

THE MUSIC BOX

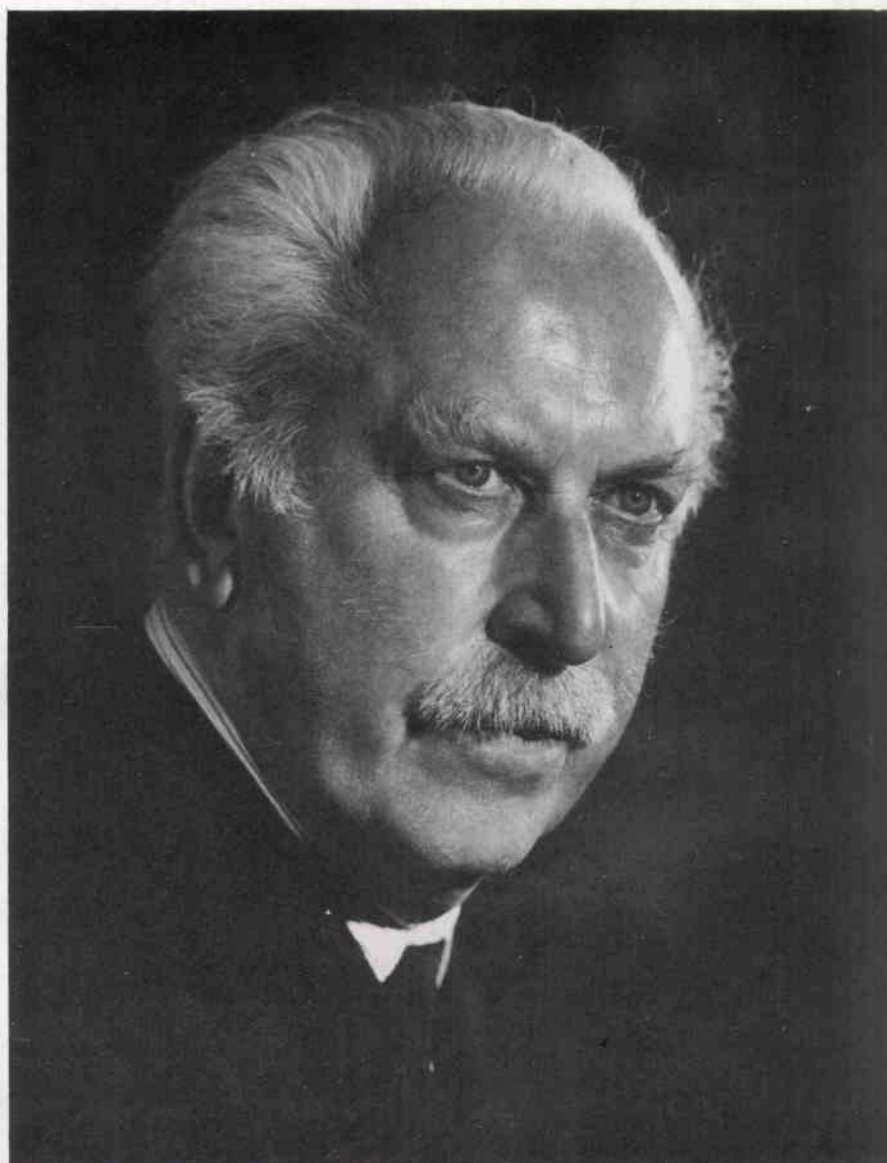
an international magazine of mechanical music

THE JOURNAL OF THE MUSICAL BOX SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN

Volume 12

Number 1

Spring 1985



BY KIND PERMISSION OF LADY BLISS

SIR ARTHUR BLISS — Master of the Queen's Musick, 1953-75.

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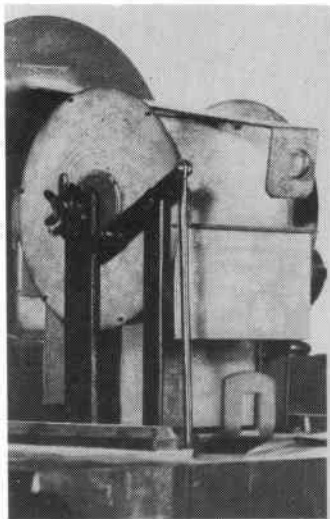


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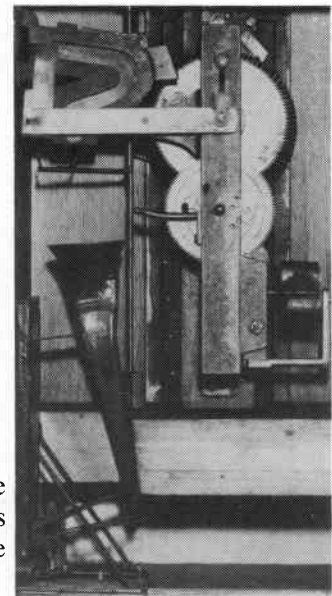
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Above: Detail of the display mechanism behind the pediment. The plates carry soft drink advertisements!



Right: Interior view, showing the cigarette chute (left) and securing holes (centre) for a missing part to operate the display.



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THE MUSIC BOX

an international magazine of mechanical music

THE JOURNAL OF THE MUSICAL BOX SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN

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AUDITOR: **Stephen Cockburn**, Marshalls Manor, Cuckfield, Sussex.

EDITOR: **Bob Leach**, 31 Perry Hill, London, SE6 4LF. Responsible for the editorial content and production of all our publications.

ARCHIVIST: **Peter Howard**, 9 Manor Close, Felpham, Bognor Regis, PO22 7PN, to whom all contributions to the archives should be sent, and at whose address the archives are housed.

AUCTION ORGANISER: **Roger Kempson**, 32 Woodleigh Gardens, Whitchurch, Bristol, BS14 9JA. Responsible for the organisation of all auctions at Society meetings.

ADVERTISEMENT MANAGER: **John Powell**, 33 Birchwood Avenue, Leeds, 17, West Yorkshire, LS17 8DJ.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS: **Christopher Proudfoot**, c/o Christies, South Kensington, London SW7 3JS.

Ken Dickens, 148 Harrowden Road, Bedford, MK42 0SJ.

Reg Mayes, 171, Barnet Wood Lane, Ashted, Surrey, KT21 240.

Keith Harding, 93 Hornsey Road, London, N7 6DJ.

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BACK NUMBERS, obtainable from; Roy Ison, 3 Greestone Place, off Minster Yard, Lincoln, England.

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FRONT COVER

Sir Arthur Bliss, 1891-1975, was educated at Rugby, and he studied music at Cambridge and at the Royal College of Music.

In 1915 he was sent to France as a Captain in the 13th Royal Fusiliers. Our celebrated "gramophone" member, Christopher Proudfoot, will be delighted to read that Arthur Bliss took a portable gramophone into the trenches and in between gunfire could be heard the music of Elgar, Berlioz, Schubert, and others. Arthur Bliss was wounded in the Battle of the Somme, July 1916, but after convalescence in England he returned to France.

From 1919 until his death in 1975 there was a steady output of work. His *Morning Heroes*, a work of five movements, was written in 1930, in memory of his brother, Kennard, who was killed in "the Somme". This symphony describes war in all ages and all time. The last movement ends with the poem *Dawn on the Somme* by the poet Robert Nichols, and it is sung by a chorus.

Arthur Bliss was knighted in 1950, and in 1953 he was appointed Master of the Queen's Musick.

Music Box readers will remember that some years ago I wrote of the interest Sir Thomas Beecham had in mechanical automata, so it was with great interest that I read in Sir Arthur Bliss's book, *As I Remember*, two paragraphs quoted herein.

Lady Bliss has not only given permission for me to reproduce the paragraphs but has also lent the photograph of Sir Arthur used on the front cover of this issue of the journal. We are very grateful to her and extend our sincere thanks.

The two paragraphs which attracted my attention are these:—

"I am told that as a very small child I was entranced by watches, clocks or by any object that chimed and tolled the hour, and that at children's parties I would wander away from the others at their games and stand transfixed in front of any new clock that the strange house could provide. This obsession of mine must have caused my father some anxiety, for temporarily all clocks in our home were removed or covered up. I expect this simple solution was more successful than any that a future psychologist could have devised. I had forgotten how retentive a



World War One Type of Gramophone.

child's first enthusiasm's could be until some thirty years later when the curtain rose on a performance of Ravel's *L'Heure Espagnole*. As the contrapuntal chiming and ticking of the clocks filled the clockmakers's shop with sound, suddenly a hand seemed to draw aside the covering of all these years, and I felt once more the inexplicable warmth of pleasure that as a child I found in these rhythmically pulsating inventions."

The next quotation refers to a vase given to Sir Arthur's parents by Uncle Kennard.

"This was a Chinese vase some two feet in height topped with a lid, and a key in one of its sides. When it was wound up, music would issue from the inside, the lid would slowly rise, and up would come . . . yes, a mandarin, in green silk with long drooping moustaches, who, slowly turning his head from side to side, would then raise a cup of tea to his lips: after more salutations in which his long moustaches would quiver, he would gracefully withdraw again and the lid would close over him. My brother Howard, who has a phenomenal memory for the past, can still remember and play this long-vanished music."

Sir Arthur Bliss's book, *As I Remember*, is published by Faber and Faber, London. Lady Bliss told me that it is possibly out of print (published 1970). It might be re-issued, but in the meantime it is highly likely that your local library will have a copy on its shelves. The book makes fascinating reading.

As more than 500 members have joined the society since I published the quotation by Sir Thomas Beecham (from his book, *A Mingled Chime*)

they, and Lady Bliss, might like to read what Sir Thomas felt about his boyhood memories of mechanical music:—

"My father nourished a passion for musical-boxes of every description, and the house almost overflowed with them . . . the visitor who hung up his hat on a certain peg of the hall rack, or who absent-mindedly abstracted the wrong umbrella from the stand, would be startled at having provoked into life the cheerful strains of *William Tell* or *Fra Diavolo*. But others were serious and solid affairs, elaborate of build, full of strange devices . . . how I loved them then, and how I lament their absence now."

(Reproduced by permission).

Robbery

Norman and June Vince have recovered most of the property stolen from their home at Wood Farm, Bawdeswell, Dereham, Norfolk NR20 4RX. They are now back in business and wish to thank the police, and also fellow-members and friends in UK, France, Holland, Germany and USA for their help.

Robbery

The robbery at Alan Ridsdill's home was well publicised in the last issue of the journal.

I understand that two youths are to be brought to trial for the theft, and that some of the stolen property has been recovered.

Christmas Meeting

This took place at the London Press Club on December 1, 1984. It was a happy and well-attended affair. I have not received a report but the listed speakers were:—

John Powell, our advertising manager, who spoke about disc projections and cylinder pins.

Peter Howard, our archivist, talked about carving and veneer techniques in a cleverly-titled lecture, "Right to the Finish".

After lunch our roving reporter **Reg Mayes** spoke of his world post-retirement tour, his title appropriately being, "The Tops Downunder", in which he introduced many musical box gems from his global trottings.

Frank Holland, creator of his wonderful piano museum at Kew, London, showed a film of the



Pirouetting Ballerina; A-169; height 37". A handsomely redressed automaton of an always popular subject. French, 19th century.

(Permission to reproduce granted to Editor by Murtoth Guinness in 1983, at his birthday party in London.)

mechanical music to be heard at the museum. His title was "One Man Band". Then the assembled members were lulled Lethwards into the Land of Romanticism with, "Chance to Dream", which was the film showing the Swiss master craftsmen at work.

And there was more.

Reg Lord was billed as offering us "A Light-hearted Look at the Box."

There was tea, and biscuits — and

the Club bar was open for those who desired a quiet drink and a friendly chat.

Thanks are due to Alan and Daphne Wyatt and they, in turn, always say that a host of people have helped them — so — on behalf of the society, thanks to everyone involved in arranging such a happy and easy-going, yet instructive, meeting.

