comparison of size).

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**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**  
**Professor Dr -Ing E.h. Walter Bruch**

Born on 2nd March 1908 in Neustadt/Weinstrasse, commenced constructing in 1929 and three years later became a television engineer. Via the laboratory of the Berlin inventor Manfred von Ardenne he went in 1933 to the television laboratory of Dénes von Mihaly in Berlin; at the end of 1935 he went to the Berlin research department of Telefunken. In 1950 he left Berlin to develop the first post war television receivers for Telefunken in Hanover. In 1951 he was with Telefunken at the Industry Exhibition in Berlin. The PAL colour television system which was demonstrated to the technical world in 1963 came from the Telefunken (later AEG Telefunken) equipped laboratories. This system was introduced in 45 countries as well as in Germany. Retired in 1976 but continues to work in international television committees and as consultant. Whilst at the Technical University in Hanover he read in the scientific principles and practice of television technology. Countless publications and over 120 patents are evidence of his development work. He had been honoured with the highest awards also from abroad. In his free time he wrote and continues to write books about the history of television technology and related fields. He is the author of issues 6/77 and 6/69 of Berliner Forum.

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# BEETHOVEN AND MECHANICAL MUSIC

by John Tagger.

(Translated from the French by Alison Biden).

THE pressing desire to hear or re-hear musical pieces urged man to create automatic musical instruments, the ancestors of today's recorded music. It is necessary to understand by instruments of mechanical music, all autophonic<sup>1</sup> instruments, that is to say, machines which produce harmonies without the direct assistance of man.

As far back as the beginning of the 18th century the works of RR.PP<sup>2</sup> Kircher and G Schott gave the exact details of the manufacture of self-operating small organs: instruments where the barrel's<sup>3</sup> rotation worked the bellows, and with the help of a very simple mechanical traction, the different points on the cylinder<sup>3</sup> released the stops of the pipes.<sup>4,5</sup>

The term "musical box" is vague. It describes instruments of all sizes, of various forms and very different techniques, ranging from the small gem of a few grams (a seal or musical ring) to the complete orchestrion of several tons, including the Barbary Organ, an instrument of perhaps debatable musical quality, but whose charm lies in its imperfection. One can enumerate more than 250 kinds of music box or musical instruments which are curious, strange, ridiculous or fantastic.

The great masters of the 18th century: Mozart, Gluck, Haydn, Grétry, and Beethoven found relaxation in the composition of small short and very simple pieces for music boxes. In this way they have left us some veritable musical testaments, little masterpieces of genuine workmanship.<sup>6</sup>

## Beethoven

\*1784 Musical clock with<sup>7</sup> movements in three parts for violin and piano-forte without opus number (authenticity doubtful).

\*1799 Five pieces for clock with flutes without opus number. Publication (1st piece): Royal Library of Berlin<sup>8</sup>; (2nd piece): "Die Musik" Berlin 1-12-1902 and B & H 1920; (2nd and 3rd pieces): Publication for piano-forte pieces for 2 and 4 hands by Jean Chantavoine, Heugel (Aux Menestrels) edition, Paris 1902; (4th and 5th pieces): Scientific Library Publication, Artaria Collection, Berlin, 1901.

1st piece: Adagio Assai in F major in  $\frac{3}{4}$  time.<sup>9</sup>

2nd piece: Scherzo Allegro in G major. Trio in D major in  $\frac{3}{4}$  time.

3rd piece: Allegro in G major in  $\frac{2}{4}$  time.

4th piece: Allegro non piu molto in C major in  $\frac{4}{4}$  time.

5th piece: Menuetto-Allegretto in C major in  $\frac{3}{4}$  time with trio in F major.<sup>10</sup>

Count Joseph Deym, husband of Josephine von Brunswick, Beethoven's cherished student, commissioned from him five pieces for clock with flutes. Müller alias Count de Deym, owned in Vienna a collection of arts and curiosities in which one could admire wax characters, musical clocks and amongst others a mechanical organ of several registers, allowing the execution of

complete musical pieces. Moreover, it is for this treatment that Mozart had already composed the pieces: KV594, 608, 616. (The latter two taken up by Beethoven). Beethoven ensured the continuity of this work by preparing: "Fünf Stücke für de Flötenuhr", the post-humous opus 33. The last piece is a perfect example of composition for the clock.

The composer always had to take into consideration the limited number of flutes<sup>4</sup> and registers, in general, 22 flutes on three registers, which explains the simplicity of the themes. However, it did not have to be played by human hands, thus allowing some original variations. It is sometimes noticeable in the compositions of Beethoven and Mozart.

\*1813. Wellington's Victory or the Battle of Victoria<sup>11</sup> for Panharmonicon (cf. orchestral version) opus 91, dedicated to George, Prince Regent of England.

