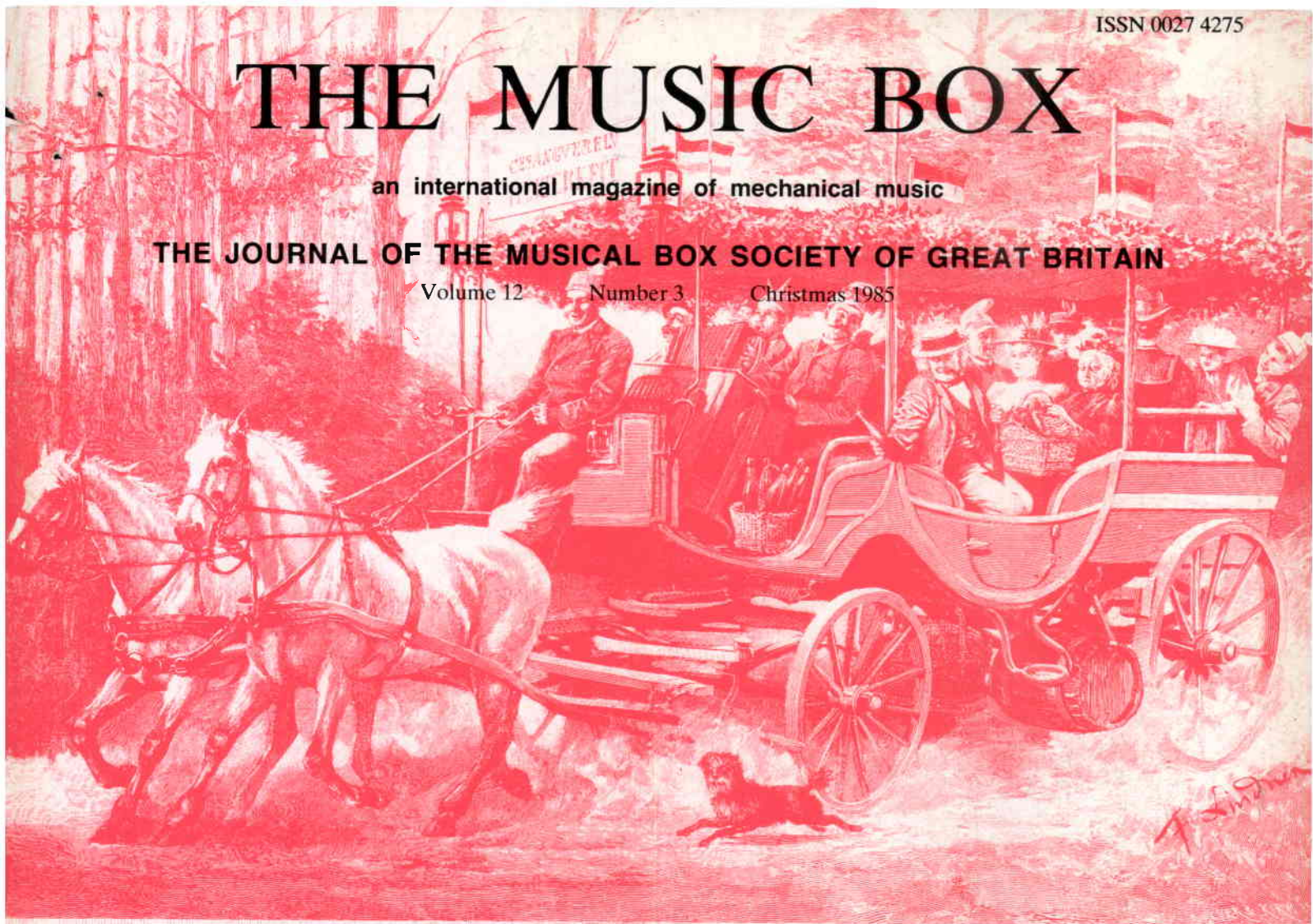


# THE MUSIC BOX

an international magazine of mechanical music

THE JOURNAL OF THE MUSICAL BOX SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN

Volume 12 Number 3 Christmas 1985



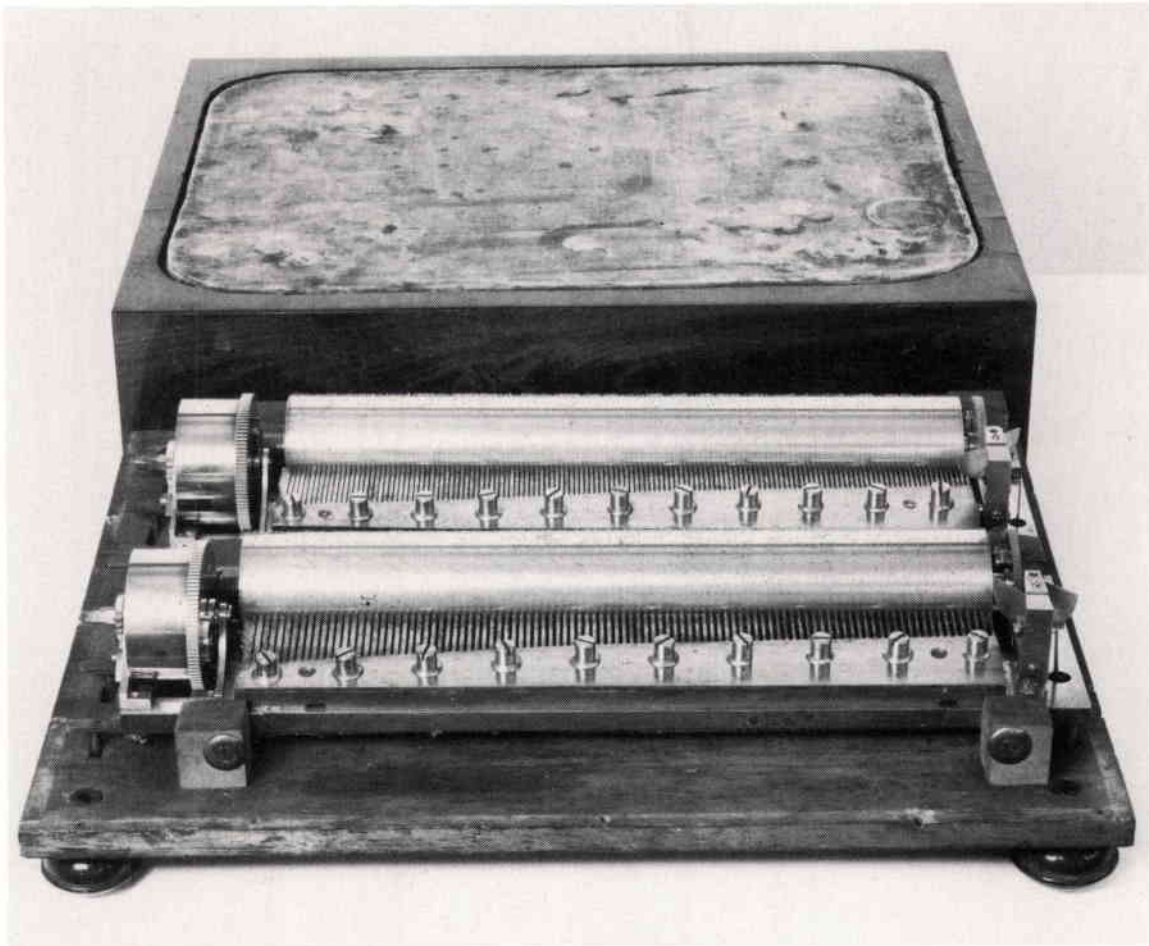
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AN INTRODUCTION TO THE

# MUSICAL BOX SOCIETY

of

# GREAT BRITAIN

*an international society devoted to mechanical musical instruments and their music*

## ABOUT THE SOCIETY

Formed in 1962, the Society today has an international membership of over 1,000 ranging from USA through Switzerland (the accredited birthplace of the cylinder musical box) to China and Australia. Almost 40% of the membership is in North America.

The aim of the Society is to further an interest in and an appreciation of all forms of mechanical music. Four meetings are held annually, two in London and two in the provinces, which give members the opportunity to meet and discuss their collections, to exchange, buy, or sell items, and, in particular, to listen to the excellent talks which are given by specialists in particular aspects of the hobby. Once a year, a major auction is held in London at which members may buy and sell mechanical items.

The Society publishes a large journal called *The Music Box* four times a year. In this you will find a large variety of interesting contents including articles on all aspects of the history, development, repair and overhaul of all types of mechanical instrument. Restoration tips and procedures are regularly published along with detailed and well-illustrated descriptions of items of particular interest.

Our lively correspondence pages bring together members and their problems from every corner of the world of mechanical music.

### *If you are interested in:*

Disc and Cylinder Musical Boxes  
Barrel Organs & Organettes  
Fairground and Show Organs  
Orchestrion Organs  
Barrel Pianofortes & Street Pianos  
Player Reed and Pipe Organs

## WHY NOT JOIN US?

The world of mechanical music contains a wealth of fascinating details for the collector, whether his interest be primarily musical or mechanical. To be able to repair a damaged musical box, it is true, you need to be something of a musician as well as an engineer, but many people who are neither gain immense pleasure from these fine examples of nineteenth-century craftsmanship. On the other hand, many amateurs have found that, given plenty of patience, the restoration of a pneumatic instrument such as a player piano or a player organ is by no means beyond their capability. By joining the MBSGB you will be able to make contact with specialists, both professional and amateur, who will offer help and advice on any particular problems in mechanical music. The annual subscription is £8 plus £1 joining fee (\$17 plus \$2.50 USA; \$20 plus \$3 Canadian). If overseas members would like all communications sent by airmail, US members should send \$34 plus the \$2.50 joining fee, and Canadian members \$41 plus \$3 joining fee. Far Eastern members can have airmail for £16 plus £1 joining fee. If you would like to join the Society, please complete the application form below. You will not be disappointed.

Player Pianos, Piano Players and Reproducing Pianos  
Mechanical Singing Birds  
Musical Clocks & Watches  
Musical Snuff-Boxes & objets d'art  
Musical Automata  
Mechanical Musical Instruments of all types and sizes

*you should join the Musical Box Society of Great Britain*

To: Mr. Reg Waylett,  
The Secretary,  
The Musical Box Society of Great Britain,  
40 Station Approach, Hayes, Bromley, Kent, BR2 7EJ.

## APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

For Society use only  
Mem. No. ....  
1st Mag. ....  
Directory .....

I wish to become a member of the Musical Box Society of Great Britain.

NAME (*Block Letters or Type, please*) .....

ADDRESS .....

I am particularly interested in .....

I would / would not be prepared to submit an article / articles and / or photographs / drawings for publication in *The Music Box* on the subject of .....

### PAYMENT OF ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

It would assist the Secretary if you complete the separate Banker's Order, but if you are unable to do this please complete Section A or B below. Note that subscriptions run from January 1st and fall due the next January 1st.

#### A. BRITISH ISLES APPLICANTS

I enclose my remittance to the value of £9 in respect of my entrance fee to the Society and, subscription for One Year.

Date ..... Signature .....

#### B. OVERSEAS APPLICANTS

I enclose an International Sterling Money Order to the value of £9 in respect of my entrance fee to the Society and subscription for One Year. (For American and Canadian airmail membership rates, see below).

Date ..... Signature .....