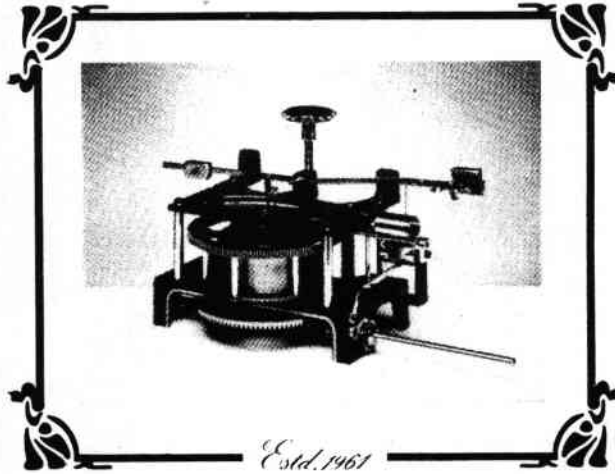
Easter 1985

This is in Oxford, March 8-10, 1985,

at Linton Lodge Hotel, Linton Road, Oxford, telephone: (0865-53461).

Full details and an application form were given in the last issue of the journal.

In this issue is an application form for the **Autumn 1985** meeting, to be held in Aberdeen. Our Scottish members have been very loyal in coming south. Now it is the turn of the English, Welsh and Irish to return the compliment to our United Kingdom compatriots.



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Subs 1985

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Form enclosed with this issue of the journal. Subs same as last year, £8.

Thun, 1985

Ah — what memories of Alan and Daphne Wyatt's 1983 trip! Remember Frank Holland in his string vest, and she-shall-be-nameless swimming in her underwear!

This year the Thun Festival is July 18-21. Dr Peter Whitehead has sent particulars. The telephone number of the secretary of the International Barrel Organ Festival is: 033 22 23 40, and the address is: Sekretariat, Verkehrsbüro, Thun, Switzerland (Schweiz).

Guildford Chapter

A meeting of the Guildford Group was held on Sunday, January 20, 1985. Once again Peter Webb made the cathedral refectory a most pleasant and congenial place for a gathering. The weather was wintry but the meeting was warm and friendly.

Ted Brown gave a talk on musical snuff boxes, and this was much appreciated by the members. Reg Mayes entertained us after lunch by telling us about his adventures and discoveries in mechanical music in Australia and New Zealand. There was not a musical kangaroo in sight, but there were other things to compensate. Anyone intending to visit that part of the world would do well to contact Reg for some addresses — including addresses of collections well worth visiting!

A Racca Piano-Melodico is always a pleasant, evocative instrument. We had some Italian Grand-Opera hauntingly presented by Bob Holden. He also gave us a talk about the instrument.

The Guildford Cathedral refectory now has three mechanical musical instruments on view to the public; a 19⁵/₈ Polyphon, a Barrel Orchestrion, and a Fratinola. The latter exhibit is a café piano (expression-piano), made by the firm of Frati, who were better known for organs than pianos. Each instrument is coin-operated and a great majority of cathedral

visitors prefer to "put another nickel in, in the nickelodian, all I want is loving you, and music, music, music!"

The next meeting of the group will be on May 12. For information, please contact, Lesley Evans, LISS 894086.

© Lesley Evans, 1985.

America

August 30-September 2, 1985. MBSI Annual Meeting. A Great Day! A Great Weekend! on the hotel QUEEN MARY, at Long Beach, California. The 1986 Annual Meeting will be in Sarasota, Florida.

Graham Webb

The revised book on Musical Box restoration, published by "The Vestal Press Ltd., PO Box 97, 320 N Jensen Road, Vestal, New York 13850, USA, can be bought direct from Graham Webb, 59 Ship Street, Brighton, Sussex, 0273-21803. The cost is £12.50 including P & P, or £11 in person at Graham's business address.

(See the Ian Alderman review of Graham's book in this edition of the journal, page 23)

Apologies to Chanctonbury Ring Chapter.
Will publish report next issue.

Ed.

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DE KLOK

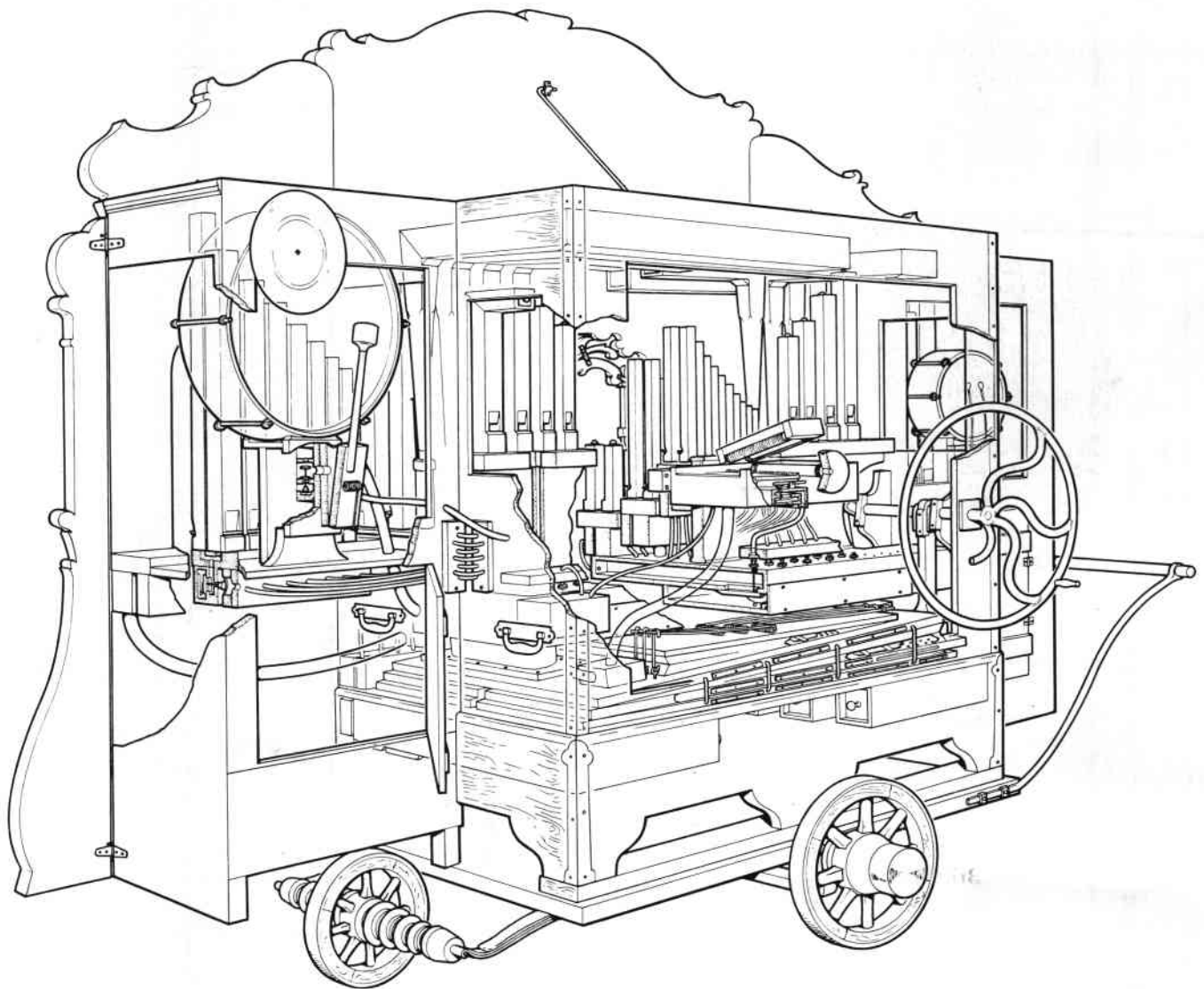
JUDITH Howard sends this diagram of De Klok organ. The drawing is her final project for DATEC (in place of the old "City and Guild" diplomas), a course in technical illustrations Judith is following at Richmond College, Surrey. When the course is successfully completed Judith will gain the *Diploma in Technical Illustration*.

Judith saw the organ in Holland in January 1976. It was then sent to Australia but Judith had the measurements and a 1:12 model was made in 1976 and exhibited in 1977.

The plans of drawings for this organ can be purchased from Judith (2 Bramfield Road, London SW11 6RB. 01-228-1620) for £5.00, and she will be pleased to give fuller details.

Judith and her partner in business, PAGE AND HOWARD, 277 Belinda Road SW14 7DT, 01-274-4139, have just completed their first year. They do any kind of work in the organ world and have recently been working on some large fair organs.

We wish them well in their business enterprise.



© Judith Howard, 1985.

PENNY ARCADIA



© Penny Arcadia, Ritz Cinema, Pocklington, York YO4 2AR.

Publication granted for the Music Box.

Britain's leading magician and television personality Paul Daniels shares the delight of one of the exhibits at our president's Penny Arcadia that the museum was awarded a Certificate of Merit in the British Tourist Authority "Come to Britain" Competition, in recognition of its appeal to foreign tourists.

Paul Daniels and Jon Gresham have been friends for some twenty two years, both are members of the Inner Magic Circle with Gold Star, and during a recent appearance at

the theatre in Hull, Paul took his full company on a private visit to the museum. Having last seen the collection of antique and veteran amusement machines when it was confined to Jon's house, he was highly impressed with it in its new home, saying on radio the next day "Its fantastic, a fabulous day out."

Ritz Cinema, Market Place,
Pocklington, York YO4 2AR.
Telephone Pocklington (075 92) 3420

Any queries contact Jon Gresham:
(0482) 24675.

MBSGB Member, Robert Leach, writes an obituary notice in "The Accountant" for the halfpenny. He assures us that "Penny Arcadia" is safe because the 10p piece will have to go before we lose our penny.



Goodbye to the halfpenny

After a chequered history spanning more than seven centuries, the humble halfpenny is to be demonetised on 31 December. Robert Leach looks at the smallest unit of our currency.

In Saxon times, halfpennies were usually made by cutting silver pennies in half. Round halfpennies made of silver became part of normal currency in 1280. The halfpenny then was worth about 10p today.

As the value of silver increased, the size of the halfpenny decreased. In the sixteenth century, many found the small coin a nuisance. By Charles I reign (1625-1649), the coin was only 10mm in diameter. The small size prompted Shakespeare in *As You Like It* to describe women's offences as 'like one another as half-pence are; every one fault seeming monstrous till his fellow fault came to match it'.

Sixteenth century shopkeepers took the law into their own hands by issuing copper halfpenny tokens. This was stopped by James I in 1613, who maintained that issuing coinage was a royal prerogative.

In 1672, the silver coin was replaced by a stout copper one. Tin was briefly used between 1685 and 1692, but was abandoned in 1694 as it oxidised too easily. An 'extra fine' 1686 tin halfpenny is valued at a record



£600. The design on the reverse of the 1672 halfpenny was Britannia, which remained until 1937 when replaced by the sailing ship Golden Hind. Early copper halfpennies were often hoarded for their beauty, restricting their use as currency.

No halfpennies were minted between 1775 and 1799. This gave rise to a second period of large scale counterfeiting and token issuing. Millions of the genuine article were minted by 1807 which effectively ended the problems of counterfeits and tokens by 1817.

No halfpennies were minted between 1807 and 1825. The new minting under George IV was mainly used in Ireland and British Colonies. At this time, new coins as small as quarter-farthings were also being minted.

In 1839 the postal service was introduced. The original charge of 1d. was increased to 1½d. in 1871. Postcards, introduced in 1870, were allowed to be posted for only ½d. in 1901. Amounts with halfpennies have frequently been used by the Post Office, the last being the 12½p second class rate, which increased to 13p on 3 September 1984. The 3½p, 12½p and 20½p stamps have recently been withdrawn. The ½p stamp is now the last of a whole range of stamps which had odd halfpenny values. This is being withdrawn at the end of the year.

Bronze coins

In 1860, copper was replaced by a bronze alloy of 95% copper, 4% tin and 1% zinc. The diameter was slightly reduced from 29mm to 28mm. In 1923 and 1942 the zinc content was respectively increased to 1½% and 2½%. These coins were minted every year from 1860 to 1967 with the sole exception of 1961.

Inflation though was eroding the worth of the coin. In 1917 there were moves to abolish the halfpenny on the grounds of worthlessness. In 1963, the Committee of Inquiry on Decimal Currency reported that only 10% of retail prices ended with a halfpenny. These items included margarine (10½d per half pound) and cigarettes (1s 8½d for ten). There were then 700 million halfpennies in circulation, representing one ninth of all circulating coins.