Ludwig van Beethoven had the talent and boldness to write the most important and most remarkable piece specially for a mechanical instrument of great span: the Panharmonicon, perfected by the inspired J N Maelzel, inventor of the metronome. Maelzel had already built several instruments of this kind being nothing like the clock with flutes or the mechanical pianos, constituting veritable orchestrions or "orchestral machines", intended to replace musicians. The Panharmonicon was made up of wind and percussion instruments (37 flutes, 16 bassoons, 38 clarinets, 36 oboes, 8 trumpets, 3 hunting horns and 6 percussion instruments). Contemporaries mentioned also that the instrument imitated canon shots. (The Panharmonicon on show in the Stuttgart Museum was destroyed during the last World War). The first academy<sup>12</sup> of 8th December, 1813, for the benefit of the wounded of the Battle of Hanau,<sup>13</sup> was a veritable triumph. Beethoven declared some days later in a letter he made public: "It is Maelzel in particular who deserves all our thanks. He is responsible for the first idea of this academy and it is he who attended to the whole of the organization, very alert to every detail. I owe him thanks particularly for having obtained for me the opportunity to offer my compositions for a useful public purpose, thus fulfilling the burning desire I had for a long time to place the fruits of my labour upon the altar of the Fatherland".

Incontrovertible proof of the great success of the Battle of Vittoria,<sup>11</sup> played by the Panharmonicon. Beethoven and Maelzel had opened thus the way to the prodigious development of mechanical music. This was the departure point for the fashion for mechanical music of all kinds and the very extensive pursuit of the perfect reproduction of music with the aid of pneumatic instruments such as the Aeolian Pianola, Expressive Steinway, for which Stravinsky specially composed pieces for 4, 6 and 8 hands, demonstrating that instruments of this kind could exceed human execution, by means of their virtuosity and precision.



\* These bars have been carefully copied from the French article but my own sense of composition suggests that the B(\*) should really be a C. Can any member confirm this? (Ed).

### NOTES ON TRANSLATION

1. "Autophonic": I don't know if there is such a word! Obviously the dictionary does not have it. I see from Bowers' *Encyclopedia of Automatic musical instruments* that there was such a term as "autophone", but the adjective in his book is "automatophonic". Perhaps you know more about it than I do, and can put in the correct word. Alternatively, put it in inverted commas, "autophonic".
2. "RR.PP.": I have ascertained that "R.P." in French stands for "Révérend Père" (Reverend Father), but I don't know if "RR.PP." is the plural form, and were Kircher & Schott both Reverend Fathers anyway? I have left out any allusion to "RR.PP." in the translation. If you know the answer, please put it in. It does not alter the sense at all, and is only a detail.
3. "barrel": The words "cylindre" and "rouleau" as far as I can ascertain, are virtually interchangeable. Not being "au fait" with the description of the instrument myself, I had to make an intelligent (?) guess at the meaning. ("cylindre" can also mean "drum" in the sense of a barrel shaped object). If I have applied the wrong technical name to the wrong part and you are aware of it, please correct accordingly.
4. "flûtes": I cannot justify translating this as "pipes" except that it seems more logical to me that it means "organ pipes" than just "flutes". Am I trying to be too clever? Elsewhere I have translated the word "flûtes" as "flutes", which is its proper meaning.
5. The whole of the second paragraph does not contain a finite verb, so I have converted three descriptive present participles into finite verbs to make it run better in English.
6. My translation "little masterpieces of genuine workmanship" is somewhat ambiguous in the English. I think the English reader will read it more metaphorically than it was actually written in the French, which is very literal. I am tempted to believe that Tagger did not really write what he meant, or meant what he

wrote, in the phrase "petits chefs-d'oeuvres d'une facture authentique", and that most probably he meant how I have translated it!

7. "ou": this made more sense to me if I assumed a misprint and that an accent had been left off, and the word should have been "où". So I have translated it as "with". If I am wrong in my assumption then instead of "with movements" it should read "or movements".
8. I have translated Foreign names into English where it is obvious that Tagger has translated foreign names into French, otherwise I have left them in their original language.
9. "3/4 time": The only logical sense I could make of "at 3/4" the literal translation of the French, was to assume it was referring to the time of the peice of music. Please correct me if you are aware that I am wrong.
10. Tagger, or the publishers, or the printers, is inconsistent in the punctuation, but I have copied his exactly, inconsistencies and all. I have not done anything about trying to copy his italics.
11. "Victoria": another inconsistency as later it appears as "Vittoria". I have just followed the French. You may tidy it up as you please.
12. "Academy": I'm afraid I have given up on this. I cannot find any suitable meaning of "academy" in this context (French "académie") and I don't know to what it refers. "Academy" is the usual, literal translation of the French word.
13. "Hanau": My geography / history / general knowledge give out here. Is Hanau French for "Hanover"? Or does it simply mean "Hanau" a place and battle of which I've never heard?

(Alison Biden)

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# MUSICAL BOX ODDMENTS 23

by H. A. V. Bulleid

ANOTHER French composer of operettas, said to have rivalled Offenbach and Lecocq in popularity during the 1880's, was Edmund Audran, 1840-1901, born in Lyons to a musical family. After his musical studies he became a composer and church organist; his early compositions included a funeral march for Meyerbeer in 1864. He went on to write several successful operettas, including...

Le Grand Mogol	1877
Les Noces d'Olivette	1879
La Mascotte	1880
Gillette de Narbonne	1882
La Cigale et la Fourmi (the grasshopper and the ant)	1886
Miss Helyett	1890
La Poupée (the doll)	1896

Tunes from the first five are quite often seen on tune sheets of cylinder musical boxes. The most successful, *La Mascotte*, has tunes on 15½ in Polyphon nos 1752 and 1920 and others, and the *Grand Mogul* and *Miss Helyett* and *La Poupée* are also represented on disc. If Miss Helyett has got onto a cylinder box she is quite likely to be nickel plated.