*Note: United States applicants:* Membership fee is \$17 plus an entrance fee of \$2.50. Airmail postage of all material including THE MUSIC BOX: membership fee is \$34 plus \$2.50. *Canadian applicants:* Respective figures for Canadian dollars are \$20 plus \$3; airmail service \$41 plus \$3. *Far Eastern applicants:* £16 plus £1.

# THE MUSIC BOX

an international magazine of mechanical music

THE JOURNAL OF THE MUSICAL BOX SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN

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## OFFICERS OF MBSGB AND THEIR DUTIES

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PRESIDENT: **Jon Gresham**, Westwood House, North Dalton, Driffield, North Humberside.

VICE-PRESIDENT: **Stephen Ryder**, 495 Springfield Avenue, Summit, New Jersey 07901, USA.

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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.

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

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

**Reg Mayes**, 171, Barnet Wood Lane, Ashted, Surrey, KT21 2LP.

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

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**FRONT COVER**

The two pictures have been sent in by that hospitable and friendly character in Hannover, **Peter Schuhknecht**.

The top picture entitled *raus aus dem Haus, raus aus der Stadt... nix als raus!*, by von F Linder, can also epitomise the Christmas spirit of a group being driven to a Festive party, complete with mechanical organ, in Vienna.

The lower picture, *Eine Tanzunterhaltung in einer Wiener Vorstadt*, shows a scene after the music has begun and the revelry has really got going. This picture is by von V Katzler, and the only person sober seems to be the organ grinder.

The enjoyment is evident, and we wish you all a very merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year.

These good wishes extend most warmly and cordially to **Mr Stan Wyatt** and the staff at Thanet Printing Works, Ramsgate. No printing firm could have been more helpful, co-operative, or more friendly during my five years as editor of *The Music Box*.

*The Music Box* stands very favourably when compared with the other three journals I receive regularly; the German, the French, and the American.

In my humble opinion the best of the four is, at present, the German. This may well be due to the recent unification of two strong-willed factions. This merging of personalities has produced a single journal which is most professionally edited and produced, *Das Mechanische Musikinstrument*, with **Dr Jürgen Hocker** heading a strong team.

The French journal, "*Nouvelle Revue de L'Association des Amis des Instruments et de la Musique Mécanique*", has not been arriving lately. The French seem to be in some disarray at the moment, and I can only report on what I have actually seen and received in writing... which may well not be the whole picture. So, based entirely on my limited information, it seems that the French society has fallen into the trap of dividing itself into two. As is



Frau Beatrix Hocker at the meeting of the French Society.

often the case, this seems to be due to a certain strong personality wishing to be a leader rather than a co-operator.

It happens in Fleet Street and elsewhere, this egotistical desire to "go it alone". There can be a feeling of "Power" in producing, say, a journal and presenting it to a group of readers. At the top of this self-seeking syndrome we have had, of course, Press Barons who have bought up newspapers... and would we be right in saying that they have done so in order to have the power to dispense *their* view of what is best for the public to know?

If any Mechanical Music Society could be excused for having more than one journal then surely the widely-spread country of America would be most in line. They have, however, resisted any temptation to diversify and the Music Box Society of America has one official editor and team. Last year **Howard M Fitch** chaired a Publications Committee, the Bulletin Editor being **Marty Roenigk** who either took over from, or handed over to, (I forget which way it was) **Al Choffness**. With **Ralph Heintz** as President of the Society's officers, the journal has always been in the hands of a team and never an individual.

This is a very wise safeguard.

The Americans diversify with *Chapters*, and we have wisely followed this pattern.

Our first *Chapter* was *The Chanctonbury Ring*, founded by **John Mansfield** and hosted by his wife **Kay**. Other *Chapters* have been formed in *Lincoln* and *Guildford*...

and this is a healthy development because it remains under the umbrella of the main society, with its officially appointed committee chaired by our President, **Jon Gresham**.

A team from the committee is producing a Silver Jubilee edition to celebrate our Society's 25th anniversary, and no one is more delighted than myself to know that "a group" is preparing this special volume.

The lesson, surely, is that societies such as we have in France, America, Great Britain and Germany... and also countries not mentioned herein, such as Holland, should beware the "personality cult" in editorship. Control by an appointed committee should always be maintained, then, the adage, "The Editor's decision is final" can safely apply. He knows that if his decisions are wrong he can be given the sack. Should an individual, unsupervised by the parent committee, unilaterally set up a self-appointed vehicle for disseminating news, then such a venture should be very carefully examined before it is given support. There must be a controlling hand over everything that is printed.

Perhaps in the present mechanical-music conditions in Germany and France the wisdom of what I am saying can be seen.

This year sees Member number 2,000 in our Society. We are not 2,000 strong... Time, during the past quarter of a century, has taken its toll. In the UK we number about 500, and internationally slightly less than 1,000. I urge all members to support the committee of *The Music Box Society of Great Britain*, and its official journal, *The Music Box*.

May I also remind you of the "Australian/New Zealand/Japan" pages which **Reg Mayes** wants to feature in the journal. This section of our membership is truly "the other side of the world". Will each member "down under" please write to **Reg Mayes, 171 Barnett Wood Lane, Ashstead, Surrey KT21 2LP, England**, giving him views and news. This material will be passed on to the editor.

**First report from the Guildford group**

The Guildford group met on Sunday 12th May 1985 in the Cathedral Refectory. We started the

proceedings with "The History of Music Boxes" by **Cecil Cramp**. This talk was highly entertaining and informative. As a result few of us present will forget that Arthur Sullivan wrote hymns and "Behold, the Lord" or be able to look at musical chairs without recalling the reactions of weary shoppers to them!

After lunch **Ted Brown** talked about organettes, their place in the history of mechanical music, and contemporary methods used in the illustrating of his talk. Ted has been cutting new discs for his Ariston, and this is a most interesting development.

To round off the meeting there was time to play the various box and items the members had brought along. It was a great pleasure to have **Ralph** and **Gloria Schack** at the meeting. They are Vice-Presidents of the West Coast Chapter in America, and they are both on the committee of the MBSI Convention later in 1985.

Our thanks go to **David Evans** and **Peter Webb** for organising this enjoyable meeting.

Details of meetings can be had from **Lesley Evans**, tel: Liss (0730) 894086.

**MBSGB of the MBSGB (Music Box Society of Great Britain) report.**

The MBSGB (*Music Box Society Guildford Branch*) held a meeting on 15th September 1985. A group of enthusiasts met at the refectory on Sunday morning for a "blow by blow" account of the development of the barrel organ. This entertaining talk was given by **Barry Wilson**. We heard a very rare recording taken from inside the bellows of an organ... now, if only Jonah had had a microphone when he went inside the whale!... Barry took us through serinettes to giant orchestrions and compressed 2,000 years of organ development into an hour. After lunch several members displayed and demonstrated their instruments. There were several chamber barrel organs of early 19th century origin.

The next meeting of the Guildford Group (MBSGB?) will be early next year. If you are interested in coming please contact **Lesley Evans** (0730) 894086 for further details.

Lesley Evans, Sec.

### **American Meetings, in 1986**

January 1986 Mid-America Chapter Meeting. Santa Claus, IN.

July 19, 1986. Mid-America Chapter Organ Rally. Indiana.

September 12-14, 1986. MBSI Annual Meeting. Sarasota, FL.

plus ... **July 23-26, 1987**, MBSI & AMICA joint Annual Meeting. St. Paul, MN.

### **Chanctonbury Ring**

During the summer a musical box evening was presented to the Rustington Gramophone Society. **John Mansfield**, **Peter Howard**, and **Cyril Hess** introduced to a large audience the delights of cylinder boxes, disc boxes and John's street organ. To these gramophonic music lovers used to an evening of pure classical music it was, to say the least, a surprise. Fortunately, the surprise turned out to be a pleasant one. The programme began with the street organ blazing out the appropriately titled *Sussex by the Sea*.

The meeting was a great success and the gramophone lovers (surely on a higher plane than mere record player players) thoroughly enjoyed the novelty and the excellence of the mechanical music makers from Chanctonbury.

At another meeting, this one at Longbury House, Washington (England) **Ted Brown** (Have you paid your 1986 subs?) demonstrated the working of several organettes (sounds like a girlie parade before an all-American Ball Game). In his talk Ted guided us through the perils and hazards involved when buying such an instrument. Many other members had brought boxes and each owner then played and said something about his musical treasure. **Mr Cooper** of Shoreham, for example, brought several fine boxes and he prattled comprehensively on about each instrument to the delight of all present. Thanks were given to **John** and **Kay Mansfield** for their hospitality and for the excellent buffet lunch.

**Cyril Hess**, who wrote the report, also wrote a letter to me. The letter is more informative than the report, and if I'd read it first I would have published it under "Letters to the Editor" rather than put his report in the "Society Affairs" section. However, it all goes to show the healthy position of our Society when

such enterprising Chapters ("Not really a chapter, more a mere paragraph", said John Mansfield when he founded his group) exist. Will Chapter secretaries please continue to send in their reports. Cyril wishes Daphne and myself (and Daphne's Mum who, at 91, is one of our older members... nearly as old as Reg Waylett) a Happy New Year... and a Happy New Year to you and Chanctonbury, Cyril.

Bob L.

**Susan Holden**, Recording Secretary, reports on **The Annual General Meeting**.

The Annual General Meeting was held at the Press Club, Shoe Lane, London, on Friday 31st May 1985 at 7.30 pm.

The Recording Secretary read out the minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting held in 1984 to the assembled company with the apologies for this meeting.

### **President's Report**

Jon Gresham thanked the Committee for all their hard work and support to him during the year.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Bob Holden reported an overall profit of £492 for the year and thanked Stephen Cockburn, Auditor, for his assistance.

### **Membership Secretary's Report**

Reg Waylett reported that he had enrolled 44 new members but the number of new American Members has decreased.

A discussion took place with Mr & Mrs Kelly, American Members, who were present and they agreed to take some membership application forms to the International Meeting on the Queen Mary in September 1985.

Mr Kelly asked if the cost of membership for American Air Mail members could be reduced as compared with the sea mail members. The President said this matter would be discussed at the next full Committee Meeting.

### **Subscriptions Secretary's Report**

Ted Brown reported that the membership had actually risen and he had been pleased to welcome a new member from the German Democratic Republic.

### Meetings Secretary's Report

Alan Wyatt wished to thank publicly everyone who has attended meetings during the past year. He thanked all the Museum Directors who had made the summer Rhine Valley Trip so memorable, although this trip had been slightly marred by the sad death of Howard Fitch shortly afterwards.

The Plymouth Meeting street collection had raised £1,400 and the Spring Meeting at Oxford had been so successful due to Jim Colley's sterling efforts at persuading the Pitt Rivers Museum to open.

Alan Wyatt gave a brief report on future meetings and thanked his wife, Daphne, for her patience and support to him throughout the year.

### Editor's Report

Bob Leach reported that he hoped there would be a Silver Jubilee Book published at some time in 1986 to coincide with the Society's 25 years of being. He thanked John Powell, Advertising Manager and Reg Mayes for their help to him.

### Archivist's Report

Peter Howard reported that all items in the Archives were now safely in his possession. He asked for information on all items and for members to come forward with new material for the Archives.

### Hon Auction Organiser and Correspondence Secretary's Reports

There were no reports.