Sentimentality, however, attaches even to coinage. A survey in 1952 had shown that only 1.3% of items ended with a farthing or three-farthings. Yet the coin was minted until 1956 and not demonetised until 1960.

The old halfpenny was finally demonetised on 1 August 1969, when it cost more than twice its face value to mint. Although minted to the end, the last coins were dated 1967, giving that year a record mintage in excess of 146 million coins. Some old halfpennies dated 1970 were minted for proof sets, providing perhaps the only example of an unspendable

Table: what a halfpenny will buy

Two paperclips
Just under a teaspoon of beer
2½ teaspoons of petrol
One polo mint
54½ seconds of a local telephone call
29 minutes' worth of road tax for a car
Journey of 22 feet in a London taxi





1860



1967



English coin.

The absence of a halfpenny lasted just 18½ months, when decimalisation on 15 February 1971 instated the 'new halfpenny', albeit at 2.4 times the value of its old nakesake. With a diameter of 17mm, it was the smallest coin since the third-farthing of 1844. At decimalisation there were calls both to issue a ¼p coin and not to issue a coin smaller than 1p.

The new halfpenny quickly followed the demise of its ancestor. Shopkeepers found them in the sweepings where shoppers could not be bothered to pick them up. Welders were using them (illegally) as a cheap source of bronze. Junior school teachers were using them in

preference to the more expensive cardboard imitation.

Bankers and accountants have never admitted the existence of the halfpenny. Retail organisations traditionally collected the coins in a jar for some vague purpose (such as buying doughnuts for the accounts department).

The present coin is believed to be costing more than its face value to produce, known as 'negative seignorage'.

After demonetisation, coins for a while can be paid in at banks who will return them to the Royal Mint for melting down. Alternatively they can be paid to the 'Tiddlers for Toddlers' campaign run by *The Sun* and

Midland Bank plc to benefit children's charities.

With the demise of the halfpenny, we also impoverish idiomatic English. From next year, a poor man really won't have 'two halfpennies to rub together' and the unappreciated man will certainly 'get more kicks than halfpence'. □

We acknowledge with thanks the help of the Royal Mint in providing photographs and information for this article. Information on modern collectors' coins can be obtained from: Martin Cragg, marketing manager, Royal Mint, Llantrisant, Pontyclun, Mid Glamorgan, CF7 8YT.

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Technical Editor, "The Accountant".

Deadline Dates for Copy:

Jan. 5; March 15;
June 15; Sept. 15.

For Advertisements:

Jan. 15; April 7;
July 7; Oct. 7.

NOTICE

The attention of members is drawn to the fact that the appearance in *The Music Box* of an advertiser's announcement does not in any way imply endorsement, approval or recommendation of that advertiser and his services by the editor of the journal or by the Musical Box Society of Great Britain. Members are reminded that they must satisfy themselves as to the ability of the advertiser to serve or supply them.

ENROL A FRIEND....

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LIST OF NEW MEMBERS

- 1952 Mr Henry P. Marriage, Goodeaster, Chelmsford, Essex.
- 1953 Mrs Suzanne Ackerman, Carlton, Nottingham.
- 1954 Mr H. Markham, Plymton St Maurice, Plymouth, Devon.
- 1955 Mr F. E. Hammond, Palmyra, New York, USA.
- 1956 Mr J. P. Simpson, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia.
- 1957 Mr G. Farrugia, Duncraig, Western Australia.
- 1958 Mr William, F. Stephen, Wellington, New Zealand.
- 1959 Mr A. J. Bennet, South Queensferry, West Lothian.
- 1960 Mr A. Rigg, Chester Le Street, Co. Durham.
- 1961 Mr Douglas R. Martin, Hanham, Bristol.
- 1962 Mr Franz Spansier, Nieuwegein, Holland.
- 1963 Mr Carol Ahrens, Den Haag, Holland.
- 1964 Mr P. J. Eggleton, Bisley, Woking, Surrey.
- 1965 Mr P. J. Livingston, Altringham, Cheshire.
- 1966 Mr Michael Carrie, Longside, Aberdeen, Scotland.
- 1967 Mr Hubert Moeller, Ohrdruf, German Democratic Rep.

In response to the request of a number of members full addresses are not listed in the Journal The Committee request that where a member wishes to contact another member for the first time he does so through TED BROWN, 207 Halfway Street, Sidcup, Kent DA15 8DE, England.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

- 0403 D. M. Heeley, Warwickshire.
- 1023 F. K. Sterland, Nottingham.
- 1152 L. L. Barnhart, Salem, USA.
- 1260 B. R. Chidgey, Reading, Berks.
- 1419 J. J. Baker, Colchester, England.
- 1719 A. M. Biden, Basingstoke, Hants.

THE AUCTION

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STRAIGHTENING PINS BY ELECTRICAL HEATING

David Gifford-Hull

TWELVE years ago I bought an interchangeable cylinder box from a bric-a-brac dealer. The case was good, and the movement only wanted cleaning and oiling.

The seven 14" cylinders, however, were a different matter. Although there was no devastating damage to the pins, some 5% or 10% were bent to varying degrees. There was no evidence that the cylinders had been in the grandchildren's toybox, and I expect the damage was due to careless handling.

A lot of the pins were brought up-standing with the standard needle technique, but those very seriously bent obviously needed more help, being brittle.

With seven cylinders to restore, and none so badly damaged as to warrant a re-pin, I devised the following technique:

I used a six volt transformer (the type used in a battery charger) and wired in series a wire-wound variable resistance (about 10 ohms.) with a reasonably precise control. One of the low tension leads goes to the cylinder shaft, the other to the hyperdermic needle. The best way to make this joint is to bare back the flex for about 1", and wind it in a spiral around the needle, leaving the tip (1/8") exposed. This acts as a heat sink to prevent the stem of the needle getting too hot.

Now it is essential to have a foot switch in the circuit, I wired it into the primary (mains) side, although it would be OK in the secondary.

This is the procedure:—

Increase the variable resistance, (so limiting current). Place the needle over the bent pin. Press the foot switch. Advance the current control gently till the tip of the needle becomes cherry red. This is now the correct adjustment for the resistance, it should not need frequent adjusting.

Leaving the heat applied for a second or two anneals the brittle pin, and it can be brought up-standing with safety.

It required a little practice. Never place the needle on the pin, with the switch on. Allow enough time to anneal the pin, but don't let the needle tip get bright red. You will not get the same degree of "contact" on all pins, and the needle sometimes makes it's contact on the surface of the cylinder, but this doesn't seem to matter. Occasionally a slight twist of the needle gets things going, if the "contact" is not immediate. I tried using too much current, and then dabbing at the switch to control heating, this works well.

I wonder if, when the contact does not seem to come through the pin, it comes through the brass surface,

and causes very localized softening of the internal compound, permitting the root of the pin to be resettled.

If the needle seems to stick to a pin when being withdrawn, it always releases if the foot switch is engaged whilst the needle is being removed.

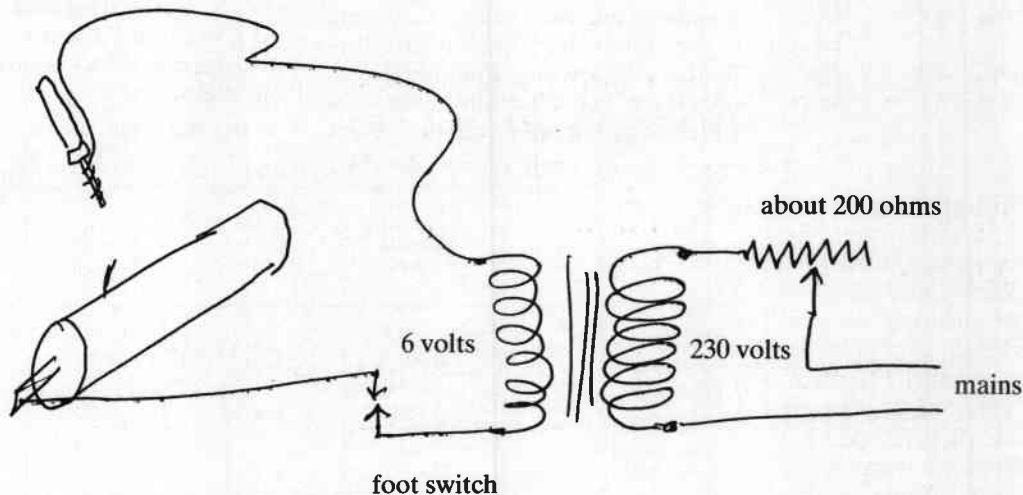
Sometimes the result is a slightly curved pin, but as long as it's tip is above the track line, this is no disaster.

I had over 80% success with severely bent pins, after "perfecting" the rig and a bit of practice. Perhaps the experts would say that having now softened the pins, they will not last long before bending under the load of the comb, but I have found no such trend after a few playings.

Minor considerations; the needles do not last long, they become soft, overheating causes bending, and the odd pin that breaks off is more difficult to clear from the tip of the needle. If you work fast the needle gets uncomfortably hot to hold, so it can be lagged with cotton tape; or a handle made. It might be an advantage to keep a piece of pin wire inside the needle to assist in dispersing heat, and expelling any pins.

The variable resistance could either be placed in the low tension secondary circuit, in which case it should be low resistance of a few ohms (electric fire element wire

(continued on page 14).



MUSICAL BOX ODDMENTS 25

H. A. V. Bulleid

CHARLES Gounod was born in Paris, 1818, his mother a pianist and his father an artist. He entered the Paris Conservatoire under Halévy and Co. in 1836. After successes with Church music he was persuaded to compose operas in 1851 and again in 1854 but neither was a success. Then came a well-received musical version of Moliere's *Le Médecin malgre lui* in 1858 soon followed by a stupendous success with *Faust* in 1859.

Gounod wrote twelve operas, the better known listed below. Tunes from *Faust* permeate cylinder and disc musical boxes, and tunes from the others turn up from time to time. Gounod also wrote numerous masses, sacred and secular songs, and orchestral works, many held in the same high musical esteem as *Faust*. He came to England in 1870 during the Franco-Prussian war and stayed till 1874, after which his composing talent declined though he had a strong and lasting influence on English choral music. The more high-brow musical set took a dim view of his two minor but lasting popular successes, namely *The Funeral March of a Marionette* and the one he ingeniously culled from a Bach prelude, *Ave Maria* (1859). This is heard effectively on fat cylinder boxes, it is not so good when shortened to one minute.

These are the Gounod operas likely to be found on musical boxes. . . .

Faust	1859
Philémon et Baucis	1869
La colombe (the dove)	1860
La reine de Saba	1862
Mireille	1864
Romeo et Juliette	1867
Le tribut de Zamora	1881

Forte Piano

For people with the time and ability to listen carefully there is something peculiarly attractive about a Forte Piano musical box. One hears with pleasure a soft passage repeated *forte*, or topped by powerful chords; and such effects as a soft, distant echo of a passage previously only heard at full power. And of course there are many well-known special applications of the

effect such as the famous *piano* passage towards the end of *La Marseillaise*.

With these attributes in mind one cannot help asking three questions: why are Forte Piano boxes comparatively rare, why did everyone stop making them about 1880, and why was the effect never introduced on disc machines???

I think the same two answers apply to all three questions; first, the public came to prefer noisier boxes in the 1880's, and secondly the standard 2-comb Forte Piano arrangement is not cost effective — by definition it involves a large proportion of the comb teeth being inactive for quite long periods. This puts it into the luxury class compared with comb teeth in use throughout, particularly when the trend is towards preferring *forte* to *piano*.

There were many talented workers on early musical boxes and they must have produced many movements with tone and volume variations; but the first chronicled examples of the Forte Piano effect were obtained from a single comb with the cylinder having either long and short pins or slightly and heavily raked pins to give the *forte* and the *piano* respectively by altering the tooth lift. Though there was no problem about using a 2-stage pinning operation to achieve either of these pin arrangements, it seems likely that a great deal of hand work on individual pins was involved, particularly as sometimes there were intermediates between the pin lengths or angles, thereby permitting a crescendo from *piano* to *forte* (and corresponding diminuendo) as on David Lecoultre serial no 9506 which was illustrated with tune sheet

on page 178 of *The Music Box* Vol. 9 no 4. The variations in tooth lift introduced dampering problems, sometimes alleviated by using hooked teeth.