## Soldered dampers

Circumstances certainly alter cases, a good example being sensitivity to damper noise. I refer not to the groans and squeaks from missing bass-end dampers, but to the various sizzling noises which indicate some missing dampers near the treble end. Luckily this slight noise goes unnoticed by many listeners. Indeed, listening for damper noises can become a malaise affecting conscientious damper-fitters; it is far less rewarding than listening for the subtleties of the music. Then again this slight sizzling noise is masked if the music is heavy or full of decoration or accompanied by bells or other distractions. And of course there is the overriding fact that no tooth needs a damper if the intervals between its soundings are all greater than the life of its vibrations.

All these factors must have been weighed to some extent by the makers, when they decided at what point along the comb they would stop fitting pinned steel dampers.

Perhaps the decision was partly forced upon them by the point at which the damper pin holes were ground away towards the lighter, treble teeth. This point varied a lot on apparently similar movements – to take for example two 13in 8-air Nicoles, no 40200 has 66 pinned dampers, no 45888 has 72.

So then the problem arose, what to do about damping these borderline teeth? The easy answer was to continue with feather dampers, used since the early days of the industry; but I have not yet found any material adequate for this duty on these comparatively heavy teeth. A really tough plastic material does not damp them and an adequately resilient material, natural or synthetic, wears out very quickly. So the more caring makers fitted a number of soldered steel dampers to extend the range of the pinned dampers. For example, some 8-air Conchon combs with 78 teeth had ten soldered dampers – though this number could have been reduced if more care had been taken to preserve adequate anvils. In contrast, neither of the Nicole boxes mentioned above had any soldered dampers.

There is no doubt that all soldered dampers requiring renewal should be replaced by re-soldering; but how about those combs where several teeth beyond the last pinned damper carry diminishing traces of the anvils but no steel dampers? Well, such teeth are generally too heavy (or stiff) for feather dampers and should certainly be fitted with soldered dampers, even if not previously so fitted, – unless their “damper noise” is masked by one of the factors referred to above.

So on both counts one needs to be adept at soldering dampers; and note! once mastered, it is almost as quick and just as easy as replacing pinned dampes... in fact quicker and easier where damper pins have to be drilled out or altered to preserve pitch.

## Tools

The only additional tools needed for soldered dampers are a soldering iron, a penknife with small blade and

a sharpening stone. The stone is merely to keep the knife blade tip truly sharp, for scraping lacquered damper wire and for cleaning and paring solder. It is very important that the soldering iron should be small – not more than 15 watts and with the tip of the bit about 1½mm dia (0".06). You may have to file down a bit to this size; if so it must then be re-tinned.

## Preparing the wire

Tinned damper wire can be soldered “as is” after cleaning away any grease, but lacquered wire must have the lacquer scraped off for about 2mm, a tenth of an inch at the most. With the prepared wire, the hot soldering iron on a stand with a tiny blob of free solder on the bit, and one drop of Bakers fluid on a clean saucer, it is only necessary to dab the wire end into the fluid and then into the hot solder when it should tin the prepared 2mm. If not properly tinned, repeat. Though Bakers fluid is very undesirable on account of being so corrosive, I have found its use advisable in the minute quantity needed. Most other damper soldering is easily and better done with any good non-corrosive soldering flux.

## Re-soldering

Where there has already been a soldered damper, I proceed as follows:–

1. mark the tooth and an adjacent tooth of the same pitch.
2. remove any remnants of old dampers with a pin after touching the old solder with the iron to melt it.
3. scrape the old solder clean and apply a touch of flux.
4. melt enough solder on the bit to suit the job.
5. hold tip of prepared damper wire over the old solder and in line with tooth tip, and briefly apply iron, making sure that the wire is well below the surface of the new blob of solder. Hold steady till solder freezes.
6. test strength of bond by lifting wire, if OK cut to length.
7. re-tune to match the adjacent marked tooth by scraping away excess solder.



The amount of solder in step 4 should be enough to ensure lowering the pitch of the tooth so that it can be restored by scraping away surplus. This scraping away permits fine tuning. For step 5 it takes a bit of practice to ensure that the new wire is well below the surface of the solder, thus ensuring the bond and permitting surplus be scraped off the top. Cutting to length in step 6 depends on circumstances; if soldering onto an almost complete anvil, cut to normal length. If the anvil is entirely ground away the wire will need to be cut longer by approximately its distance below the top of a damper pin hole, say about 0".03 (3/4mm).

#### New soldering

Where there has not previously been a soldered damper, two additional steps are needed:-

(a) enough metal must be ground off the anvil remnants to compensate for the weight of solder being added. As can be seen on many a well-finished comb, this only needs an extremely small amount of solder.