### Election of Officers

The following Officers were elected to serve for the forthcoming year:-

Hon President	- John Gresham
Hon Vice President	- Stephen Ryder
Hon Subscriptions Secretary	- Ted Brown
Hon Correspondence Secretary	- Roger Kempson
Hon Membership Secretary	- Reg Waylett
Hon Meetings Secretary	- Alan Wyatt
Hon Treasurer	- Bob Holden
Hon Recordings Secretary	- Sue Holden
Hon Auditor	- Stephen Cockburn
Hon Editor	- Bob Leach
Hon Archivist	- Peter Howard
Hon Auction Organiser	- Roger Kempson
Hon Advertisement Manager	- John Powell

Committee Members:-

Christopher Proudfoot, Ken Dickens, Reg Mayes, Keith Harding.



Travelling the Alan and Daphne Wyatt way.

### Vote of Thanks

Doctor Peter Whitehead proposed a vote of thanks to the Committee for their efforts during the year. This was seconded by Mr Kelly.

NB The Treasurer reports that the question of the American Air Mail subscriptions raised at the Annual General Meeting has been considered by the Committee. In view of the fact that the American subscriptions have not been increased for 6 years, the matter will be reviewed when the subscriptions are next fixed.

The Meeting closed at 9.03 pm.

### Spring Tour

#### HOLLAND & BELGIUM

1st-5th April, 1985

Dear Member,

I have arranged a trip to Holland & Belgium to take place from 1st to 5th April, 1985. We shall again be using one of Young's excellent coaches, leaving on **Easter Tuesday**.

The coach will be starting from Cambridge, members wishing to park their cars in my barn are very welcome to do so. We shall pick up at Liverpool Street Station, London, then proceed to Dover to catch a ferry about mid-day. We will take the opportunity to have our lunch

during the crossing to Calais, then travel via Gent, Antwerp, Brede arriving Amsterdam early evening.

Accommodation has been reserved four nights Half-Board basis at hotel Estherea situated on the Single canal in the city centre. I have available 23 double rooms and 3 single, the single rooms are already taken. The cost including evening meal will be for those sharing £139 per person, single £176 per person. This is for the whole package coach, ferry and hotel, insurance can be added as an extra if required.

The coach travel during our stay is inclusive, we plan to visit Arthur Prinsen at Antwerp, Museum van Speeldoos tot Utrecht, Perlee's organ works Amsterdam, Carillon tower Royal Palace and the Dutch Street organ museum Haarlem. Following our four nights stay in Amsterdam we hope to call at Delfte on the return trip to Calais.

I have to make advance payments on the 1st October, final payment 1st February. I would be grateful for you to reserve your place as soon as possible by sending me a booking fee of £30 per person balance due before 31st January 1986. Please make cheques payable to "Young's Coaches".

Yours sincerely,

Alan W Wyatt,  
(Meetings Secretary).



John and Hilda Phillips, Peter Murray, Daphne Leach, enjoying the meeting at Plymouth.

**Newport, Isle of Wight  
25th-27th April, 1986**

Alan Wyatt supplies this extra information:-

**CALVERT'S HOTEL**

(All prices including VAT & Service Charge)

**Rates per night:-**

Single, bed and breakfast .....	£ 9.00
Single, self-contained bathroom or shower, TV .....	£11.00
Twin near bathroom & WC .....	£18.00
Double bed, self-contained bathroom or shower, TV .....	£22.00

*Special rates for parties, etc.*

Evening meals from £5.00.

Also full a la carte menus.

Baby's cot available at no extra charge.

Dogs admitted.

Lounge with coloured television. Two bars.

Intimate restaurants, Snack Bars.

Ample parking space. Private dining suites.

Conference rooms. Weddings.

Friendly atmosphere.

**Graham Whitehead** told an amusing story (reported in a previous edition of *The Music Box*) about the man in a cinema who was "heavy breathing" in the stalls during during the film *Baby Doll*. Because of the erotic nature of the film the poor man received no help, the attendants not realising that the poor chap had fallen from the balcony into the stalls

and he was not "heavy breathing" but was in genuine agony.

Caroll Baker (now Mrs Donald Burton of London) has been dogged by this 1956 film and she writes in her biography that she has been constantly haunted and irritated by "that stupid little thumb-sucking brat for more than 25 years". All she did was run naked into the forest - who wouldn't, in that condition!

Haunted or irritated or not, she had the commercial sense to call her book, *Baby Doll*.

Any more good stories Graham?  
(Ed.)

The Autumn Meeting of the Society held at the *Skean Dhu Hotel, Aberdeen, 20th-22nd Sept 1985*.

Meeting Host's, **Robbie and Joyce Gordon**.

Those travelling by train were met at the station by Scottish members who had arranged transport by Rolls Royce and Mercedes cars. Frank Holland MBE, who had requested an "Aberdeen Tram" for transport, was delighted to find a 1920's Rolls Royce on the platform for his personal use (chauffeur included). On arrival at our hotel the "Highland Fling" began for, from now on, our feet hardly touched the ground.

Arriving at Aberdeen at 5.30 we were requested to make a quick change as the Civic Reception commenced at 6.30. A most enjoyable reception concluded with a speech of welcome of the society to the City by the **Lord Provost of Aberdeen**, an apt reply being given by our President, **Jon Gresham**.

Following dinner at the hotel we enjoyed a "Sing Along" accompanied by a Pianola ably played by members. With his usual attention to detail Robbie had provided us with song sheets and selected rolls of all the old time favourites.

Early Saturday morning the hotel foyer was bustling with traditionally dressed "Organ Grinders" waiting to be taken to the City centre to provide entertainment for shoppers and support Dr Barnardo's Flag Day. This charity raised over £1100 on the day and are most grateful for the support of the organs.

During the morning members were taken on a conducted tour of the Carillon of 48 bells situated in St Nicholas's Church. The Carillonneur Mr Ronald Leith gave a talk on the history and mechanism of the bells and then demonstrated his skill by playing a selection of tunes on the Carillon.



On Saturday afternoon members were treated to a feast of musical instruments and clocks, these being provided by our Scottish members. These were ably demonstrated by **Jim Colley, Michael Bennet-Levy, Jim Weir, Rev Colin Junner, Hector Cormack and Robbie Gordon.**

Following pre dinner drinks in the lounge two lady pipers lead the group to the conference room for dinner. Entertainment provided by Magician **Peter Nichol** and display of Highland Dancing by **Aileen and Heather.** Dancing, until past midnight, including a marathon "Eightsome Reel" completed a most enjoyable day.

Sunday morning a 2 hour coach tour of Old Aberdeen, The City and the Winter Gardens. On again to Anderson's Storybook Glen for Lunch accompanied by an organ grinding session. A most enjoyable afternoon was then spent at Alford visiting the Grampian Transport Museum which also houses a 92-key Mortier Dance Organ, demonstration of a model Steam Calliope built by **Mike Duguid,** a visit to Craigievar Castle, the Railway Museum and **Robbie and Joyce Gordons** antique shop.

After dinner on Sunday evening **Mike Carrie** demonstrated a laser disc recording of mechanical music. A superb BBC Video film of Robbie Gordon's clocks and musical boxes was much enjoyed as were the laughs caused when **Graham Whitehead** showed a video recording made of the members grinding their street-organs on the Saturday morning.

Those staying on were treated to a trip round a Whisky Distillery and coach tour of the area on Monday.

Long will be remembered the warmth and most generous hospitality of our Scottish friends in particular the new members that joined us there. We will take up their invitation on leaving Aberdeen to "*Haste Ye Back*".

Sincere thanks to Robbie and Joyce and their many helpers.

Alan Wyatt.

List of names of new members, and changes of address, will be published in the next issue. We've passed membership number 2000! - now our target is 3000!

HAVE YOU PAID YOUR SUBS?



Bob Minney, Oxford, 1985. Sent in by Alan Wyatt.



THUN.

# MORE STREET MUSIC

by R. Booty

SOME while back I compiled a piece on street music for "The Music Box." It noted what could be found in England, France, and America, and the first two of those countries feature in this further look at the subject.

First the small book organ (fig 1), seen in Monmartre, Paris, in March 1985. Here we see something that could be tried by someone with sufficient courage at one of our society organ charity collections. Wondering what I mean? The young lady is singing along with the organ and judging from the piles of books visible she had been busy for some time. Regrettably I did not have the pleasure of visiting Paris personally, I must thank **Mrs Linda Bennett** for supplying the photograph.

The next shot (fig 2) is nearer home and here the collection is not for personal gain but for charity. Taken at Cambridge in September 1984, it shows four stalwarts of the playing for charity fraternity. Left to right: elegant **Kay Brown** with natty husband **Ted**, followed by the military smart **Albert** with **Ken Dickens**, who, with sleeves rolled up, out of the men looks like the only one ready for an afternoon's work! **Albert** has every right to be both the shortest and most rigid of the group, he spent his childhood adorning the front of a fair organ. The instruments being played are Aristons, and it was possible to experience both playing the same tune in unison. It was all for a "Fight Muscular Dystrophy" collection organ-ised by **Alan Wyatt**.

The third photograph, (fig 3) courtesy of the "Essex Chronicle", was taken in April 1985 in Chelmsford on the occasion of a collection for the local hospice. The organ is a locally owned 20 keyless Dean. A fantastic town collection of over £1,500 was made, the organ contributing over £200 although I don't think I would be too keen giving to the fellow on the left! **Michael Dean** is the organ's builder. From Whitchurch, nr Bristol, he works full time as a manufacturer of organs and of the seventy or so instruments built in

thirteen years, at least twenty were on this small specification. A more recent addition to his range is a 52 keyless model, an example of which has found its way on to the travelling fairgrounds accompanying its owners **Big Wheel**. It is expected to be capable of holding its own against modern panatropes. The majority of music for the 20 note organs comes from the workshops of **Pete Watts** at Chipping Norton, having been expertly arranged by his partner, **Stephen Clarke**.

While I was on another collecting stint with my friend **Dean**, interest was shown in the organ by a couple, but it was the woman who had the greatest interest. Conversation revealed she was the daughter, or was it niece? – it is not very easy holding a conversation while attending to the musical needs of an organ – of **Simon Robino**, he was a barrel piano man in Manchester, and she recalled visiting the workshops and seeing barrels being pinned by her relatives. As was stated by **Canon Wintle** in one of his radio talks, everything was kept in the family and no outsiders were taught how to pin barrels. She also said she knew of **Mr Tomasso**. I only wish I had the chance to quiz her further.

During recent searches through the "Mechanical Opinion" I found two pieces from an earlier time. The first, from the June 1897 issue, concerns a "picturesque" Italian grinder who fell foul of both the law and a member of Parliament. The errant fellow was sentenced to one years hard labour for persisting in playing outside the residence of **Mr Justin McCarthy** who was seriously ill. The piece ended with the usual irritated style of comment; "Perhaps there may now be some hope of a street music bill from the member of parliament!"

"Interview recently in a morning paper. Organ grinder declares with the greatest nonchalance that all his class are regular readers of the birth and death columns of the newspapers, with a view to – not playing where there has been a birth or death? You know not the grinder. It is just in

order that he may grind where he is specially not wanted to grind that he keeps himself posted up in these newspaper articles. "Sometimes", he says, "we get ordered off, of course; but if we're polite, and say you're sorry for disturbing the lady or hurting the relatives' feelings, as the case may be, it's generally a silver coin. We **have** to do these things". There is one other thing that he of the sunny south ought to have to do, – 6 months at his majesty's expense when caught at this trick".