If a single-comb Forte Piano box got damaged and lost its tune sheet it was more than likely to lose its real identity when re-pinned, which I think partly explains why such boxes are so very rare today. But also, probably due to the excessive demands on skilled labour in pin setting and to dampering problems, they were superseded around 1845 by what became the standard type, with about two thirds of the cylinder playing a *forte* comb and one third playing a *piano* comb, and with equal pins throughout the cylinder. The *forte* comb had teeth similar to the general run of combs, while the *piano* comb had much finer teeth as shown in the accompanying table. This table gives the dimensions and stiffness of the *a* teeth (about 440Hz) on the *forte* and the *piano* combs of a typical Nicole 8-air Forte Piano movement no 40767 with 17½in cylinder and a typical simple Nicole 8-air movement no 40200 with 13in cylinder.

The stiffness of a tooth is proportional to the cube of the thickness multiplied by the width and divided by the length. This stiffness in turn is roughly proportional to the work done in lifting the tooth tip a certain distance which determines the amplitude of the resulting vibrations and thereby the volume. For box 40767 the ratio is 195/57, about 3½ to 1, which is more than enough to give a loud/soft contrast but is of course subject to control in setting up the combs.

By the time these 2-comb Forte

Tooth data	Thickness <i>T</i> mm	Width <i>W</i> mm	Length <i>L</i> mm	Relative Stiffness $\frac{t^3 w}{L}$
40767 forte comb a tooth 29	0.66	1.98	29.2	195
40767 piano comb a comb 11	0.43	1.90	26.5	57
40200 comb a tooth 35	0.61	2.24	26.7	190

Piano movements became standard the tune arrangers already had considerable knowledge of the effect, and I think it is fair to categorize their style under three headings . . .

1. Completely separate *forte* and *piano* passages, varying from short (one or two bars) to quite lengthy.
2. *Piano* passages reinforced with a few notes, generally bass only but sometimes accent or piccolo notes, from the *forte* comb. (Both types one and two often used both combs, mainly towards tune end).
3. Mix of notes from both combs throughout a tune.

Almost any special effect becomes tiresome when flogged and tune arrangers took the natural step towards types two and three for this reason. Most boxes I have heard use type two on some tunes and type three on others, giving a desirable variety without losing the essential Forte Piano charm. The main hazard facing the tune arranger was the fact that the aftersound of a *forte* passage can drown the start of a *piano* passage. This particularly applies to larger boxes and to cases of excessive *forte* volume due to the comb being set too close. This also introduces harsh, undesirable harmonics from excessive tooth lift and the resulting noise is a hopeless prelude for a soft passage of tonal purity. Some late and large Forte Piano boxes, many by unidentified makers, are prone to this trouble though they have many admirers. But it was no use striving for a "powerful" Forte Piano effect; it is essentially subtle and ideally the *forte* is normal full volume and the

piano a little less than half that volume. The box should stand firmly on a robust and un-cluttered table top and be listened to without any extraneous noises, including conversation, if the effect is to be fully enjoyed.

I rather think the arrangers were scared of over-doing the *piano* passage — Nicole 40767 has 5594 cylinder pins, of which 1561 are for the piano comb. The combs together have 129 teeth, of which 42 are on the piano comb. So 33% of comb teeth are *piano* but only 28% of pins play them.

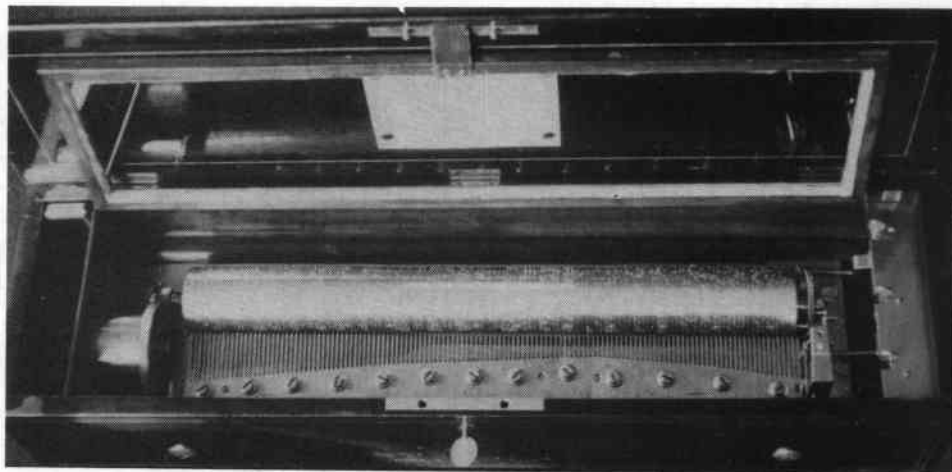
Nicole Freres were the makers chiefly associated with Forte Piano boxes and they differed from all other makers in two respects: they called the effect Piano-Forte (in the comparatively rare cases when they so marked the tune sheets and they arranged the combs with treble teeth adjoining, an elegant refinement because it permits adjacent comb teeth to have equal lift. But it probably caused complications by upsetting the normal routine of the comb makers and of those who set out the pricking programmes. It was probably for these reasons that the other makers kept to the conventional left side for the bass notes.

Nicole Piano-Forte boxes are to be found with serial numbers from the early 20,000's (about 1840) right up to the end of their manufacturing business in Geneva in 1880. Popular gamme numbers were often repeated, for example gamme 2261 appeared on no 40767 mentioned above and on no. 45906 about six years later — it is a collection of eight very popular

operatic airs. The same gamme number could be used for both 4-air and 8-air pairs of combs; gamme 1164 appears on straight 8-air and on 2-per-turn 8-air movements. The four most common Nicole types were 17½in cylinders playing eight airs, 13¼in cylinders playing six airs, and two fat cylinder 2-per-turn types, — eight airs with 9¼in cylinder and twelve airs with 13¼in cylinder. They all had about 86 *forte* and 42 *piano* teeth, individual boxes varying by one or two teeth and sometimes including unused teeth at the bass end of the *piano* comb.

As usual when writing about cylinder musical boxes of special types, one is hampered by having seen and heard comparatively few — and some of those under very adverse conditions. However, all the Forte Piano boxes I have heard have been of undeniable quality (though some were in urgent need of improved setting) and I have not come across any significant evidence of one maker being better than another. I tend to prefer the smaller ones, among which Moulinié Ainé serial 4171, six airs, 13¼in cylinder and the Lecoultre mentioned above get my highest mark to date. Langdorff serial 6622, six airs, 13in cylinder, makes an excellent job of *La Marseillaise*. I will add some notes on an interesting early Ducommun-Girod in future Oddments.

Of the larger boxes, some playing lengthy variations on popular tunes or long versions of opera overtures are very desirable; but some Forte Piano overture boxes display the effect with scant regard for the original score which is a natural



Typical 17½in cylinder Nicole Frères Piano-Forte, serial 40767, gamme 2261 playing eight operatic airs including Libiamo, Casta Diva, La Donna Mobile and the Freischütz waltz.

irritant to music lovers who prefer the loud and soft passages to be as the composer intended.

Tooth Measurement

It is not possible to give definite dimensions for the length, width and thickness of comb teeth, because all three are to some extent indeterminate. So for the above table (and in previous Oddments) I have always used the following conventions . . .

Length measured from root to tip (which is significantly shorter than full length along slit at top of comb).

Width measured at half length.

Thickness measured at thinnest part.

In stiffness calculations, taking the length in this way is not strictly correct, because the deflection mostly occurs some distance in front of the thicker root area; but this does not seriously affect the resulting ratios.

Music Arrangers

I used to imagine numerous dedicated music arrangers each doing his independent best in getting contemporary popular and operatic music in suitable shape for the cylinder prickers. But more and more I have gradually come to the conclusion that numerous short cuts were taken. After all, it is a bit strange to hear almost exactly the same arrangement of *Home Sweet Home* (to take an easy example) on an 1835 Alibert no 6245 and on Nicole's gamme no 2615 which was used on serial numbers 45887 and 8 and 47392 in the 1870-75 period. So one is tempted to conclude that some person or persons gathered together successful arrangements and supplied them, for a fee, to all

comers; cheaper and quicker than doing new arrangements from scratch. In a boom year it would make particular sense when there was a shortage of good arrangers. This general plan would be helped by the large degree of standardisation between many makers. It also goes some way towards explaining the narrowly conventional style of so many arrangements; though they vary a lot in their quality they are very consistent in avoiding unconventional effects, such as, for example, bells only passages in a bell box.

Presumably many arrangers worked from home and were available to any maker, which may explain why the boxes made in France by L'Epee have tune arrangements which are indistinguishable in style from the Swiss makers. Perhaps also there was never any getting-together of groups of tune arrangers; if there had been, possibly enough insulting remarks would have been made to sting some of them into being more adventurous. Equally, one can imagine bright ideas being strictly taboo to the conventional makers.

Quarter century

This being the 25th Oddments, I take the opportunity to acknowledge again, with many thanks, the consistent help I have received from fellow members of the Society. Though the opinions expressed are my own, they take seriously into account considered views and comments of others. The Organocleide and Forte Piano notes involved an exceptional amount of consultation and those to whom I am indebted include Dr Robert Burnett, Cliff Burnett, Jim Colley,

C W Cramp, Mike Gilbert, Keith Harding, Patrick McCrossan, Grace and Alfred Thompson, and Graham Webb.

It is something of a joke among those long interested in cylinder musical boxes that if you decide a particular box is unique, you will see another just like it within a month. This has happened to me more than once, and is due to the simple fact that the total number of boxes seen is too small to constitute a statistically significant sample. That is why pooling information is needed, so thanks again to all concerned.

Fiction

There were about fifty "Saint" novels by Leslie Charteris and numerous films, TV and otherwise, all adding up to a vast quantity of fiction, much of it stranger than truth. Often gangs of international crooks were seeking to acquire goods to which they were not entitled. One such piece of goods was a small musical box, and after numerous thrilling adventures in which the crooks were finally outwitted it was duly acquired by the Saint. But why should the crooks be so desperate to have this modest item? To solve the mystery was, for the Saint, merely the work of a moment. Quickly removing the cylinder and rolling it on a bit of paper, the resulting pattern of dots revealed a secret formula of international importance.

What an interesting job for the tune arrangers, to combine the formula with an acceptable tune.

HAVB, October 1984.

Straightening Pins by Electrical Heating (D. Gifford-Hull)

continued from page 11

12" long with adjustable tapping might do), or in the mains primary circuit in which case it must be well insulated, and of higher resistance but wire wound, of around 200 ohms. The advantage of this is that the contact on the control is not so critical.

It is possible to use a 12 volt car battery for the power, but it is essential to have a reliable variable resistance to limit the current to a few amps. A few car bulbs with selector switch might do this.

I have also used my device to deal with certain obstinate disc projections, taking the low tension wire to small pliers. But brittleness is less of a problem, and it is probably easier to break off and replace the off-ending projection.

If any Member who tries this procedure wants any advice, or the loan of my rig. I would be pleased to help.

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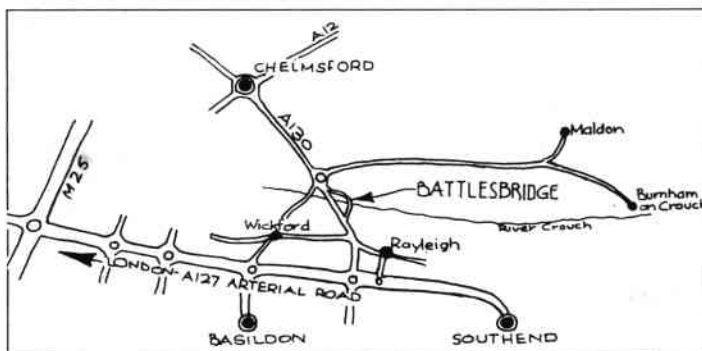
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NAME THAT TUNESHEET

John Powell

SINCE becoming interested in music boxes, cylinder box tunesheets I have found, have generally meant to me a means of identification of the makers, — whatever they may mean! In the clock world, the name that appears on the dial may be the man or firm who assembled it by purchasing a movement, a case and a dial. He may have drilled a few holes and screwed a few brackets on but can he be called the clockmaker? This situation appears to apply in some instances to some musical boxes so why should a maker's name be so significant to some of us. For all that, I still subconsciously feel that a box with a name has more substance than one without — all other aspects being equal of course.