(b) the ground area must then be tinned. This is sometimes difficult, and it is worth facilitating the job by initial de-greasing and by using Baker's fluid. Only a small blob of solder should be put on the bit, but after applying a spot of Bakers fluid to the tooth the bit will have to be pressed on the tooth much longer – several seconds – than for damper soldering, because the tooth must be locally heated to the temperature of the molten solder before good tinning can occur. A second small touch of Bakers fluid may be needed after the tooth area is up to temperature. Once properly tinned, as much solder as required is easily added. If that is the last use of Bakers fluid on the comb, rinse well in a solution of washing soda then hot water. Before soldering on the damper wire, check that the pitch of the tooth has been lowered; it is not easy to add solder subsequently without disturbing the wire. And be careful not to apply flux to the sides of the tooth, because if solder gets onto the sides it is a tedious job to remove it, and if not removed it spoils the appearance of the comb.

#### Damper details

Occasionally a damper pin hole drilled too high on the anvil or burst open by a strong-armed re-damperer

necessitates a soldered damper quite a distance from the treble end, in which case it will need the same thickness of damper wire as its neighbours. Otherwise soldered dampers almost always need 0.06mm or finer wire. A common error seen in soldered dampers, particularly where there is no anvil remnant, is that they are cut too short. This means that they are too stiff and thereby likely to be ineffective. All dampers, soldered or pinned, should be of the same form throughout the comb if they are to give the appropriate damping action for a given wire thickness. This simply involves giving the extra length described above; and making certain that the solder gets no nearer to the tooth tip than the line of the anvils.

Two experts with whom I discussed soldered dampers expressed anxiety about the soldering heat annealing the damper wire, thereby reducing its springiness. But soft solder melts at 180°C which is well below the annealing temperature of spring steel; so the only danger is from using too large or too hot an iron. Hence the advice to use a 12 or 15 watt iron. I have held a 15 watt iron in contact with damper wire for many seconds without any trace of softening.

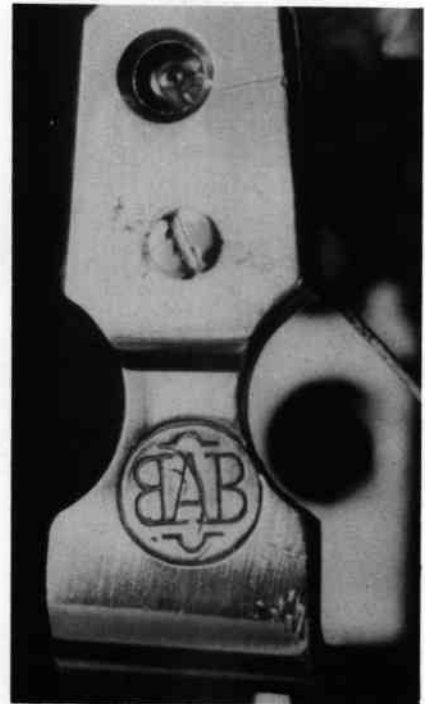
#### Trade marks

A close look at the Bremond trade mark stamped on a governor cock and illustrated herewith reveals three errors: it is not central, it leans to the left, and traces of the right side of its circle and the top of the B running through the A indicate a rather wild previous application. File marks suggest efforts to remove the worst traces of this error.

I think all this proves that such stamps were more often applied by apprentices than by craftsmen; and to my mind this explains why these governor cock stamps vary in both character and reliability – they are missing on many movements. Presumably one such special steel stamp was obtained, engraved to special order, and would be expected to last for years in a craftsman's hands and used only on brass. Probably not until it was lost or damaged was a replacement ordered. So naturally the stamps would vary over the years, and a second Bremond type is also illustrated herewith.



Probably an early type of Bremond stamp, here seen on the governor of movement serial no 6329.



Later type of governor cock, cut away to allow the securing screw to be inserted from above, with later Bremond stamp applied carelessly on serial no 17614.

Similar thoughts apply to the makers names stamped on brass bedplates. Henriot are particularly variable and evasive and even trustworthy Nicole shows occasional signs of a casual apprentice: the upper line, NICOLE FRERES, is sometimes seen misplaced – and even inverted, as on serial number 38010.

#### The Great Exhibition

Items on show in the Great Exhibition of 1851 tell an interesting story about what are now the antiques of that period. The official reports run to five hefty volumes, over 1200 pages each and containing some top

class engravings. The text is very brief on exhibits but includes comments on current industrial affairs and procedures.

The exhibits were predominantly British, so it is not surprising that many notable foreign manufacturers did not exhibit – Nicole Frères for example. The only non-Swiss musical box exhibit was by Rzebitschek; that was the official spelling, British printers were not keen on adding “a whole lot of fancy accents” at that time. Thus:–

162 RZEBITSCHKEK, F, PRAGUE – Manufacturer. Four musical boxes, playing two, three, four and six tunes.

The number signifies the 162nd Austrian exhibitor. All the headings differentiate between manufacturers and inventors.

The extensive Swiss entry covered a wide range from watches and instruments to textiles and textile machinery and chocolate. There were eight musical box exhibitors, and no one exhibited both musical boxes and watches. It was 1851, remember.

26 E. & A. PAILLARD BROTHERS, Sainte Croix, Canton of Vaud – Manufacturers. A musical box – Mandoline. Musical snuff-

boxes, playing respectively two, three and four tunes.

27 JACCARD BROTHERS, Sainte Croix, Canton of Vaud – Manufacturers. Musical snuff-boxes, in horn and tortoiseshell, silver mounted, playing two, three, four and six tunes. Another box, playing four overtures.