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Subscriptions for 1986 –  
(U.K. £8.00)  
Please send to:  
**Ted Brown**



On the streets of England.... waiting for the coach to Thun.



Here he comes – Mike, the driver – first stop... Thun, 1983.



The two Italian Street Piano Grinders lived and played their instrument in the streets of Worthing between the two wars. One tune in particular I recall hearing was the then popular 6/8 rhythm of Valencia, which was always included in their programme.

As one of their pitches was outside our music shop, on occasions Father or our head of repair shop would be called upon to replace broken hammer shanks etc. When not grinding, the couple would have a barrow selling Ice Creams in summer and Baked Potatoes and Chestnuts in winter. The old man's street cry in summer was Hokey Pokey a penny a lump, the stuff to make you jump. In winter it was Hot Potatoes, all bigguns!

*The picture and caption was sent in by John Mansfield.*



Fig 2. Kay and Ted Brown, "Albert" and Ken Dickens.



On the streets of Hannover.



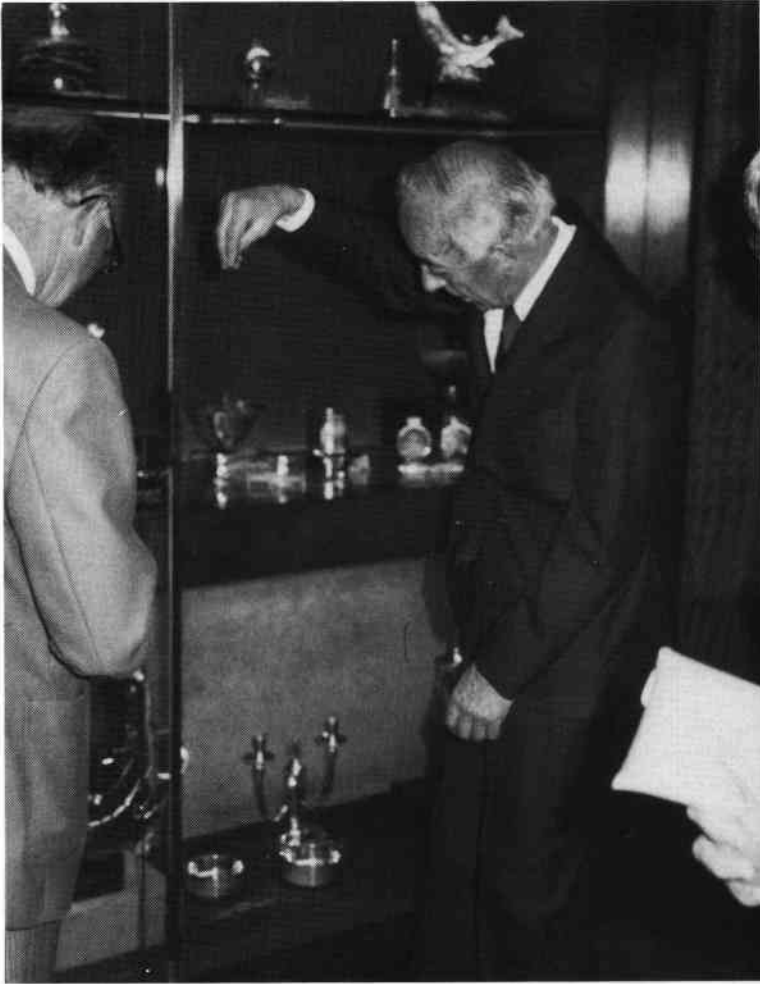
Fig 3. Chelmsford. The man on the left is Roger Booty – you have been warned!



Fig 1. "Here them coming down the street, with that organ-grinder's beat..." Monmartre, Paris.



On the streets of Paris.



THE DEPUTY MAYOR OF PLYMOUTH  
SAID TO JON GRESHAM,  
"YOU HOLD IT LIKE THIS."



REG WAYLETT SAID,  
"THAT'S SILLY, IT WILL DROP."



KEITH PRATT SAID,  
"WHY NOT PUT THE OTHER  
HAND UNDERNEATH."

Est. 1968

Nancy Fratti  
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Specialist in  
Antique Music Boxes and  
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**Offers You:**

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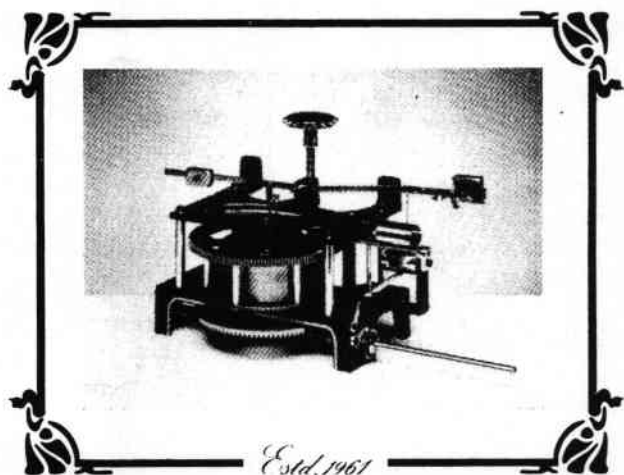
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# KOMET, A MYSTERY?

by Luuk Goldhoorn

THERE are few disc musical boxes which occur so frequently in the columns of *The Music Box*\* yet about which we know so little. **David Tallis**, in his book *Musical Boxes*, wrote, "Another great rarity, not unlike Halley's comet which comes round every seventy-five years, is The Komet."

Why all the mystery about this machine? Is it because of its intriguing name, is it the tremendous disc size of over 33 inches, or is it lack of information?

It is true that The Komet is not a common disc machine, and little is published about its manufacturers. Why is it that we are thoroughly *au fait* with such instruments as The Monopol, The Orphenion, The Celesta, and so on? These instruments can be well researched by studying the back numbers of *The Music Box*. It surely cannot be that students have been more interested in these machines and have deliberately neglected study of The Komet. Perhaps in this article I can fill in the gaps in research and solve a little of the mystery.

As far as I can trace **Bowers'** *Encyclopedia of Automatic Musical Instruments* was the first author who supposed a connection between The Komet and Weissbach & Co in Leipzig.

The next author was **Ord-Hume** but he only borrowed the information from **Bowers**. Ord-Hume did, however, mention that British patents revealed that two patents were granted to von Pollnitz and Bauer of the firm *Komet Musikwerke*. With this piece of information Ord-Hume is in the picture. The inventor of The Komet was Franz Bauer of Leipzig. I do not believe that Bowers and Ord-Hume, repeating Bowers, were correct in thinking that Weissbach & Co were the inventors of The Komet.

**Bauer** must have been working in the field of mechanical music long before the establishment of the Komet Musikwerke because a number of German patents were granted to him. I have gathered references of quite a number of these patents and they are listed at the end of this article. (Patents of Franz Louis Bauer).

Most of the earlier patents were credited to a man called **Carl August Röder** and the last one in co-operation with Bauer is dated 1st November 1894.

Unfortunately I could not find any further information about Carl Röder. Certainly he did not take part in the Komet Musikwerke, neither as a managing director nor as a backer, and as he did not invent, or at least patent, anything after 1894, his name is lost to this story.

As a matter of interest, there was a Röder family in Leipzig who were in the music-publishing business. As it was quite a substantial firm it seems doubtful that Carl Röder was part of this family because, in that case, the Röder family might have been the backers. But, to return from this speculation to the Bauer and Röder patents.

The first one I traced was number 42553, dated August 5, 1886. As my sources of information begin in

1885 there may be older patents. The feature of this first patent was a mechanism for tightening an endless paper band in a musical box. This patent was not of use in my research into the production of The Komet, but the patents which followed were all in the field of projectionless discs, and as the projectionless disc was one of the advantages of The Komet, I presume that with these patents Bauer decided to found a factory. That was in 1894.

The *Zeitschrift fur Instrumentenbau* (Periodical for instrument building), a magazine which was published three times a month as from October 1880, in Leipzig, by Paul de Wit. The magazine is full of information about disc music boxes and on September 1, 1894, it reported that a new disc machine under the name of **Komet** had come on to the market. The machine was manufactured by the Komet-firm, Ranstädtersteinweg 31, Leipzig. In this first article about The Komet the particulars were given as follows: The machine worked with round metal discs, the winding was with crank, and there was a silent winding. The projectionless disc was not even mentioned. The impression given by this article was not that a world-shaking machine had been introduced.

We have to wait until March 1895 for the first advertisement of The Komet to appear in the *Zeitschrift*. Perhaps the editors did not see the advantages of the new machine, its producers knew better. In the advert the use of a projectionless disc was underlined. It seems wise here to remember that the use of projectionless discs was a normal practice with the Aristons, the mechanical musical instrument which was more popular in those days than the disc musical box. I presume that therefore the *Zeitschrift* paid little attention to this particular property of the Komet. As far as I have traced, the Komet was the first disc machine with smooth discs, and Bauer was its inventor.

There is another fact to which we have to pay attention when reading the advert: the address of the firm is changed to Friedrichstrasse 4, but of course, as with all the disc box manufacturers, still in Leipzig. The next issue of the *Zeitschrift* gives us a lengthy article about the "*Leipziger Ostermesse*", the Leipzig Easter Fair, in which all the mechanical music machines which were on show are featured. About the Komet, the editor wrote: "The advantages of this machine are triple: The discs are without projections (prompted by Bauer?) and hence completely smooth, the winding is silent, and the bar which holds the disc in position cannot be removed before the piece of music is ended." The last part of this is an especially intriguing one for its counterpart was invented in 1896.

The first models were to a wall-automaton with 61 teeth and an upright machine with 102 teeth. The manufacturer was not completely satisfied with his first machines: in particular the bass was not strong enough in comparison with the descant. "Nevertheless the inventor deserves a feather in his cap", quoting the editor,



“he has given the proof of uniting a plucking system with precision”. Another assumption: this may refer to the numerous troubles teeth-plucking machines with long paper-bands did have. Bauer, coming home from the fair with a success, most probably looked for a backer. And he found such a person, for on July 1, 1895, a firm is incorporated in the name of “Firma Komet Musikwerke, Pöllnitz und Bauer”. The owners of this firm were Hans Bruno Ulrich Pancratius Golzo von Pöllnitz, merchant, and Franz Louis Bauer, technician, both from Leipzig. Now the company possessed the fundamentals: money and a product, the future must have been a sunny one.

At the next Leipzig Fair, October 1895, the firm introduced table models. In its review the *Zeitschrift* commended the firm for the sound quality of their machines.

At about this time we see in an advertisement for the first time the name “Victoria” used for the table-models of Komet. Even the firm’s name seems to be changed to “Komet Musikwerke Victoria”, but no official document could be found that proves this name-changing. Therefore we can assume that it was used only for reasons of publicity. I have a lot of hesitation in coupling this name with Queen Victoria. One has to take in mind that Victoria is a very much used German word for victory, also that Queen Victoria’s Jubilee was much later than the introduction of the Victoria-Komet at the Leipzig Fair.