The two boxes pictured here were both acquired some time ago and are still waiting in line for repair. In my enthusiasm to label them, I attributed the organ box to JH Heller because I matched the four remaining tunesheet corners to a reproduction

timesheet which the books led me to believe, was produced by that firm. The governor was "Volant Compense" and the serial number stamped on the side of the winding handle which suggested the origin to be Bremond rather than Heller.

The other box was brought at the second Lincoln Society Auction. I'm not sure who the auctioneer was now but he was ably "assisted" by a much loved Scottish gentleman who is very well versed in the ways of selling and who made me pay more for it than I had intended. The general opinion on that occasion was that the maker was Lecoulre because of its Tunesheet. This opinion about the Tunesheet appears to have persisted over the years in spite of others expressing doubts. I added my doubts also, as the box itself did not appear to have any of the qualities generally attributed to the Lecoulre "empire". My thoughts of overpayment for this box have now dispersed as memories of one's

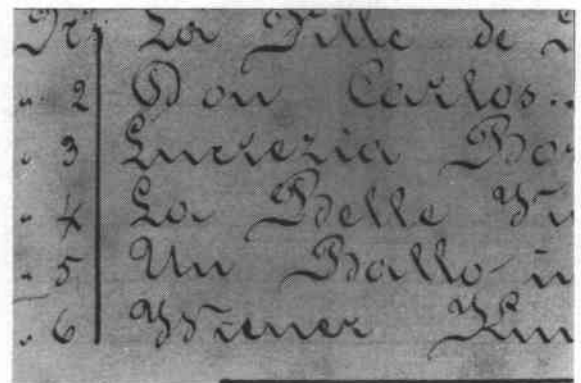
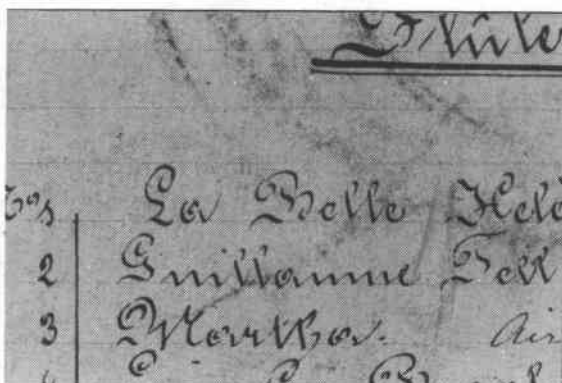
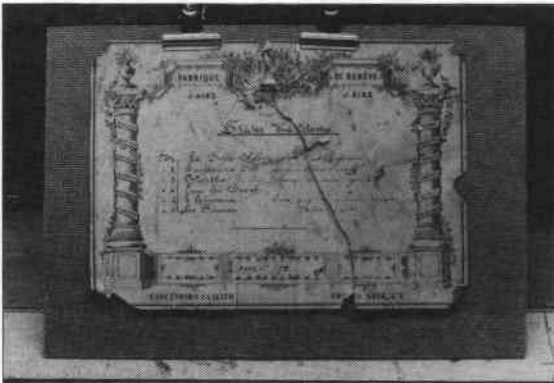
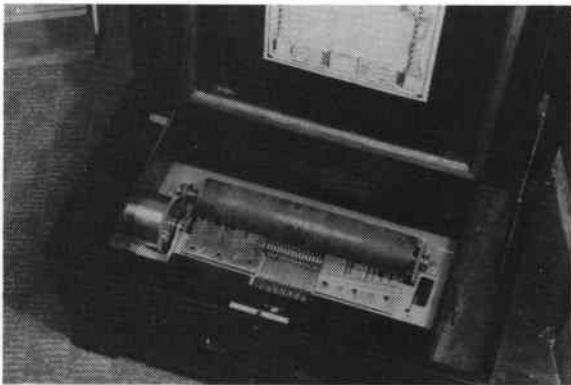
mistakes sometimes do and, in fairness, the box has quite a lively sound. It was by chance that the similarity in their numbers came to my attention, both being stamped on the side of the handle and being close numerically. Closer examination showed similarities between the six stamp in both numbers (used upside down for 9). I concluded that the same stamps had been used for both numbers as the stamp characteristics appeared on both, bearing in mind that one impression shows more stamp wear.

About two years later, the previous owner of the organ box found the original tunesheet and the two are now reunited. What was more exciting was the apparent similarity in the writing on the two tunesheets and even more coincidental, the fact that the words "La Belle" appear on both. I think there is enough similarity to be significant and would let you decide for yourselves.

I have concluded that these boxes have a common maker or at least a common number stamper and a common tunesheet writer. I gave up

the idea that this box is of Lecoultré origin but would not suggest that this label never appeared on a Lecoultré box. I am still no nearer to a solution

about Bremond or Heller but there may well be still some hidden symbol which will take me one stage nearer to an identification.



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REVIVAL OF THE AUTOMATON PICTURE

Jack Tempest



Michel Vigor at work on one of his moving-pictures. He has adapted his skills learned in restoring automata to revive this particular art and his success has led him to be invited to exhibit his work on various occasions.



A closer look at the same picture which depicts an old-time magic lantern show in which arms and heads move (as well as the cat's tail!) to a melody from the musical-box mechanism within.

BECOMING well-known for his fascinating automata pictures is French craftsman Michel Vigor, from Rouen. All his ingenious productions have the necessary novelty-appeal appreciated by the "Peter Pans" of the collecting world — one of the subjects featured is playthings from the past, depicting a colourful animated scene of an old-time street-vendor. On his stall one can recognise many famous old toys, including Martin toys, the Lehmann sailor, and a billiard-player. In action the vendor demonstrates a climbing monkey and a

mischievous boy is busy removing a boxed violinist by means of a piece of string and a hook, to the top of the wall behind which he is hiding. All this is accompanied by music from a musical-box movement concealed within the picture's frame!

Other tableaux manufactured by Michel, all with musical-box accompaniment — illustrate scenes of all kinds — there is even a *risque* scene of curious antics taking place in a haystack! C'est la vie!

Michel told me that he had given up doing the restoration work on old

toys and automata, for which he was well known in France, and had decided to go all out to produce these novelty animated tableaux — many being manufactured to his clients' special requirements.

Although his moving pictures are all attractively produced in water-colours Michel insisted that he was not an artist, though his illustrative talents do possess a naive charm in keeping with the theme of his pleasingly entertaining animated glimpses back into bygone days.

© Jack Tempest, 1985.

OBITUARY NOTICES



Mr R P Atkinson

Robert Preston Atkinson

Robert Preston Atkinson, aged 79, sustained a fractured skull as the result of a fall on Monday October 1, 1984, and died early next day in Lancaster Infirmary.

He served his time with Messrs Gilkes and Gordon, Turbine Engineers, Kendal, starting in the drawing office, before going on the "bench". He left Gilkes to extend and improve his knowledge of the water turbine industry, first to English Electric at Rugby, later Boving's in Scotland, and Harland's at Alloa. He was a very good engineer, totally reliable, and was responsible for the installation and commissioning of water turbines at various projects in the British Isles, also abroad, visiting Iran several times, also Sweden and Kenya.

Born in Kendal, on retirement, he came back to live in his native town, and did well to look after himself, as he was a bachelor, and had lived in "digs" most of his working life. His culinary skills were limited, but he learnt, for he was very independent. His love of good music probably

stemmed from having a mother who was a singer. He liked Church organ music, of which he had an extensive record collection, but no television as he had little time for it. He was very interested in Railways, Bridges, Mechanical Music, and of course, water turbines and dams. He used to advocate that more use should be made of water power in this country, harnessed to produce cheap electricity as they do on the Continent. Even in retirement the Scottish Hydro Electric Board called on him for advice.

Known as "Preston" to his family and old Kendalians, and "Bob" to those of us who knew him later in life. He had a very good brain and a photographic memory, — needed only to see a thing once, to be able to put it down on paper, as he was very good at technical drawing, his favourite tools being his micrometer and slide rule. Bob was a kind gentleman who would help anyone if he could, — if he had a fault it was his insatiable quest for more knowledge, for he would ask numerous questions until he had the grasp of

the subject. Bob dreaded to think he might be a nuisance to anyone in his old age, and he did not want any handouts from the State. He was a member of the Kendal and District Engineering Society and attended meetings regularly.

Member no 49 of The Musical Box Society, members will recall his lecture on musical box dampering at the Kendal Meeting last year.

The world would be a much nicer place to live in, if there were more people like "Bob" around, his passing is a great loss, and I amongst others have lost a very good friend.

J P Hall.

Roy Mickelburgh

Members of our Society will be very sorry to know that Roy Mickelburgh died on October 26, 1984 after being ill for some months. He was aged seventy.

Roy was number twenty in the list of the Society's members and was thus a founder-member. He had a wide interest in all kinds of mechanical music and, starting to

collect long before most of us thought of doing so, he had assembled a really remarkable collection of a whole range of mechanical instruments. These included cylinder boxes, disc boxes, barrel organs, barrel pianos and a host of other types of mechanical music.

He was always ready to show his collection to other people and I remember well many a visit to Bristol to talk with Roy and look at his collection. Many members will remember the Society's meeting in Bristol in December 1979 when one of the highlights of the meeting was a visit to see Roy's collection. It was always a pleasure to meet him and discuss our common interest. His interest extended to the larger automatic organs and he was a member of the Fairground Organ Preservation Society. He was also an honorary member of the London College of Music and a member of the Bristol Civic Society.

Roy was concerned with music in his business and he ran jointly with his elder brother Jack the family business dealing in pianos and other musical items.

Those who knew Roy will remember the energy and enthusiasm which characterised him and he will be very much missed. He is survived by his wife and one son to whom we would express our sympathy.

Robert Burnett.

Howard M Fitch, 1911-1984

With deep emotional feeling we announce the death of a friend and Musical Box Society International member, Howard Fitch, on August 20, 1984. Howard had just arrived in England after a tour of the Black Forest, when a series of strokes claimed his life.

Howard was born at Cobden, Illinois, September 25, 1911. He received his BS at Texas Christian University in 1933 and a PhD in organic chemistry at the University of Virginia in 1937. In the same year he married Helen. During the years 1937-1944 Howard and Helen lived in Wilmington, Delaware, where Howard was a research chemist with E I duPont deNemours and Co. He then joined the College of Medicine at New York University, where he was a research associate in organic medical chemistry. In 1949 Campbell Pharmaceutical claimed Howard as

a research chemist until 1957 when he joined the Hanover Liquid Gold Division of Englehardt Industries.

A quiet man of keen intellect, Howard had many friends both in this country and abroad. He was deeply involved with and loved the Musical Box Society International. Howard was president of the Musical Box Society International 1966-1968 and served as a trustee from the time the Society was incorporated in 1967. His devotion to the detail and operation of the Society was unmatched. His memory of events and the intricacies of the Society structure were unparalleled. Some of his personal traits became apparent in his devotion to the Society, his careful conservative nature, his adoration of precedent, his penchant for care and accuracy in whatever he did, his firm stand on matters of principle, his joy in working with Society activities and seeing the MBS grow and prosper, and, of course, his marvellous sense of humour in the British tradition.

He had a great love for precision mechanisms, as exemplified in musical watches, small automata and music box movements. Howard knew that if the Society were to prosper, all kinds of mechanical instruments would have to be represented. He therefore made certain in his editing, and in all Society discussions, that all types of devices in which we have varying degrees of interest received equal treatment.

Howard shared with Helen a great love of artistic detail, and this was exemplified in their hard work in putting together the English version of the Chapuis book, *History of the Musical Box and of Mechanical Music*. Great effort was put forth to make the project a success. Meticulous attention was paid not only to the purely mechanical aspects of producing the book but also to every little artistic detail of words, format and design.