32 LECOULTRE, D., & SON, Brassus, Canton of Vaud – Manufacturer. A large musical box, with two combs, playing the following overtures, viz, De Semiramis by Rossini; Robert le Diable by Meyerbeer, and Guillaume Tel by Rossini.

33 JAQUES, LOUIS, & SON; St. Croix, Canton of Vaud – Manufacturers. Musical boxes, playing respectively 8 tunes, with forte-piano; mandoline, 4 tunes; 6 tunes, with derum and cymbals; 4 tunes, with castanets and cymbals; large size, 4 overtures, with forte-piano; mandoline, large size, 4 tunes, with forte-piano; two small, 4 tunes; two small, 3 tunes; six small, 2 tunes; and one, 6 tunes with forte-piano.

77 DU COMMUN GIROD, Frederick William, Geneva – Manufacturer. Musical boxes, carved and marquetric.

83 GAY & LUQUIN, Geneva – Inventors. Complicated musical box,

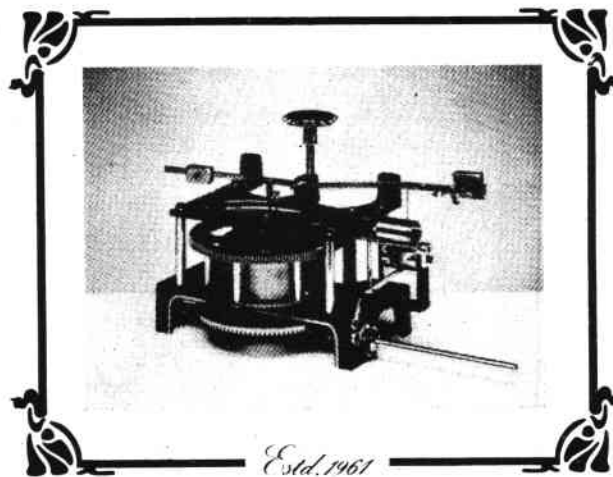
imitating a military band, plays six modern tunes, the barrel is nineteen inches long, and three inches four-tenths in diameter; it contains also harmonic tones, a drum, two castanets, twelve small bells, and a large drum, which are not seen; with a carved box and moveable glasses.

90 LECOULTRE BROTHERS, Brassus, Canton of Vaud. Musical box, plays four overtures, with two key-boards. Musical pianoforte, plated box, inlaid work, and glass.

97 METERT & LANGDÖRFF, Geneva – Manufacturers. Musical boxes, playing six tunes, with bells and drum at pleasure, ebony and black cases; musical boxes playing four tunes, mandoline, black case, all with metallic incrustations.

Swiss thinking in 1851 on accurate machining for interchangeability is exemplified by Antoine Lecoultre who exhibited various pocket chronometers including “Six movements, without escapement, with this peculiarity, that after being taken to pieces, and the pieces mixed, they can be placed together again, taking each piece as it presents itself, with the exception of the barrels and indexes and the screws”.

HAVB, April 1984.



**ROBERT KANE TRENDER**

Specialist Restorer of Disc Musical Boxes

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## Book Reviews

This book arrived when the autumn edition of the journal was ready to be printed. There was no time for our book reviewer, Ian Alderman, to study it in time for this edition. We can, however, publish the following information about Graham Webb's book.

**"THE MUSICAL BOX HANDBOOK"**. 2nd edition. Volume 1, Cylinder Boxes by Graham Webb. \$14.95 US (or Sterling equivalent). 246 pages, papercover. Fully illustrated, 5½ × 8½ inch size.