On July 1, 1896, von Pöllnitz left the firm. Why he did so is not clear, but in those days it was quite normal that a firm changed its backer. As a result of his resigning the name of the company was changed to “Komet Musikwerke Bauer & Co”. The “Co” indicates that a new backer was found, but his name is a mystery. The firm stayed in the news: at the *Michaelis Messe* (Autumn-Fair) an upright machine number 200 was introduced. At first sight one would imagine that the number 200 indicates the number of teeth, but no, the comb had only 163 teeth; the discs were without projections. The editor of the *Zeitschrift* was impressed by the musical volume. As there were so many new or altered machines we must not blame the editor because he mentioned a new 106 tooth-machine, although it had already been introduced a year before.

Really important, according to the *Zeitschrift*, was that one of the instruments with projectionless discs had a device to pluck the teeth with the help of a friction operated lever mechanism. Quoting the editor: “This construction makes it possible to exploit an almost chromatic scale, and besides that a lot more music can be put on the disc. The handling of the instrument is very easy, especially because the disc can be removed or set up without stopping the instrument first.” Remember in this respect that two years ago the Komet had a device for exactly the opposite: the disc could not be removed before the music was ended.

# Komet „Victoria“.

## Neueste epochemachende Musikwerke

mit auswechselbaren Metall-Noten,

ohne Zacken, geräuschloser Aufzug.

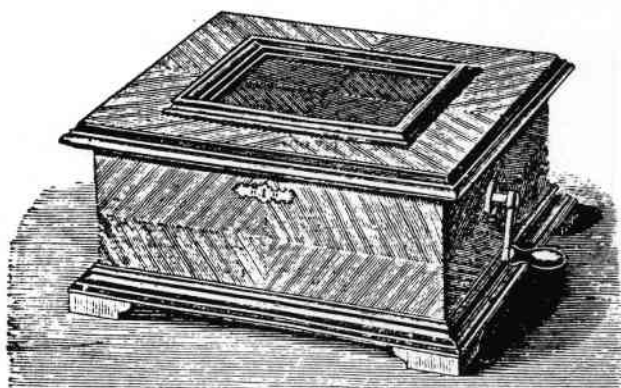
*En gros.*

*Export.*

*Patentirt in vielen Staaten.*

Zu haben bei allen Grossisten der Musikbranche,  
sowie in sämtlichen größeren Uhrenhandlungen.

[3336]



The Komet “Victoria” in a table model (December 11, 1895).

From now on a prosperous future seemed to be assured. At the start of 1895 the firm moved into new premises at Angerstrasse 32, in Leipzig.

The review of the Easter Fair of 1895 mentioned, besides the wall and upright machines with 61 and 106 teeth, new instruments with 30 and 40 teeth. Obviously these must be two table-models. These new machines worked, however, with discs with projections.

Bauer was granted a patent for this normal disc in 1895. The “old” machine with 106 teeth deserves a remark: at the fair of October, 1894, the machine had 102 teeth, It is hard to understand that one could not count in those days, so I presume that the same machine was mentioned, but that the teeth where the pressure wheels came, were counted.

The patent that made it possible to put more music on a disc seems to be in preparation for the later giant machines with over 1200 teeth; but let us not anticipate.

At the Easter Fair 1897 not much news was on show; only two small boxes with 30 and 40 teeth. The editor predicted a good future for these as a mass-seller, because the tone was very loud.” Besides that, the orchestration is perfect”, the editor wrote.

That the news at the Easter Fair was quite thin is understandable bearing in mind that the big “*Sachsisch-Thüringische Industrie und Gewerbe-Ausstellung*” (Saxonia-Thüringe Industrial and Trade Exhibition) was less than half a year ahead. The manufacturers tried to score off each other by not giving anything away too soon. Therefore the Komet Musikwerke must have been



# Komet- Musikwerke Bauer & Co. Leipzig-Lindenau, Angerstr. 32.

Zur Messe:  
**Petersstr. 27,**  
I. Etage rechts.

Letzte Neuheit:  
**Stand-Automat**  
No. 200.  
Grossartige Tonfülle.  
Elegante Ausführung.  
Längste Spieldauer.

Ferner:  
**Automaten**  
und  
**Spieldosen**  
mit zackenlosem Blatt und  
geräuschlosem Aufzug.

\* Articles about the Komet in the Music Box.

- |              |              |   |
|--------------|--------------|---|
| Vol I No 1   | Xmas 1964:   | Graham Webb discovers a Komet.                            |
| Vol II No 2  | Summer 1965: | Photo's and trade mark.                                   |
| Vol V No 7   | Autumn 1972: | Peter Whitehead: Some Komet peculiarities.                |
| Vol VI No 5  | Spring 1974: | Photo's of the giant Komet.                               |
| Vol VII No 1 | Spring 1975: | Photo's giant Komet. J A Holland.                         |
| Vol VII No 7 | Autumn 1976: | Ord-Hume. Who made the Komet?                             |
| Vol XI No 7  | Autumn 1984: | The case of the case for a Giant Komet.<br>Geoff Worrall. |

The upright machine no 200 (September 1, 1896).  
Komet Music factory Bauer & Co  
Leipzig-Lindenau Angerstreet 32  
At the Fair: Paterstreet 27, 1st floor right.  
Latest novelty: upright automaton no 200  
Magnificent fullness of tone.  
Elegant workmanship.  
Longest playing time.  
Other automaton and music boxes  
with projectionless disc and silent winding.

The Komet "Victoria" in an upright model (February 1, 1896).

Newest sensational music box.  
Without projections, silent winding.  
Wholesale Export  
Patent granted in numerous countries.

Obtainable from all wholesalers of the music line of business  
and in all larger clockshops.



# Komet „Victoria“

Neueste epochemachende Musikwerke

mit auswechselbaren Metall-Noten,

ohne Zacken, geräuschloser Aufzug.

*En gros:*

*Export.*

*Patentirt in vielen Staaten.*

Zu haben bei allen Grossisten der Musikbranche,  
sowie in sämtlichen größeren Uhrenhandlungen.

3377]

very sure of its grounds, because as early as March, at the Easter Fair, they made an announcement that they would introduce at the "Gewerbe-Ausstellung" a giant machine with 652 teeth, and using only one disc!

They kept their word, as such a machine was indeed introduced at the Exhibition. In a long article the *Zeitschrift* reviewed all the machines that Komet showed: a 30 tooth manivelle, table-machines with 40, 61, 84 and 121 teeth. Wall and upright automatons with 61, 84, 121 and 163 teeth. Moreover an automaton number 200 with 163 teeth with a clock which played once, or twice at every stroke of the hour.

But, by far the most important item was of course the giant upright machine with over 600 teeth playing from one disc with a diameter of not less than 85 centimetres (33½ inches). "The mechanism is based on a new patent, number 95132, by which it is possible to work with a relatively small disc. The system is based on starwheels which are provided with two smaller wheels, which in turn, pluck the teeth. By this system a lever-action is used through which much in driving-force is saved. The mechanism is housed in a rococo-styled cabinet, made from Italian walnut, with veneer of rose-wood, and decorated with real gilding. The centre of the disc bin front is adorned with a painting in the style of Watteau. The loudness of the instrument is adequate for a group of 15 or 20 dancers."

With these superlatives the giant Komet was introduced by the editor. This praising review was not at all common in the *Zeitschrift*. Most of their reviews were much more reserved.

Not in this respect: Half a year later the editor is still impressed by the giant Komet. In a comprehensive way the working of the patent number 95132 was discussed. From this article we learn that each projection activates four teeth. Therefore a very narrow division of the teeth can be achieved.

In the *Zeitschrift* some rumours are quoted that Bauer now will build a machine with 1220 teeth, a doubling of his record up to now. And he built it: Two 600-machines were united and presented as a double-machine at the Michaelmas-Fair 1898. The two discs are placed in the same line to both sides of the driving-mechanism. Underneath is the disc-bin. From this description we learn that it must have been a very tall machine. Especially as the editor compares the machine with a medium sized orchestrion, and comes out best! The mighty tone of the machine would appear to full advantage as the discs would not sound in unison, but, for example, could play piano and forte alternately. A further improvement, fantasizes the editor, would be if it was possible to play longer pieces, by putting on the second disc after the first has come to its end.

As the machine is driven at only one point, a device was foreseen that makes it impossible to place the lower disc in the upper position and vice versa. For if two discs are driven at one point the direction of moving for the one is to the right, for the other to the left. Even with projectionless discs one must not make a mistake in placing the two discs.

Besides the lyricism about the 1200-machine, the *Zeitschrift* also stated that the 600-instrument is very

# Komet'-Musikwerke

## Bauer & Co.,

### Leipzig-Lindenau

Angerstr. 32.

Automaten und Spieldosen  
in allen Gröfsen und Ausführungen.

**Letzte Neuheiten:**

### Komet-Automat

mit **1200 Tönen** und  
zwei Notenscheiben v. 85 cm Durchm.

### Komet-Automat

mit **600 Tönen** und  
einer Notenscheibe v. 85 cm Durchm.

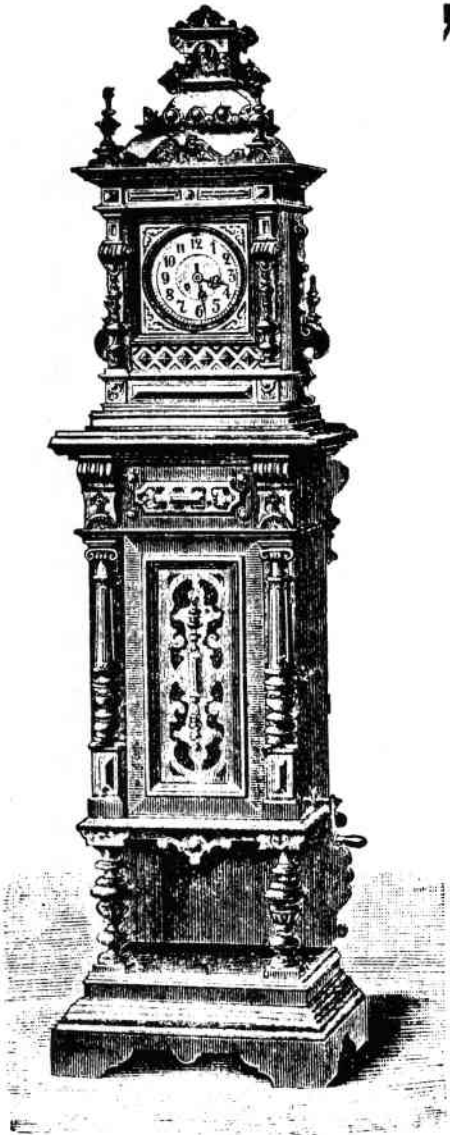
**D. B.-Patent.**

**Bis jetzt unerreicht  
in Grösse und Ton-  
fülle.**

[6359

Preisverzeichnisse und Kataloge stehen auf  
Wunsch kostenlos zur Verfügung.

Ab Ostermesse 1899 beständiges  
Musterlager in **Leipzig**, Reichshof,  
Ecke Grimmaische u. Reichsstrafse.



Komet clock (June 1, 1899).

Automatons and musical boxes in any size and design.

Latest novelties: Komet automaton with 1200 teeth and  
two discs of 85 cm diameter.

Komet automaton with 600 teeth and one disc of 85 cm diameter.

German patent.

So far unsurpassed in size and fullness of tone.