As a Trustee, Howard took his responsibilities seriously. His inherent conservatism helped to insure that the guiding group of the Society over the years provided sound management. While receptive to new ideas, he always wanted to make sure that they made both organizational and fiscal sense before being put into effect. He was always extremely sensitive to any schemes which in his opinion might establish

an unsatisfactory precedent that we might later regret. This he also exemplified in his careful editing of the technical *Bulletin* from 1967 till 1982.

Active, but not too busy to lend a helping hand when needed, of a gentle and kind nature, willing to get involved in nitty gritty events that sometimes came about, Howard was dependable and always willing to discuss problems and help with answers to questions from Society members and officers alike. We as individuals and the Society as a whole were fortunate that Howard Fitch was a devoted friend who contributed of his talent so generously. We will miss him. He gained our respect and love.

Contributions in his name may be made to the Museum Fund of the Musical Box Society International.

Some of the above facts and memories were contributed by Del Lohuis, Harvey Roehl, Paul Ottenheimer, Steve Ryder, Ruth and Amos Fowler, Marguerite and Clarence Fabel, and Bill Nevard.

James R Feller.

(Obituary as published in the journal of the *Musical Box Society, America*, to whom we extend our thanks.)

Mrs F Milsom

A letter from Mr. Milsom informs us of the very sad news that his wife died in December, 1984.

Mrs Florence Milsom, of Ilkley, Yorkshire, was MBSGB Member no 21 and attended the very first meeting of the Society. She and her husband attended every meeting in London during the first decade or so of the Society's existence. Dr Robert Burnett does, of course, remember them well, and with great affection. They attended a meeting at Dr Burnett's house about eight years ago.

Mr Milsom writes, "Florence has not been well for a few years and has had two spells in hospital during the last twelve months. Then she had a slight stroke from which we hoped she would recover. However, she had a further and more serious stroke ten days later which proved fatal".

Florence died on December 4th. On behalf of the Society I send our condolences and sympathy to Mr Milsom and his family.

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Book Reviews

THE MUSICAL HANDBOOK, by Graham Webb. (Second Edition). Published 1984 by The Vestal Press Ltd., Vestal, New York 13859, USA.

The first edition of this book appeared 16 years ago and in the time that has since gone by many new collections of musical boxes have come to the interest which all readers of this journal share. In that time, too, restoration techniques have become, perhaps, more standardised and sophisticated, and certainly there are many more professionally competent restorers now than there were. **Graham Webb** has long been a respected collector, dealer and enthusiast for his subject, and this second edition of his handbook will be of interest to all but the touchiest among us. I say "touchy" because inevitably any book can be faulted in some detail or other.

The book falls into three sections.

I was particularly impressed by the way in which Mr Webb laid out the historical development of the cylinder box. In a compressed space he described the different types of movements, adding the improvements and alterations the passing decades have brought to both mechanisms and cases.

Mr Webb's object, in which he succeeds perfectly, is to enable the collector to place in history, value, and interest, any instrument which has just been obtained. If this book has been read carefully the new or novice collector will have been able to benefit from the sound advice on how to assess the condition of an item being considered by the purchaser . . . is the box sick or healthy? . . . if sick, is it a major repair that is necessary or merely a small adjustment?

This is a good common-sense approach to collecting, and one which is to be welcomed. Music, engineering and woodwork are each dealt with, in the second edition.

The third section, "Makers and Agents", is a comprehensive list, not merely of names and addresses, but including many of the inventions patented by those engineers and musicians from the last century.

I found this section particularly fascinating. Mr Webb does not claim that his list is exhaustive, but it is praiseworthy long.

The book has many photographs of instruments, rare and common, and these interesting pictures are supplemented by clear drawings done by Adrian Little. These admirably illustrated the progress of the text.

I warmly recommend this book to both beginners and to experienced collectors.

Ian Alderman,
Chedington, Dorsetshire.
October 1984.

A HISTORY OF ENGINEERING IN CLASSICAL AND MEDIEVAL TIMES, by Donald Hill. Published by Croom Helm, London and Sydney. £18.95.

There is no doubt in my mind that our members, being lovers of *Mechanical Music*, will find this book interesting, instructive, and helpful.

As the sleeve notes say, "For too long the technical and engineering dimension has been missing from the social history of antiquity and the Medieval world. This book fills that gap, and incidentally provides a new depth to our understanding of the societies in which pyramids and cathedrals, arches and aqueducts, roads and bridges, were planned and built. The book is particularly notable for the attention it devotes to engineering in the Islamic world, whose early sophistication and wide influence is too little known in the West. (An Arabic scholar as well as a working engineer, the author has been able to use Medieval Arabic manuscript sources.) The history of fine technology, especially clocks and automata (another area where the Islamic world is ahead of the West), is explored, along with windmills, watermills and other energy technologies.

Donald Hill holds advanced degrees in both Engineering and Arabic Studies, and is currently a senior engineer with an international petrochemical company. His previous works include an annotated translation of As-Jazari's classic of Islamic engineering, *The Book of Knowledge of Ingenious Mechanical Devices*."

Of course, as Editor of *The Music Box*, the bit that caught my eye was the statement that the Middle East was ahead of the West in clocks and automata. I spent five years in Egypt, 1939-44, and, indeed, was holidaying in Cairo five years ago when the MBSGB were looking for me in London to become your editor. So, the Middle East connection in this book was a magnetic attraction.

I agree with Donald Hill.

The sophistication of the Middle East is underated in the West.

But, clocks and automata?

Yes, indeed.

The first known example of mechanical music was in Upper Egypt.

The book is beautifully illustrated, and there is superb draughtsmanship, a skill which in no way inhibits the freely flowing narrative of the author.

On page 200, MBSGB members will be more than interested to read,

"The pre-history of automata begins with the dolls with jointed arms and other articulated figurines such as those from the ancient Egyptian tombs from the Twelfth Dynasty onwards. The next stage of development is also found in ancient Egypt: talking statues worked by a means of a speaking trumpet concealed in hollows leading down from the mouth . . . The beginnings of sophisticated, mechanised automata, however, are to be found in Hellenistic Egypt."

And there's more.

Buy the book . . . and then there might be a demand for Alan Wyatt to arrange a MBSGB trip to Egypt.

I'll go!

© R Clarson-Leach, 1985.

Book These Dates:

A.G.M.
31st May, 7.30 p.m.

Summer Meeting:
1st June, all day, with
AUCTION in the afternoon.
London Press Club.

SEWING MACHINE DEALERS AND MANUFACTURERS

R. Booty

WHAT have sewing machines got to do with mechanical music? Very little is the obvious answer but these earliest of machines to be found in the home were responsible for the rise of one manufacturer of mechanical music and for the foundation to the fortunes of a man who was to introduce the Aeolian company to this country. Some sewing machine dealers were doubtless to go on to deal in phonographs and later gramophones. But here I am keeping clear of phonographs and staying with mechanical music, chiefly in the form of the organette.

Maxfield & Sons Ltd.

According to a 1902 advertisement Arthur Maxfield first established in business in 1859, this probably being in Nottingham. In 1869 his first patent, for improvements to water closets etc., stated his occupation as being a sewing machine manufacturer. The second, applied for with two others in Birmingham in 1867, was for improvements to sewing machines. Two further related patents were to follow in 1868 and 1870. By 1870, Arthur, with son Arthur Isaac, had set up A Maxfield and Co. in Birmingham as "Inventors, Patentees and Sole Manufacturers of the Agenoria sewing machines", with works at 71-72 Spencer Street and showrooms in New Street. Despite a medal for excellence of workmanship and supplying a machine to the Princess of Wales, and thereby describing themselves as "By Appointment", the company had ceased trading by 1878. Arthur and three of his sons, John, Alfred, and Harry, moved to London where it was established in 1879 at 118 Upper Street, Islington, John Maxfield and Co., sewing machine manufacturers. While at that address John applied for his first patent connected with mechanical music. This was no 4608 of 1883 which only got as far as receiving provisional protection and referred to a method of making music rolls by burning the holes out with gas jets! His next

granted and covered a spool for paper roll music.

1885 saw the demise of the sewing machine interests and the following year found the Maxfields at 326 Liverpool Road, a road which runs parallel with Upper Street, listed as manufacturing and wholesale stationers. Within a short time though, this was expanded to mechanical engineers, label makers, tag makers, perforated music paper and later music roll manufacturers, and mechanical musical instrument manufacturers. They were to make the Seraphone, Ariel, Ariel Double Voiced Automatic Organ and 31 note organettes, and the Maxfield Automatic Organ. They later made pneumatic actions for player pianos but these were probably not sold under their name, possibly being fitted in Brinsmead pianos. In time, after the brothers had applied for many more patents covering many differing subjects, the company reverted to being just wholesale and manufacturing stationers and is still in existence today.

John Pittuck

On p.200 of Vol. 9 of *The Music Box* I enquired if anyone knew anything of John Pittuck of 63 Union Street, Stonehouse, Devon, and why his name should be on an Ariel DV Organ. Pittuck's history is as follows. He is first noted in London in 1881 as a sewing machine and perambulator manufacturer at 6 and 6a Kennington Road, London SE. As I have already noted the Ariel was made by Maxfields and here we have a good reason for Pittuck selling a Maxfield instrument. They were both working with sewing machines in London so it is quite possible they came into contact with each other. By 1885 Pittuck had moved to Plymouth where he was district manager for the Singer Manufacturing Co. It was 1886 when he moved to 63 Union Street, Stonehouse, now part of Plymouth, and set up as a photographer, residing there until about 1910. Despite the Ariel label stating manufactured by Pittuck, he seemingly produced nothing himself, not even anything

photographic. I am assuming that he had met the Maxfields in London and continued the acquaintance when he moved and therefore was in a good position to sell their organettes. His name disappeared from the directories just before the First World War.

John G Murdoch

Murdoch is known for selling organette and player organs, but in 1887 was also listed under sewing machine manufacturers, although it is most likely he only factored the machines. His address was 91 and 92 Farringdon Road and a machine named the Farringdon, carrying the entwined letters JGM as a trademark, has been seen. Further research is required to find whether the sale of sewing machines predated musical instruments.

Joseph Wood

In 1861 Wood was noted as being a sewing machine manufacturer at 8½ Chiswell Street, Finsbury Square, EC. After a number of short, very local moves, he finally settled in 1874 at 1 City Road, EC. He was not content to keep with sewing machines though, as in 1880 he advertised from Finsbury Square, "The Aeolus Bicycle", 2s.6d. weekly. I would guess that 1 City Road and Finsbury Square was a corner building, fronting both addresses. In the following year he even claimed to be a manufacturer of bicycles and tricycles but I would think that, like Murdoch, he only acted as an agent for others. It was to be about 1882 when Wood first started to advertise "New Musical Wonders", i.e., the Organina. 1883 saw a small name change to J E Wood and Co., with perhaps a son taking over the business. Doubtless sewing machines, cycles and mechanical music were offered together from the same address until 1887 when Jones and Co., sewing machine manufacturers took over 1 City Road. Did Wood sell out? I found no listing of him after that date but Jones and Co. were manufacturers and still exist as part of the Brother Industries. (See also *Music Box* Vol. 11, p.120).

J M Draper

Draper is known for his patented *Orchestral Organette* which he manufactured in Blackburn. He was also a dealer in other articles including sewing machines and, interestingly, phonographs. As one of the latter has been seen carrying a stencil of his name, it is quite likely the sewing machines would have been treated likewise.

Hermann Loog

We now come to the blot on the copy book! First appearing in 1877 as a general merchant at 128 London Wall, EC, Loog was to become in 1879 the sole British agent for the German made sewing machines of Frister and Rossmann. By 1887 he occupied 126, 127, and 128 London Wall as well as six other London depots. At sometime before this he also started dealing in mechanical music. I know of two organettes he sold, the *Cabinetto* and the *Hermann*, the latter being an *Ariston* fitted with a sliding lid over the disc. At present I cannot state whether Loog carried out this alteration to the *Ariston* himself, perhaps those who own a *Hermann* would be willing to offer their thoughts.