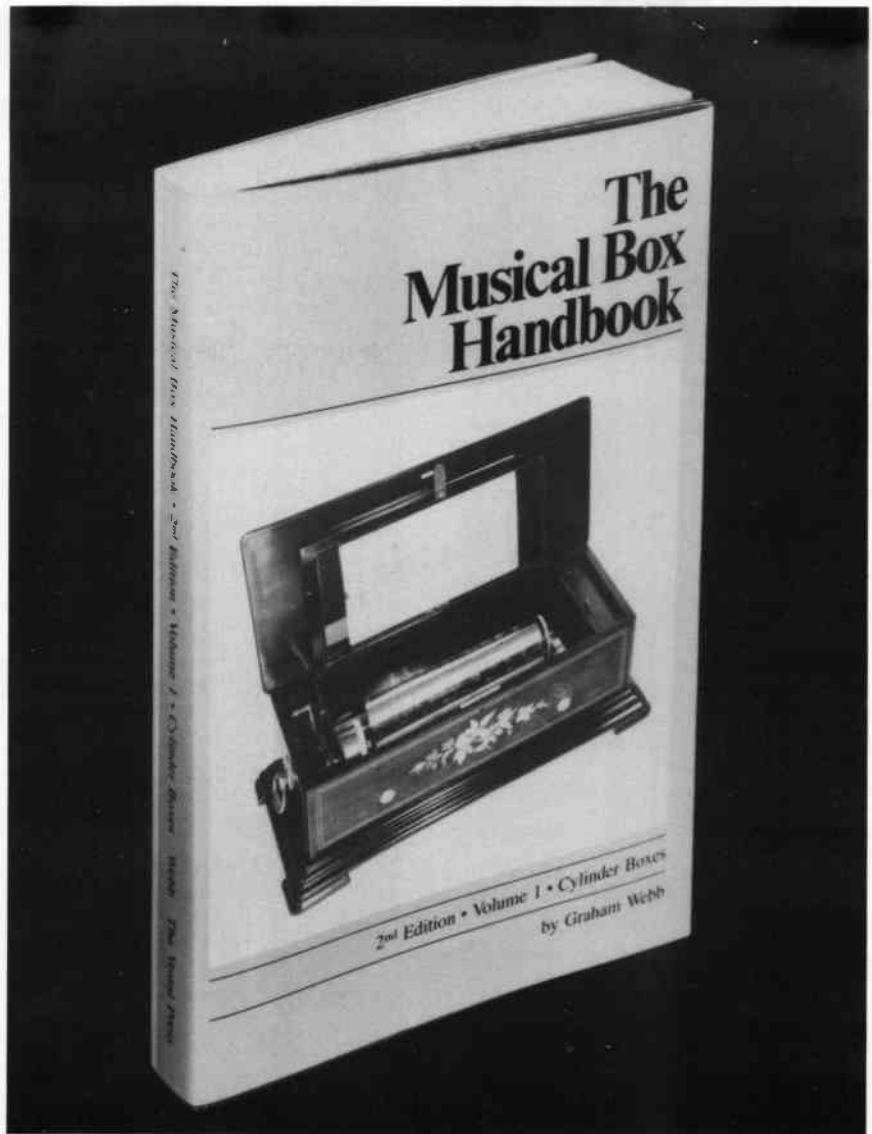
One of the World's great authorities on the musical box is Graham Webb, who maintains a sales outlet and repair facility in Brighton. His latest work is a new edition of his famed book on Cylinder Musical Boxes, first published several years ago.

It features a lengthy section on the general development of the musical box, with pictures of the various configurations and adaptations that took place over the years from the early 1800's when they started to become popular, to the end of the 19th century when modern technology in the form of the gramophone rendered them obsolete as a medium of home entertainment.

19th-century musical boxes have become valuable collectors' items, and the main thrust of Mr Webb's book is to illustrate and describe repairs and restoration techniques to put these machines back into their original condition. Not only are they marvelous examples of craftsmanship from years past, but their musical renditions are unique to this type of instrument and, in many cases, are quite spectacular.

A number of Societies around the world involve thousands of individuals who are interested in the preservation and the lore of musical boxes. One of the most prominent of these is the Musical Box Society of Great Britain, whose members meet frequently to discuss the latest historical findings, and which publishes an excellent journal devoted to all aspects of mechanically-produced music.

Copies of Mr Webb's 246-page book are available through bookstores and libraries throughout Great Britain.



Graham Webb's address is 10 Powis Road, Sussex, England. Volume 2, on Disc Musical Boxes, is scheduled for early publication. The book is published by The Vestal Press Ltd, New York, USA. (Graham Webb is a former editor of "The Music Box" Journal).

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## Letters to the Editor

16th April, 1984.

**South of the border, Down Mexico way.....**

Dear Sir,

There have been many items in the journal over the years reflecting the interest in street organs, the latest being that by Roger Booty in the 1984 Spring issue.

I enclose three photographs taken in Mexico City early this year showing such an instrument which is in daily use; the player moving from pitch to pitch in the fashionable area of pavement restaurants during the prolonged Mexican lunch hour. The organ appears to have been made in Mexico by Wagner and Livien and I was told that it was over one hundred years old. I only heard one tune, but that repeatedly, a sad and haunting waltz.

Also in Mexico I came across a music shop – now devoted to electronic organs. Holding pride of place in the window was a small Orchestrelle, possibly Model A. The owner of the shop, being an enthusiast, had taken it in (part?) exchange or a modern organ. The instrument was in good playing order having just been renovated and had a fine inlaid walnut case. It was not for sale otherwise I might have had a big bill for excess baggage!

Yours sincerely,

Jocelyn Walker.



26th March, 1984.

Dear Mr Leach,

Enclosed is a photograph of the tunesheet belonging to Nicole Freres No 25010, Gamme No 913. In case it does not reproduce well the tunes are as follows:

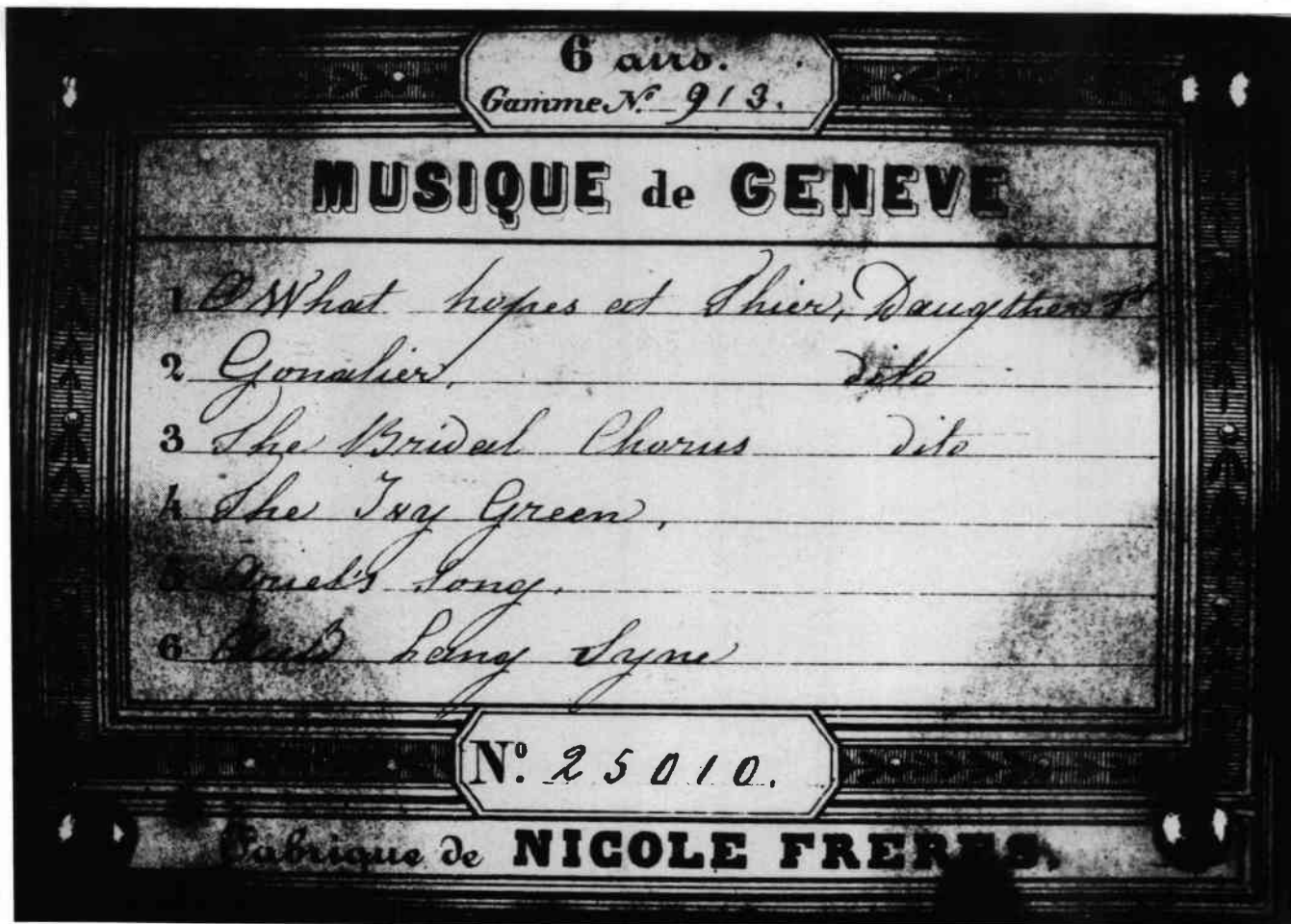
1. Ah What hopes at Thier, Daughter St.
2. Gonalier. Dito
3. The Bridal Chorus. Dito
4. The Ivy Green.
5. Ariel's Song.
6. Auld Lang Syne.

Perhaps one of our members with an extensive knowledge of music can advise me of the origin of the first three tunes. I assume that the words "Daughter St." refer to the work, and that the "Dito" indicates that tunes two and three come from the same work as tune one, although I suppose that Daughter may have been the composer. If so I have been unable to trace him.

My first thought was that they may be selections from The Daughters of the Regiment, as the date is about right, but they are not. The Daughter of Madame Angot is much too late. Can someone please enlighten me?

Yours sincerely,

L C Thompson.



Mr L C Thompson's Tune sheet

4th June, 1984.

Dear Sir,

As we all know the Green Welte Rolls are very rare and do not come up very often, and when they do, they fetch premium prices.

It has been decided to approach various music roll companies to recut 100 rolls, it is hoped that the price will be competitive with similar recut rolls available for the AMPICO and Duo-Art.

The rolls will ONLY be sold in a set of 100 titles, the scheme would run on a NON PROFIT basis so all Participants would pay the same price for their rolls including myself. If you are interested please let me know by return of post as the scheme will be run on a "first come first served" basis, but I will keep a list of all interested parties just in case someone drops out.

A deposit of 10% will be payable with your order, and the balance as soon as all the deposits have been collected.

It is planned to hold the money in the USA in an interest bearing account. Delivery would probably be around 12 to 18 months.

It is proposed to approach various museums and collectors to ask them if they would let us borrow rolls for copying, in exchange it is planned to give them one recut copy of their roll and their original back. Because of this, one set of rolls will be set aside for this purpose. It is envisaged that each participant should make available if possible between 10 and 20

rolls available for copying. If you are interested in the scheme please also send a list of rolls you have available for copying, giving the following information:-

Roll title.

Pianist.

Condition of roll.

Any comment you would like to make about it.

I feel that it is essential that the rolls recut should be of a wide enough variety to account for all peoples taste, although the majority would be of classical nature it would be hoped to include some popular titles.

Please in the first instance write to the address below, DO NOT telephone, and I will advise you of the price as I can.

Yours faithfully,

Chy an Goon  
Valley Road  
Carbis Bay  
St Ives  
Cornwall  
TR26 2QS  
Tel. Penzance (0736) 796904.  
Jonathan J Holmes.