Price list and catalogue are available free on request.

As from Easter-Fair 1899 permanent showroom in Leipzig,  
Reichshof, Corner Grimmaische and Reichsstreet.

much improved: "The first sample which was shown at the Easter Fair, naturally had a number of imperfections and faults. But automatically they will disappear as improvement goes on". That, however, turned out to be only wishful thinking.

The 1200 was not the only news from Bauer. A new 84-machine was also introduced with "countersunk bedplate", the editor let us know. It is not clear if this instrument was built on the same principles as Ruckert's *Orphenion*, or Malke and Oberländer's *Alder*. These instruments did not have the motor beneath, but beside the bedplate. If so, the Komet was not first with this kind of assembly. Ruckert introduced it as early as 1893.

The final news about the Komet at the 1898 Autumn-Fair was a disc bin. A series of levers made it possible to select the disc wanted, and make it protrude from the bin, by pressing the appropriate handle. All these new things, but in particular the giant Komet ushers in the fall of Bauer. At the turn of the year 1898/99 the backers retired and in their place the bankers Frege and Mayer were introduced.

This may not have been too serious, but their first action was to dismiss Bauer. In his place the new managing director was Mr Muhme. There is unfortunately no data available to give us an impression of the qualities of this man.

Probably because of the good name of Komet and Bauer, the name of the Company was not changed and stayed "Komet Musikwerke Bauer & Co." "In times to come", the *Zeitschrift* put forward, "it will become clear if this is a wise decision". At that moment the editor was not in the least convinced, but his commercial feelings did not allow him to choose Bauer's side. He knew on which side his bread was buttered!

It is not surprising that after such a takeover the Easter Fair did not bring much news of the Komet. A wall machine with 84 teeth is mentioned and besides that, the housing of the instruments has improved. English style becomes the fashion, that is multi-coloured with a pattern of flowers.

We have to wait until September, 1899, when the Michaelmas Fair opened its door before anything new from Komet Musikwerke is heard. At that occasion the editor of the *Zeitschrift* withdrew his masked accusations to the new management and frankly stated that numerous abuses are cleared up under the new men. New models were introduced and old-ones improved; briefly and to the point under new management the wind blows from another quarter.

Except for all the boxes from 30 teeth and up, two novelties were shown: A double disc-box, number 240, with 242 teeth, and a box number 300 with 326 teeth. The diameters of the discs were 52½ and 62½ centimetres (20.7 and 24.7 inches). And, big surprise, at least in our eyes, a giant Komet is showed with 304 different teeth, four times repeated, making a machine with 1216 teeth, with two discs.

I don't think this machine under new management was a success, for it was the last time this giant machine was shown. At later fairs the number of teeth didn't surpass 350, a respectable number, but far, far behind the all-time record of 1216, invented by Bauer, but also his undoing.

The turn of the century announced the decline in popularity of disc boxes and the rise of the orchestrion, and as the *Zeitschrift* was not a history book but a commercial journal, the articles on disc musical boxes diminished substantially. A last straw at which the manufacturers of disc boxes clutched was the "Glockenspiel", in order to get more "music" (or din?) out of their instruments. Among others Komet tried to hold fast the public interest by introducing the addition of bells to their boxes. At the Easter Fair of 1900 a 123 and a 137 automaton were introduced, while the 210, which was already introduced at an earlier stage, was now fitted with 14 "Glocken". It played for over three minutes! At the Easter Fair 1901 a box with 92 teeth and with a disc of 42 centimetres (16½ inches) was introduced. The external measurements of the box were 124 × 73 × 43 centimetres (48.8 × 28.7 × 16.9 inches). This is the first and also the last time the *Zeitschrift* tells us something about the dimensions of Komet boxes. Therefore it is an important item.

On the same occasion it was predicted that a double-disc-machine number 300, with two combs of 163 teeth each would in due course, be fitted with a Glockenspiel; and at the Michaelmas Fair 1901 it was shown: 326 teeth plus 24 bells. The machine was baptised "Konzertautomat" (Concert-automaton). With two other new instruments number 210 (196 teeth + 10 bells), and number 137 (127 teeth + 10 bells). The final review of Komet machines at the Leipzig fairs had been published in the *Zeitschrift*.

In February 1902 we read again about the Komet, but now in a sad advertisement:

"The complete and well-established  
mechanical music firm, called

**KOMET-MUSIKWERKE BAUER & CO**  
**LEIPZIG-Lindenau**

with the complete equipment products a.s.o.,  
is offered for immediate sale at a fair price."

For a couple of months the normal commercial advertisements were continued, but, alas, no buyers appeared and at last the two proxy-holders C A Meyer and R H Leonhard were fired at the end of 1902. No other activities of the Kometwerke were mentioned, until the beginning of 1904, when the grounds and buildings at Angerstrasse 32, were sold to Th Mannborg, a famous harmonium-builder, who erected on that piece of land new premises to which his production was moved in July 1904.

With that last item the curtain falls over the Komet. And what about Bauer? After his being fired from his factory there is only one piece of information: He was granted a patent number 111970 dated October 17, 1899, for a device for shifting the spindle in a disc musical box. There is no evidence that this device was used in practice. Maybe he sold it to Mermod-Frères, but I don't know. Anyhow, there must have been some relations between the Kometwerke and Keller, the assigner of some Mermod patents: the "Gebrauchs muster 157356, 157357 and 160654 were taken over ca August 1, 1902, by Alfred Keller from Saint Croix.

Giant Komet (Spring 1898).

Automatons and musical boxes in any size and price.

Latest novelty.

Komet Giant Automaton no 600

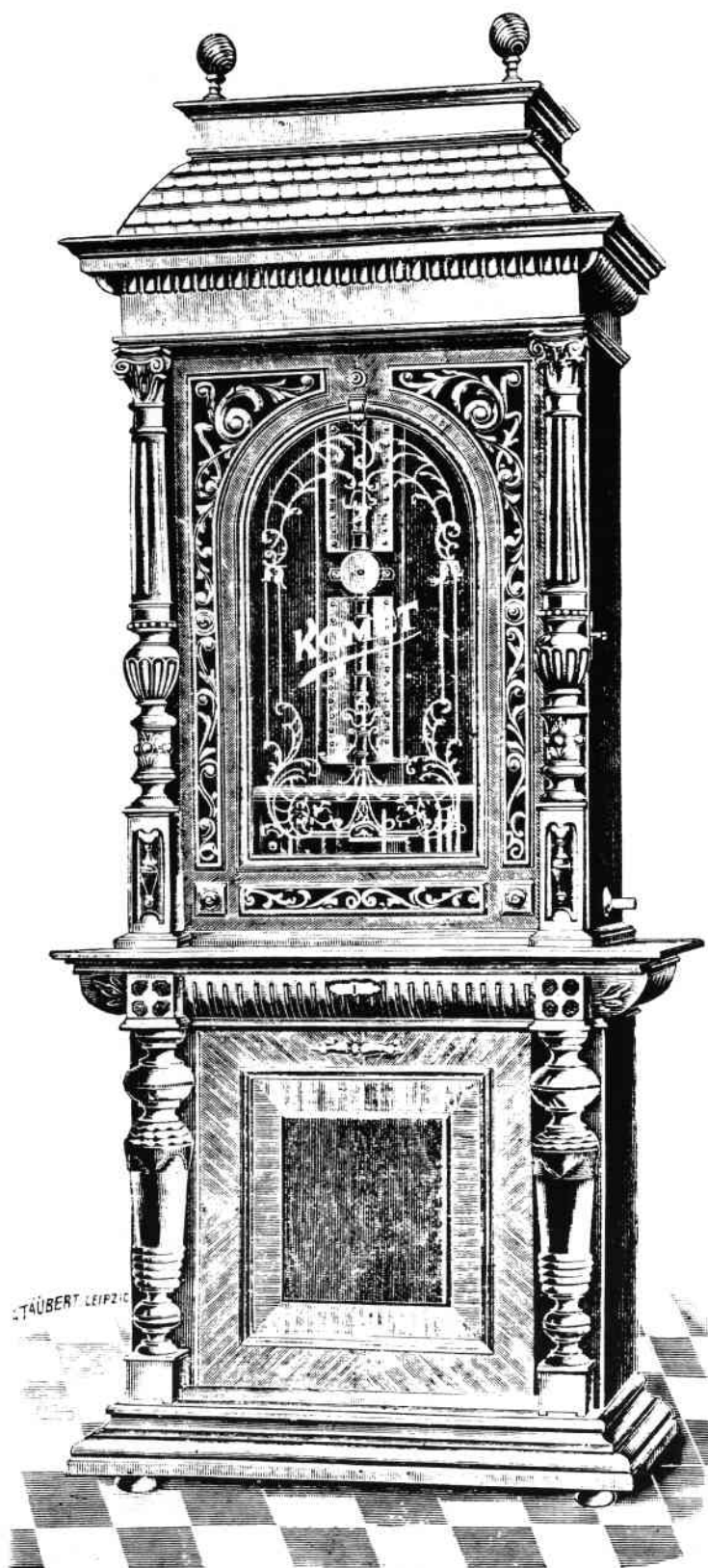
with over 600 teeth, using one disc.

So far unsurpassed in size and fullness of tone.

Suitable for small dances.

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# Komet- Musikwerke

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Angerstr. 32.

## Automaten und Spieldosen

in allen Grössen und Preislagen.

**Letzte Neuheit!!**

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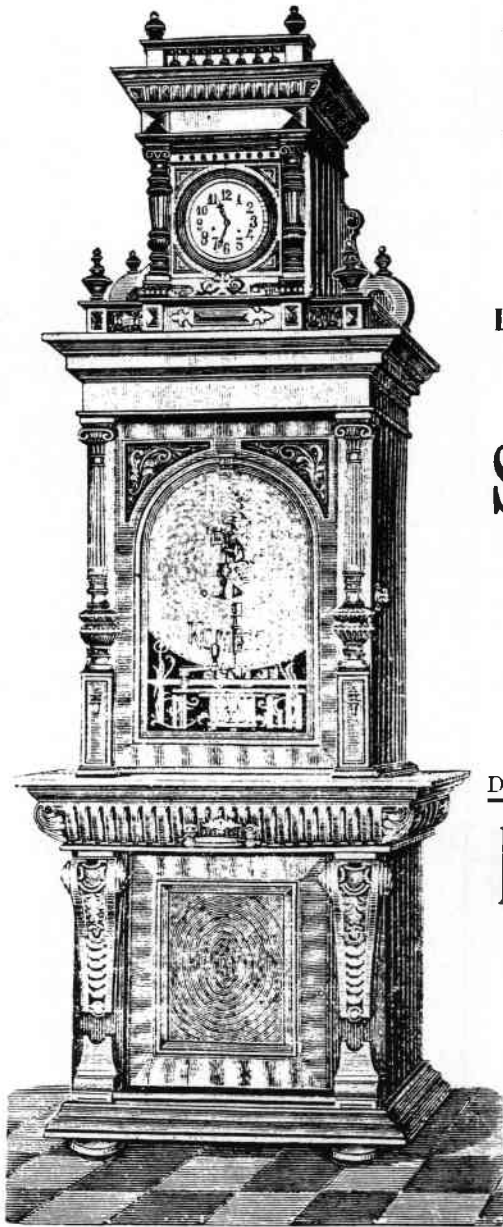
mit über 600 Tönen und einer Notenscheibe.