Loog ran two businesses side by side. *Hermann Loog (Limited)*, sold pianos etc., and *Hermann Loog, Agent*, was responsible for the sewing machines. Due to mounting financial problems in 1885 Loog started giving F & R machines as security against loans and by the end of 1886 had got to the point where receivers were called in. When Frister and Rossmann had Loog's ledgers checked they found he had been running a "Private Ledger" in conjunction with theirs. Loog and his seventeen year old son Robert were actually taken to court but, due to no evidence being offered against them, were acquitted. However, they were then rash enough to take out a counter charge of causing wrongful arrest and lost, having to pay costs. This was not to be the end of Loog. He reappeared in 1890 as a sewing machine agent at 85 Finsbury Pavement EC, staying until 1896. His agency for Frister and Rossmann presumably ceased in 1887 but I have no idea how long his musical dealings lasted.

Whight & Mann

George Whight, born 1829, and Aldridge Mann, born 1822, were

brothers in law. Their earliest listing was 1862 when they were sewing machine manufacturers at 122 Holborn Hill EC, with a manufactory at Gipping Works, Ipswich, Whight's home town. 1866 saw a move to a new London address, 143 Holborn Bars, EC. The first dealings in music appear in an 1874 advertisement for the "Celeste" piano which they claimed to have designed and manufactured themselves. Mann's death in 1876 caused the alteration of the company's name to George Whight and Co. two years later. However there was to be a return of Whight and Mann in 1891 at 53 Farringdon Road as sewing machine and bicycle makers. Final cessation of business came in 1899 for both Whight and Mann and George Whight and Co., the latter, since 1892 at 225 Regents Street, becoming *The Orchestrelle Company*.

But even in 1888 sewing machines were not far away, witness the following from the "Musical Opinion" for October of that year. "At the recent exhibition of sewing machines etc. at the Agricultural Hall, Messrs G Whight and Co. showed various kinds of automatic musical instruments, an automatic piano (which

played upon a penny being dropped into a slot), — a capital idea, and very suitable for bazaars etc.; and also exhibited one of their New York aeolian organs, played either with the automatic action or in the ordinary manner, or in combination." I believe the Aeolian organ had been introduced here in 1886. Whight's first offer of mechanical music was the *Cabinetto* in 1880 but it was about 1885 when he first proceeded with his dealings with the company that was eventually to become Aeolian and take over his business on his retirement. Whight died in 1906. He also seems to have acted in a small way as a patent agent in the 1860's and '70's, receiving a number of communications from prospective American and Canadian patentees on a variety of subjects.

Acknowledgements

Firstly to Brian Jewell and his excellent book, "Veteran Sewing Machines", pub. David and Charles, 1975. Of great help with Pittuck was Brian A Fyfield-Shayler and Plymouth library. Other libraries were Birmingham, Ipswich, and the Science Reference library, London.

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Fig. 1. From Birmingham Directory for 1876-77.



Fig. 2. Pittuck label on Ariel Double Voiced Organ.

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Fig. 4. English Mechanic, November 24, 1882.

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Fig. 5. An Organina with spools. From English Mechanic, November 2, 1883.



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Fig. 3. From English Mechanic, August 5, 1881.

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Fig. 6. Note the transposed initials, compare with Fig. 5. From English Mechanic, November 28, 1884.

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WHIGHT & MANN, Patentees and Manufacturers,
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Fig. 9. From Ipswich Directory for 1875.

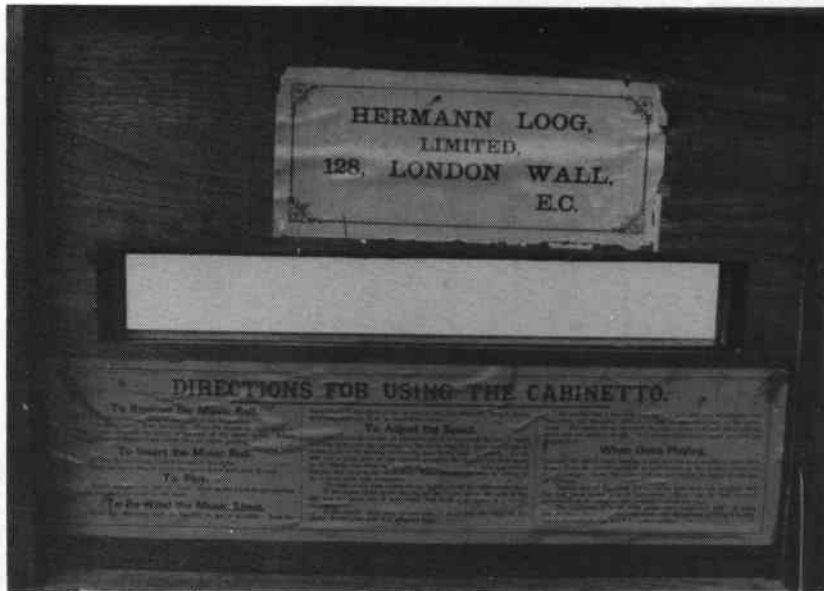


Fig. 7. Loog label on the lid of a Cabinetto. I have seen two instruments with identical green labels, both had been pasted over other green labels.



Fig. 10. Label on the lid of an early style Cabinetto. All of the patent dates refer to American patents obtained by E P Needham or O H Needham and C A Needham.



Fig. 8. The underside of a well played Ariston disc showing Loog's way of customising the discs for his Hermann, the disc is otherwise standard, this particular one being No 1. Rule Britannia.

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EVERY INFORMATION FREE BY POST.
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Fig. 11. At 6 guineas the Cabinetto was thought to be expensive. From Musical Opinion, October 1882.

Letters to the Editor

12th December 1984,

Dear Mr Leach,

Besides being a member I am also a collector of old postcards. There are not many cards to be found on Mechanical Musical Instruments.

This one seems to have been printed between 1902 and 1906. And it reminds us of how they brought work and food to many of

the poor folk. I have not before seen such a good close-up of one of these people.

You may think it worthwhile to print this picture. Someone may identify the machine or instrument. I like the oil lamp in the front.

Kindly return the picture when finished with it.

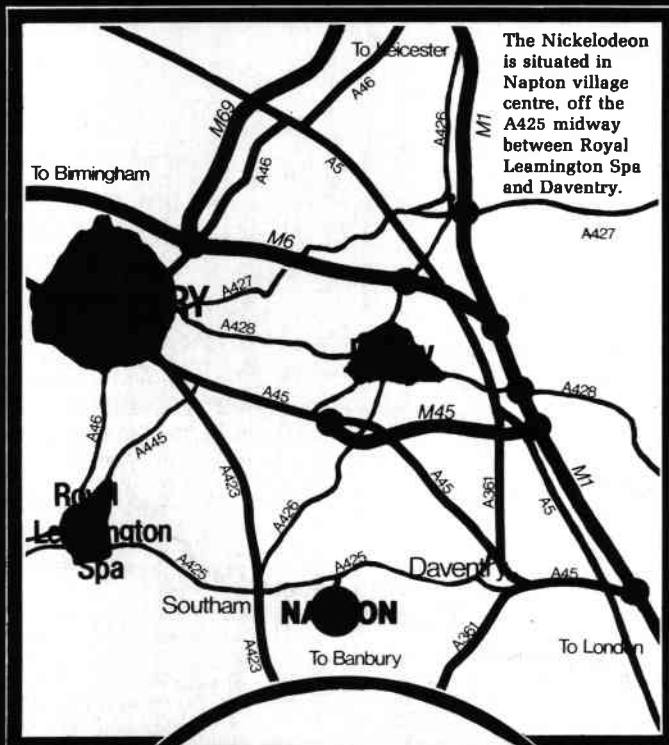
Yours sincerely,

C W Cramp.



I had an interesting letter from **Graham Whitehead** and I am pleased to publish the following details:

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5th December 1984,

Dear Bob,

I was very interested in J P Hall's article on the Bates Church Barrel Organ as I recently acquired one very like it. It is also by T C Bates & Son, Serial No 2578, which dates it between 1847 and 1859 according to Boston & Langwill. This organ has the same layout of pipes, stops and scale as Mr Hall's but differs in the following respects:

1. The case is of oak throughout and was evidently never fitted on a base plinth as it has four turned feet with castors which are integral with the organ frames.

2. Although it has the normal arrangement of double feeders, the winding spindle has only one crank which operates one feeder, while the other is independently connected to a foot-pedal. Thus, when accompanying chants, the organist can stop turning the handle and continue a sustained chord as long as desired by foot-pumping, then continue turning at the right moment. He must have needed to know his chants pretty well to get it right every time! It does, of course, mean that there is not a lot to spare in the wind department on crank alone, but the foot-pedal can be used at the same time if necessary.

3. The sliding back panels are designed so that the section with the tune lists on (4 barrels, each of 11 tunes) can be folded outwards to wedge under a bar provided, for easy reference by the organist.

This organ came into my hands in rather a strange way. It was brought to my notice by a friend who saw it in an antique shop not far from Worcester. I rushed there hot-foot and found it full of dirt, including a mouse's nest. It was not operable but it seemed to be reasonably complete, though not improved by having been transported on its back so that all the metal pipes had fallen out. Nevertheless, I considered it a good bargain and managed to squeeze it into my car (yes, on its back!)

My first action at home was to look it up in Boston & Langwill and was surprised to find it was mentioned in 1953 as being "Built for Bosbury church in Herefordshire, now in All Saints Church, Hereford on loan from the City Museum". On writing to the museum to enquire about its history, I was dismayed to receive an immediate visit from the Hereford Police, as it seemed the museum was unaware that it had gone! It took about two months to sort out that it had been sold by accident with some redundant church furniture and passed through several hands before reaching me, and that I was undoubtedly the legal owner. Since then I have restored it and enclose a photograph.

In 1871 Bosbury Church was given a fine finger organ and, so far, I have not been able to trace the travels of the barrel organ between 1871 and 1953, (nor the three missing barrels!). However, I am pleased to think it has probably entertained more people in the short time I have had it than it did during the previous 30 years gathering dust in a locked back room of a church.

May I finish by wishing you both the Compliments of the Season.

Yours sincerely,

Lyn Wright.



5th May 1984

Dear Mr Leach,

Enclosed is a photograph of the memorial, which is of special interest to our members.

The memorial is sometimes featured in a small coloured print on a make-up piece behind the glass lid, and on a level with; on some of the larger Bremond Boxes.

The memorial is sometimes mentioned in connection with the musical box manufacturers in Geneva.

The winged beast has been taken as the trade mark of Ami Rivence/Dawkins; and represented as a sphinx on their tune cards, and sometimes stamped in the top of the escapement "back".

Duke, Charles II of Brunswick, was an exile in Geneva, 1830-1873, and a benefactor of the town.

In his Will he left 20 Million Sw. Francs with a condition that 10% should be spent on a memorial in his memory.

Guide books refer to this as a "Mausoleum", and looking at the photograph it does seem there is a basket resting aloft.

I do hope the Photograph is suitable for reproduction in the Journal in the same format size. Perhaps you could write something to accompany. Please return photo if not suitable.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Robert P. Atkinson.



The Brunswick Memorial

(From HAV Bulleid)

Member Blyelle Horngacher of Geneva has sent us the accompanying three photographs and information for their captions, adding to the Bremond notes on page 303 of *The Music Box* for Autumn 1984, Vol 11 No 7.

Mr Horngacher adds: I was very interested in your notes on various trade-marks of B A Bremond because I think that Baptiste-Antoine Bremond was the best maker in the third quarter of the XIXth century. The box with automaton was ordered from Bremond by a friend who had a flat in the Place des Alpes, thus it was a neighbour of BAB's factory. My third BAB is a religious organ box and my fourth is an orchestral with 24 reeds etc. I have another little box and two snuff boxes, one mandoline. I enclose the last issue, Autumn 1984, of our Bulletin of the Conservatoire Autonome des Boites a Musique showing our participation in the Paris exhibition of automatons and musical boxes in October.

Fig. 1. Plain BAB but with added lyre on governor cock of Bremond 19608, a 13in cylinder 8 air box with double spring drive, tune selector and tune indicator.