Dear Don,

Thanks for enquiry. Orff and Orth are two different people. Carl Orff was born in 1895 and studied in Munich. His operas are widely heard in Germany. Best known work in UK is *Carmina Burana*, a work often performed by schools. I believe Charles Orth went to live in America. Ed.

Dear Editor,

I liked your **Introduction** in Vol 11 No 6 but is the **Charles Orth** on p239 supposed to be **Carl Orff**, born in Munich and, as far as is generally known, still alive?

Greetings,

Don Fillinger, Geneva.

13th May, 1984.

Dear Bob,

Referring to my article, "The Tight-Rope Walker" in the Summer issue of **The Music Box**, there seems to be an omission from the original script, viz: that the version described in the article and shown in the general view (Fig. 1.) is in the collection of members Norman and June Vince who also supplied that photograph.

Would you please print this in the next issue to set the record straight.

Yours sincerely,

Lyn Wright.



5th April, 1984.

Dear Robert,

Many thanks for your letter of the 12th March, the delay in my reply being occasioned by disorganised muddle for the MOOS AGM and weekend at Northampton recently in which my charges did not seem to know whether they were going and behaved rather like chickens being herded into their coop at night. At the last minute they seemed to fly off in various directions, and to me, without apparent reason.

As some of the Members have expressed a wish to see a photograph of *Shaharazad*, I enclose one taken "somewhere in Germany" three years ago, but I do know that it was North of Köln.

As time passes I find that I am rather thankful that my book on the mechanical organ was not published. For one thing the subject is too large to confine to 50,000 words, and in addition so many systems have been used in the past in the action that this part must be substantially increased. For instance only last week I found a completely different system for operating the tremolo on the Jazz pipes that this will have to be included in due course. This on an Alfonse Bursens instrument built about 1930 or so. Time however keeps me somewhat busy with the almost complete production of the News Letter for MOOS as I find that I have to write most of the articles particularly the technical ones.

When temperature and time permit *La Cascade* goes together with the new two stage action, which I found I had to design, and where it is working it works extremely well one day a cassette of "Bach on the Band Organ".

Yours ever,

Brian Oram.

January, 1984.

Dear Mr Leach,

I am preparing two articles for **The Music Box**. One concerns a large collection of musical automata which came to New Zealand in the 1920's. I have located the son of the person who brought them, and I have photographs of most of the items.

I am seeking information about his uncle, David Haughton, but it seems that he changed his name to Adams. His wife's name was Ethel Mary. He was previously in the movie business. Any information members can supply would be much appreciated.

The second article concerns two Conchon and one interchangeable organ music boxes which have turned up here, with consecutive members. They have differently inlaid boxes but the same tunes on all three cylinders. The numbers are 6826 and 6827. One is dated in pencil on the base, 19/3/95. The article will compare the two boxes.

I very much need an Index to Vol 4 of **The Music Box**. Is it possible to get one?

Many thanks,

Yours sincerely,

Rod Cornelius.

Note: If any member has a spare, or photocopy, of volume 4, and if anyone has information about David Haughton, also called Adams, please write to: Rod Cornelius, 16 Jubilee Avenue, Devonport, Auckland, New Zealand. Ed.



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*Below left* A Euphonika Herophon Organette (left) and a rare Ariston Organette (right). Sold on 29th May 1984 for £385 and £550

*Right* A Clementi Chamber Barrel Organ. Sold on 29th May 1984 for £1,870



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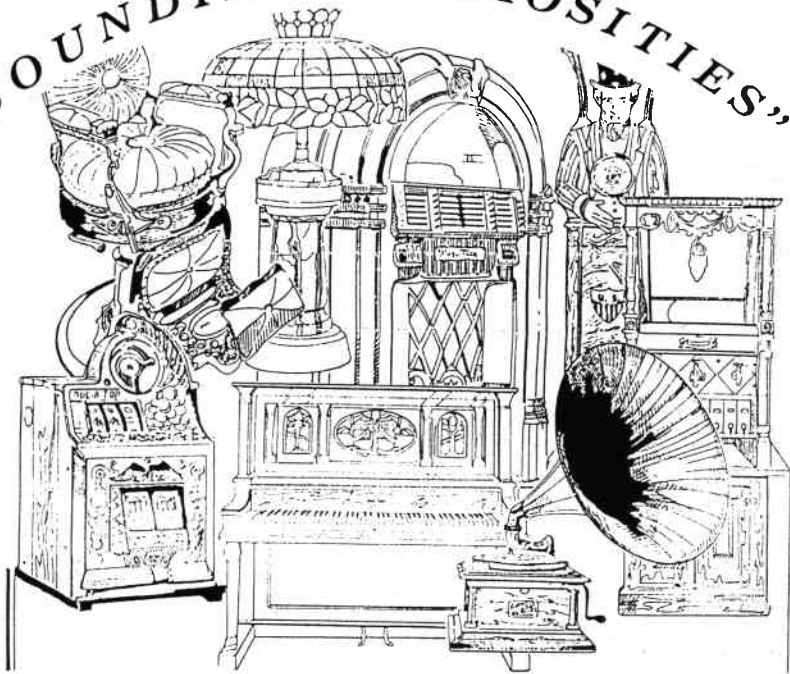
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