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# KOMET

## Musikwerke

Bauer & Co.,

Leipzig - Lindenau, Angerstr. 32.

—\*—  
*Fabrik von*

## Spieldosen u.

## Musikautomaten

*in jeder Grösse.*

*Ausgezeichnetes Musikarrangement.*

D.R.-Pat. Letzte Neuheit: D.R. Pat.

## Riesenautomat No. 600

mit über 600 Tönen spielend,  
mit 1 Notenblatt

—●—  
Solide Bedienung.

Direkte Bezugsquelle.

Komet clock (November 1, 1898).

Factory of musical boxes and automats in any size.

Excellent musical arrangement.

German patent. Last novelty. German patent.

Giant automaton no 600 with over 600 teeth playing on one disc.

Reliant service. Obtainable direct from factory.

# Who made the Komet?

ON page 26 there is a picture feature on the Komet disc-playing musical box. According to members Q David Bowers, the Komet was made by Weissbach & Company of Leipzig. An examination of Leipzig directories around the 1898-1900 period does indeed show up the fact that Kurt Weissbach was at work in that town repairing musical automata, but no other reference to the Komet has been found.

Recently, while searching through British patents for mechanical musical instruments, I was as ever pondering on the vast number of different names in the lists and the proliferation of ingenious music machines, and wondering if any of them ever made the market. Some names crop up time and time again so that one is inclined to accept the possibility at least that they were the work of men who worked for

companies who were actively engaged in producing instruments. The pervading sensation, during searches such as these, is that even now we know very little of the history of the instruments of mechanical music.

During this search, I discovered some patents for instruments playing projectionless music sheets using motion-assisted starwheels rather like the Ariophon described on page 258. One of these provided a clue to the Komet question.

British patent number 13,940, dated 22 July, 1895, was issued to Hans von Pöllnitz and Franz Louis Bauer of the firm of Komet Musikwerke, Pöllnitz & Bauer, described as manufacturers of Friedrichstrasse 4, Plagwitz-Leipzig.

This would seem to suggest that the Komet was the product of a firm



**Schutzmarke.**

based on Pöllnitz & Bauer. However, the name Pöllnitz & Bauer does not appear in the 1903 directory – nor does Komet Musikwerke. But there is a Louis Bauer listed at Lindenau, Hohestrasse 13. His business is described as having been established in 1899 as inventors and manufacturers of gramophones. Significantly (or just coincidentally?) Richter's phonograph was produced under the name Komet.

If anyone has access to other information, perhaps one of our German members, perhaps they would care to take the story a little further.

A O-H



The two pictures, left, show a fine example of the 33<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in (84.8 cm) Komet which plays on bells as well as combs (the mechanism is illustrated on page 45 of Vol 2). The box is the property of Klaus Pevler of Dortmund. Top: trade mark taken from a disc.



• Patents of Franz Louis Bauer

Date	Number	Short description
5- 8-1886	42553	Tightening an endless paperband.
16- 5-1888	47924	Plucking a tooth from a projectionless disc.
25-12-1888	48377	Plucking a starwheel from a dimple-like projection.
12-10-1888	48939	Improvement of patent 47924.
30- 4-1889	49797	Plucking a tooth from a projectionless disc.
7- 3-1891	60255	Plucking a tooth from a projectionless disc.
5- 6-1892	69851	Addition to 60255.
7- 3-1893	R7907	Plucking device for teeth with different strength of sound (application).
16- 3-1893	78431	Fabrication of discs with dimple-like projections.
1-11-1894	83740	Device for locking a disc during its playtime.
2- 3-1897	95132	Small starwheels for plucking teeth, coupled to a big one acting on the projections.
23- 2-1898	100649	Vibrating a tooth in two directions.
11- 9-1898	104586	Disc bin.
17-10-1899	111970	Disc-shifting system.
1- 5-1900	B26890	Starwheel-holder in the form of a damper (application, which was withdrawn).

“Gebrauchsmuster” of Franz Louis Bauer

(invention with insufficient qualities to be a patent).

1892	13013	Disc for a musical box.
1892	38711	Holder for a mechanism.
17- 9-1896	63659	Governor.
17- 9-1896	64324	Spring on the centre dome to hold the disc.
25-11-1896	67031	Holder for a mechanism, composed from single lamellae.
27-11-1896	67033	Damper device.
12- 3-1897	72346	Tooth with special level to take hold of the damper.
19- 1-1898	89021	Bevelled tooth.
28- 5-1898	96803	Starwheel plucking two teeth.
10- 9-1898	102533	Disc changer with motor at the top.
21- 2-1899	111966	Disc changer.
21- 2-1899	111968	Disc changer.
21- 2-1899	111969	Disc changer.
1- 6-1899	117503	Electrical coin mechanism.
30- 6-1899	119196	Coin mechanism.
30- 6-1899	119197	Silent winding device.
1- 7-1899	119200	Disc bin.
1- 7-1899	119201	Motor assembling.
6-11-1899	125757	Double disc machine.
6-11 1899	125758	Double disc machine.
29- 6-1901	157356	Escapement-device.
29- 6-1901	157357	Fastening of a screw-like escapement-device.
22- 8-1901	160654	Facilitate the taking-out of the centre dome.

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# MUSICAL BOX ODDMENTS 27

by H. A. V. Bulleid

## Franz von Suppé

Suppé's father was an Austrian civil servant and his mother Viennese. Born in Dalmatia in 1819, he studied law at Padua but turned to music in 1835. After a string of early successes he became Kapellmeister at a Vienna theatre from 1845 till 1862, composing many theatrical scores and becoming friendly with his distant relative, Donizetti. He worked for other theatres till 1882, his compositions including parody versions of Wagner and Meyerbeer operas. He is the earliest Viennese composer whose work is still popular. He was given the Freedom of the City of Vienna in 1881, and died there in 1895.

The best remembered and most popular of his many operettas and musical plays include....

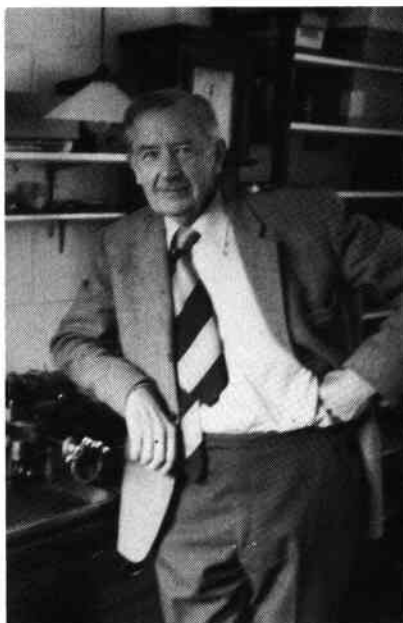
Morning, Noon and Night in Vienna	1844
Poet and Peasant	1846
Pique Dame (Queen of Spades)	1862
Die Schone Galathea	1865
Light Cavalry	1866
Boccaccio	1879
Das Modell	1895

There are many Suppé tunes on disc, including three from *Boccaccio* of which he once said "it was the greatest success of my life." Also, on Polyphon 1866 and 5625, there is the Coletta Waltz from *Das Modell* which I have not yet seen on a cylinder box tune sheet, though all the others appear from time to time, most commonly the *Light Cavalry* Overture.

## Cement

Melted cylinder cement goes through a plastic stage while cooling, during which it can be moulded to shape almost as easily as chewing gum. So the question naturally arises – at what temperature can the cement be relied upon to retain its rigidly solid state?

This is difficult to answer with the many different (and seemingly casual) cement mixtures that were used; but there is one indisputable fact, namely that this cement can and does flow, albeit very slowly indeed, at temperatures as low as 110°F = 44°C, and probably in some cases at even lower temperatures.



H.A.V. Bulleid.

Depending on the summer weather in the British Isles, these temperatures are met for a few days or a few weeks every year in most attics and in most south-facing windows and certainly in out-buildings. Therefore anyone leaving a cylinder musical box for longer than, say five years in such conditions should note that there is a very real danger of cement flowing. Even if the box is only sometimes placed in these hot spots it merely extends the time, because the effect is cumulative and is concentrated on account of the cylinder always being parked in the same rotational position.

In extreme cases the cement flows enough to foul the arbor and prevent tune changes; but usually, on looking into the cylinder, one sees a slight wave of cement the full length of the cylinder emerging from what should be a neat circle. The resulting out-of-balance can also be diagnosed with the cylinder assembly alone on the bedplate, because it will always come to rest with the heaviest part at the bottom – which is usually the normal end-of-tune position. With a 3 inch cylinder the out-of-balance effect can be quite dramatic.

By the time it has got near to fouling the arbor the cement may have sufficiently denuded some cylinder pins to cause a loss of sound quality while they are in play. Don't even think about what happens if the box suffers a run under these conditions.

A cylinder 13in by about 2in diameter rotated at about 350 revs per minute requires about fifteen minutes heating to re-distribute the cement, using a fish-tail burner on a small blow-lamp traversed slowly back and forth along the cylinder with the tips of the blue flames about an inch from the rotating surface. Then it must be left rotating for about a further thirty-five minutes to be sure the cement is fully set.

Have a chat with someone accustomed to re-pinning before doing it for the first time, because several precautions are necessary, particularly in setting up the job on a lathe and in subsequent cleaning of the arbor and cylinder. During the cooling run, air re-enters the cylinder and by the time it is cool this new air will have deposited moisture which will rust the arbor bearing surfaces if not thoroughly cleaned. How does the air get in? Between the arbor and the end cap bearing holes which are very far from being hermetic seals.

## More Forte Piano

The Forte Piano effect was first achieved from a single comb using long and short cylinder pins to give loud and soft volume from the same comb teeth. The pinning complications soon persuaded makers to use separate combs for the forte and the piano passages, and they must have debated whether to make the piano comb with weaker teeth and normal lift or with standard teeth and reduced lift, – the latter idea following the single comb arrangement.

It seems that the general decision, quickly taken, was for weaker teeth in the piano comb. In various movements I have measured, the range of relative stiffnesses of the forte and piano combs varies from the extreme of 3½ to 1 in Nicole boxes to 1¾ to 1 in a Langforff. But certainly a

number of movements were made with equal standard teeth in both combs, and such a one is Ducommun Girod serial no 22386.

### Ducommun Girod

This highly respected Geneva firm, operating from about 1828 until 1868, was involved in various combinations of partners which may possibly explain why their serial numbers defy reason. The numbers are known from 1000 to at least 30,000 and several 4-figure numbers have been noted on lever-wind movements. However, no 22386 is a key-wind model about 1850 or slightly earlier, in plain case with side-hook lid fastening, flap over control levers, and no glass lid. The serial number is written on the bottom of the case with "-/7/50" added which may mean July 1850. The latest operatic tune on the tune sheet, reproduced herewith, is from Donizetti's *Don Pascale*, first performed in Paris, 1843.

Various manufacturing details are shown in the six photographs reproduced herewith.

Occasionally one comes across a musical box with so many unusual features that it might be some sort of experiment or prototype or pilot model, as modern manufacturing jargon would describe it. I think Ducommun Girod 22386 comes into this category. It plays 12 airs 2-per-turn with a 12<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>in by 2in diameter cylinder and it has these three distinctly unusual features....