Fig. 2. Instruction card on control lever platform of Bremond 19608. The same plain BAB and lyre in front; at the back odd use of "Boutons" (knobs) instead of "Manettes" (levers) though some early Bremond boxes did have knobs fitted to these levers. Text beside tune selector reads: To choose an air pull and push this knob till the pointer on the dial at the left of the cylinder shows the desired air. Then set repeat. Before moving this knob stop the music.



Fig. 2.



Fig. 1.

HAVB
Oct. 1984.

30th October 1984,

Cher Monsieur LEACH,
Je fais référence à la Revue MBSGB, Volume 11, Number 6, Summer 1984, dans laquelle vous avez présenté le nouveau Centre International de la Mécanique d'Art, à Sainte-Croix.

Je vous remercie vivement de cet article, et vous tiendrai au courant de l'avancement de nos travaux dès que les nouvelles seront suffisamment importantes.

Veuillez croire, Cher Monsieur LEACH, à mes meilleures salutations.

Le Conservateur du CIMA:

A. Chabernet.

14th November 1984

Dear Mr Leach,

I am writing in the hope that you might be able to help me reach Mr Vincent Chiappa of Chiappa Ltd. I have written to him twice in the last three months and have received no response. I have never had the pleasure to meet the man and I understand he is well up in years and does not always have the time to respond.

What I am looking for are music books for the Pell 27-note organ, especially of Italian music, which Mr Pell does not offer, and which I understand the Chiappa firm does have for sale. I do not wish to ask Mr Pell to act on my behalf in contacting a competitor, and I would appreciate any assistance or advice which you may be able to offer in determining for me if the Chiappa firm is still offering books for the 27-note organ.

With warm regards,

Angelo Rulli.

If any members have information please write to Angelo Rulli at: 1300 East 3rd Street, St Paul, MN 55106, USA. Tel: 612/774-2590.



Fig. 3. Bremond 8873, 42cm cylinder, 8 airs, with automaton of man turning his head and striking the drums. The BAB stamped on the governor cock is the same as on serial no 6329 (page 303 of Vol 11) but with lyre added. The lyre adorned most Bremond tune sheets.



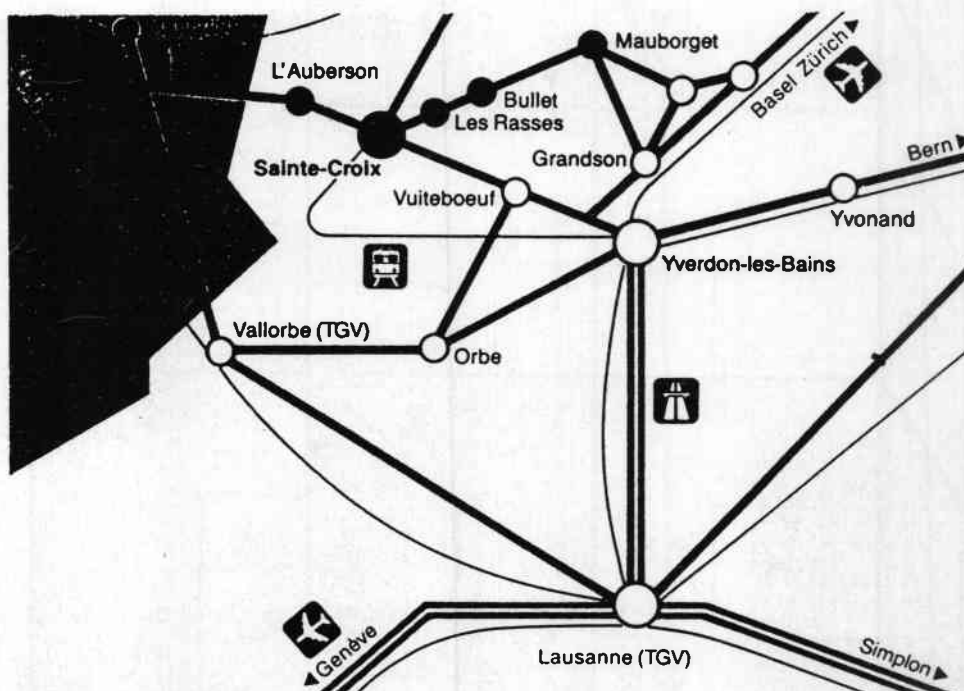
CENTRE INTERNATIONAL DE LA MÉCANIQUE D'ART, SAINTE-CROIX
Rue de l'Industrie 3, Case postale, 1450 Sainte-Croix, Tél. (024) 62 11 21

Le CIMA se présente

UNE ÉQUIPE

Une équipe de spécialistes et de bénévoles, soutenue par la Commune de Sainte-Croix et par de nombreux organismes privés et publics, travaille en collaboration avec son conservateur - M. Anthony CHABERLOT - nommé début 1984.

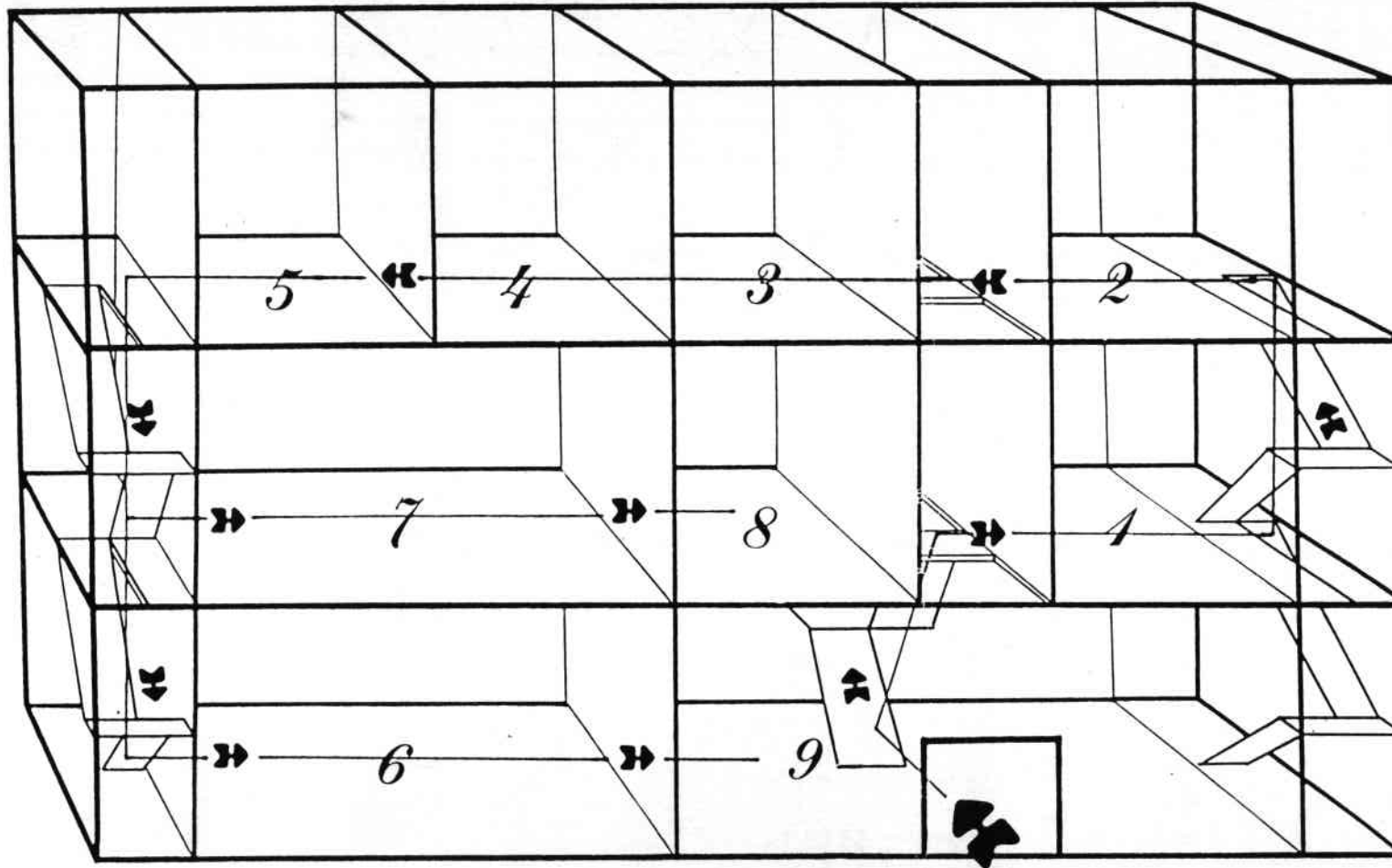
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Yours very truly,

Anthony Chaberlot
Anthony Chaberlot



La visite guidée débute par une présentation d'ateliers anciens reconstitués avec leurs outils : le monde du savoir-faire et de la technique (1 et 2).

Elle se poursuit - et se termine - dans le monde du merveilleux : boîtes à musique (3), automates (4), gramophones et phonographes (5), musique mécanique (6).

Le visiteur a ensuite le loisir de visiter la partie consacrée aux machines de bureau, machines à écrire, machines comptables et équipements de cinéma (7). Selon la période, il peut également parcourir l'exposition temporaire (8), écouter un concert, un exposé... Il peut toujours s'arrêter dans le hall d'entrée pour admirer les créations récentes et y boire un café (9).

LE MUSEE DU CIMA : TROIS ETAGES D'EXPOSITION

LONDON

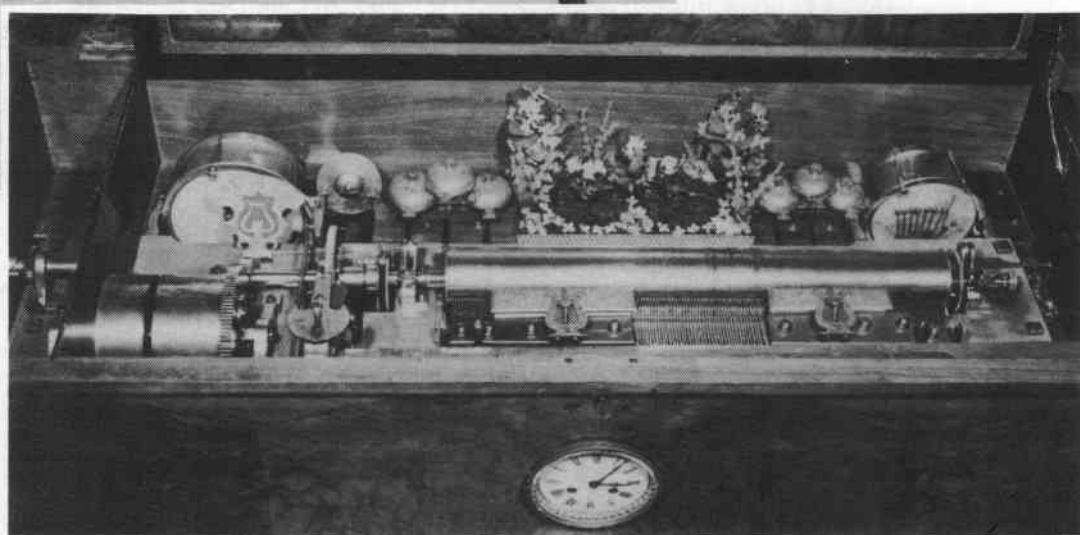
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2. HUPFELD SINFONIE JAZZ NR: 19 — 1928 — only four known to exist. With saxophone and "lotus flutes", etc. See pages 434 and 976 of Bowers Encyclopedia. Fully restored with 200 rolls. \$57.000.
3. POPPER LUNA ORCHESTRION, 1910 — page 589 of Bowers Encyclopedia with piano, mandoline, 15 bells, 28 xylophone, triangle, snare drum, bass drum with triple beaters, cymbal with two beaters, five ranks of pipes (violin, Vienna flute, cello, clarinet, gamba), 140 in all. Moving picture front (mosque with two swans), inlaid oak case, 200 rolls, \$88.800, absolutely fully restored.
4. IMHOF and MUKLE "LUCIA" ORCHESTRION, c.1900, restored, with 13 rolls mainly offering between five and eight tunes. See page 472 of Bowers. Beautiful glass with floral decorations. 78 pipes, bells, piano, mandoline, snare drum, bass drum. \$23.000.
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