1. Slow-running cylinder taking 90 seconds per revolution and thereby giving nearly 45 seconds per tune.
2. Piano and forte comb teeth of equal stiffness.
3. Piano comb having only just over a quarter of the total number of comb teeth.

### Slow running

The overall gear ratio from cylinder to endless is 1 to 2040, obtained from 136 teeth in the great wheel and conventional 12-tooth and 10-tooth pinions in the governor but the first gear enlarged to 60 teeth. For the cylinder to take 90 seconds per revolution, which is necessary to play the tunes at correct tempo, the endless rotates at 1350 rpm which is at the low end of the practical range and involves the fan blades being at maximum extension. The cylinder surface speed is

just under 0".07 per second. (Details and some comparative speeds were given in the table on page 267 of *The Music Box* Vol 9 No 6). This low cylinder speed, which was not uncommon on very early movements, demands greater accuracy in pinning. The playing time is also extended in this case by reducing the gaps between tunes to 5mm – well under a quarter of an inch.

### Comparative tooth sizes

The teeth tune to *a* (440Hz) are numbers 32, 33 and 34 on the forte combe and 8 and 9 on the piano comb. Those on the forte comb are slightly longer, narrower and thicker than those on the piano, but the net result is that they are almost exactly equal in stiffness – the actual ratio, forte to piano, being 1.1 to 1.

To obtain the intended Forte Piano effect the piano comb is so set that the lift of the teeth is reduced.

### Comparative comb sizes

The forte comb has 89 teeth, the piano 33. This compares with the usual split of 82 and 40.

The cylinder has 7240 pins, 5144 forte and 2096 piano. The abnormally large number of pins for the cylinder size naturally follows from the large number of tunes crowded on it and made possible by the low surface speed. Though there are 2½ times as many forte as piano pins the ratio of comb teeth is even greater and in fact the forte comb averages 58 pins per tooth whereas the piano averages 63½.

### Performance

As might be expected from the above figures, this movement has distinctly more forte than piano; in fact the piano passages, which are well decorated, are numerous but comparatively brief on most tunes. In addition to the usual bass support from the forte comb, there are occasions when both combs operate together and I think it must have been noted that even at reduced lift the playing of a piano and a forte tooth together added unexpectedly full volume; this is the sublime harmonic effect coming into play. Possibly an arranger or a business rival spotted the effect! It could not be exploited where the music was scheduled for Forte Piano which effect depends mainly on the combs playing separately.

Ducommun Girod serial number 24042 has the same cylinder size and comb sizes and the same plain case as no 22386, but it plays its six airs at one-per-turn and it has a weakened Piano comb; so the style of no 22386 was apparently soon abandoned.

### Brass stringing

Quite a number of musical boxes have inlaid brass stringing, which was merely a posher version of the usual boxwood stringing. The brass was generally a bit less than 1mm wide and often considerably deeper than its width. Due to wood shrinking at right angles to its grain the brass stringing was often forced upwards at one of its chamfered ends and then, caught by idle finger or energetic duster, it became dislodged and sometimes lost. So, how to replace it...

The square section brass wire is readily obtainable (eg from Yorkwire Ltd of Leeds) but is seldom straight when delivered. Sometimes it can be straightened by gripping one end in a heavy vice and applying a strong pull. If this fails the brass should be softened by heating to dull red and quenching in water, and the pull applied again.

Then cut to length and chamfer the ends to match the mating pieces of stringing. Clean out the groove very carefully and in the usual case of it being too deep, pack uniformly till the new piece of stringing fits snugly and is just level with the surface of the surrounding veneer. Remove any grease from the brass by washing with detergent, and dry thoroughly.

Any modern clear general-purpose adhesive will serve if the new stringing will lie perfectly flat in its groove; but often this is hard to achieve, and with curved stringing even harder, so holding in place by hand is the only way and then the best adhesive to use is Araldite Rapid. With this adhesive it is very important to be sure the room temperature is at least 60°F = 16°C, and to mix small but equal quantities of the adhesive and the hardener, and to practice the skill of quickly laying, from pin point, a small amount of the mixed adhesive uniformly along the narrow groove. It only remains workable for just over five minutes. Then insert the piece of stringing, carefully press down till level throughout, remove surplus adhesive and hold steadily in

position: it only has to be held for another five minutes or so before the adhesive sets enough to hold it. You can check that it is sufficiently set by reference to the mixed adhesive left over.

#### A problem with glue

All work with adhesives presents the problem of how to hold it in position without sticking to it. The answer is now simple, – interpose pieces of the coated paper used as

backing for self-adhesive labels such as car park tickets. Easily available and absolutely free.

#### Through different eyes

The famous American dictionary, Websters, gives musical box as: “n, chiefly Brit: MUSIC BOX.” And a bit lower down it gives music box as mechanical, mainly clockwork, producer of music. Poets, however, are among those who do not take too much notice of the dictionary,

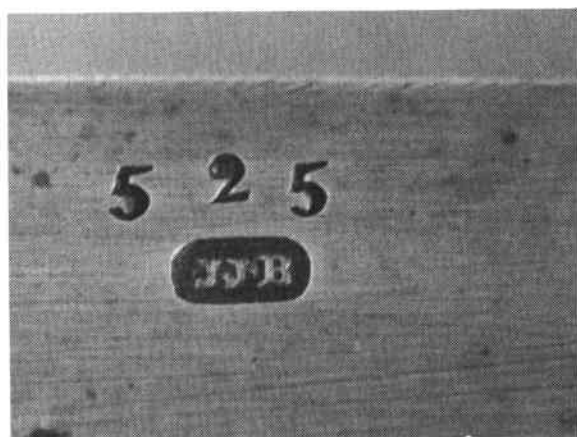
specially when there are problems of rhyme or metre. The simple three syllable word just would not fit so Robert Service took a liberty in *Dan McGrew*...

A bunch of the boys were whooping it up in the Malamute saloon;  
The kid that handles the music-box was hitting a jag-time tune...

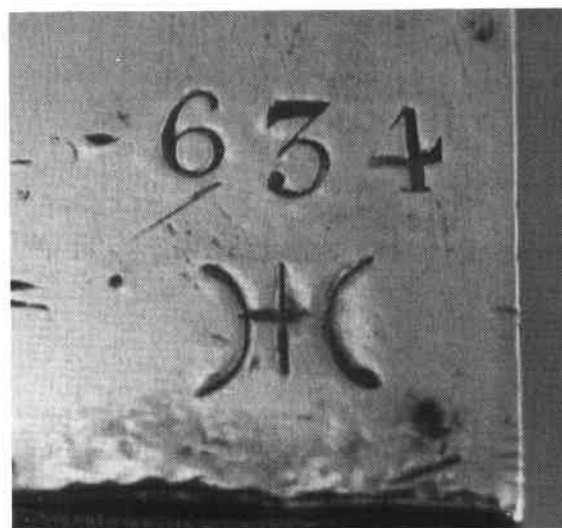
H.A.V.B.  
May, 1985.



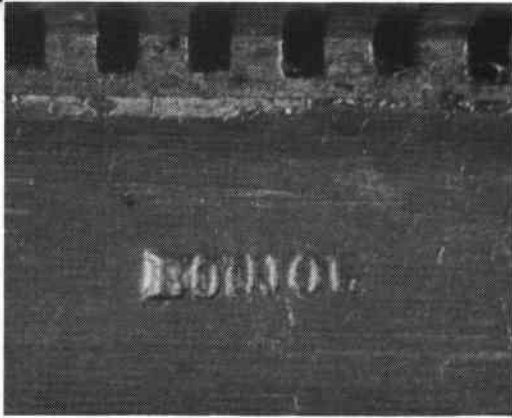
Tune sheet of Ducommun Girod no 22386. The twelve tunes include waltzes, galops, polka and the finale of a quadrille; also airs from two Auber and three Donizetti operas, the latest being *Don Pascale*, 1843.



No 525 and JJ.B stamped on bedplate of no 22386 under the forte comb.



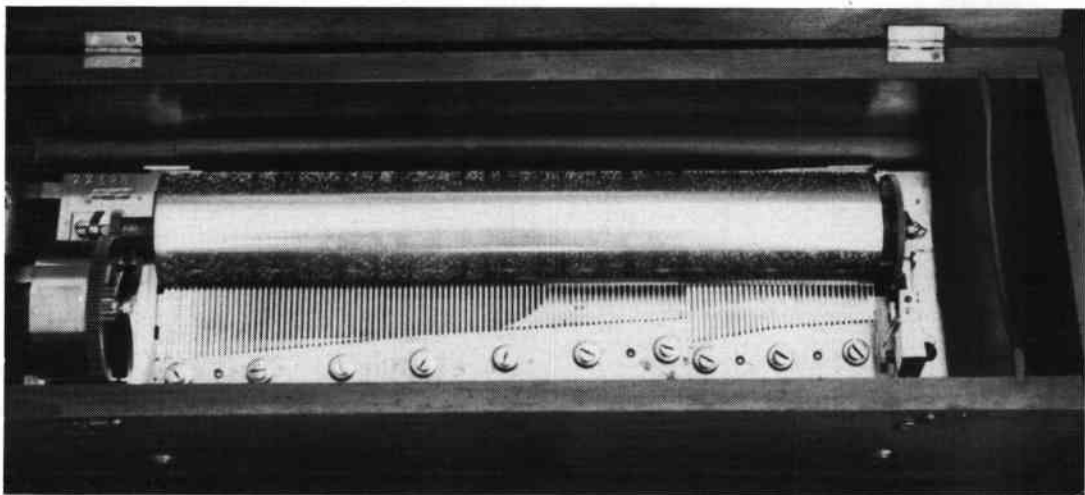
No 634 and a monogram – perhaps simply HC – stamped at the right front corner of 22386 bedplate.



Boujol of Geneva put his stamp on the two combs. This has also been noted on other Ducommun Girod movements.



Bass end of 22386 cylinder dismantled for re-pinning. Note small nicks filed on end cap to indicate where notches were needed to clear cylinder pins. Pinning was taken closer than usual to the edge of the cylinder.



Mechanism of no 22386 showing comparatively short piano comb.



Maker's name stamped twice on bedplate, once inverted. Quite a rarity.

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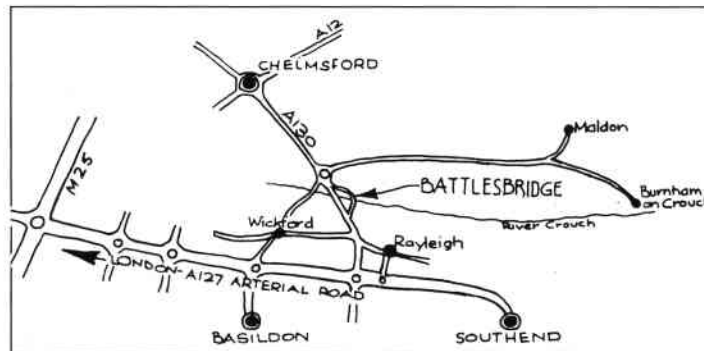
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# SETTING MUSIC FOR SMALL MECHANICAL ORGANS

by Kevin Byrne

THE increase in the number of small reproduction Street/Fair organs on the English and Continental Scene has meant that for some of us organ nuts, to buy and run a mechanical organ will not cost you an arm, leg and a mortgage on the house.

It will just cost you the arm.

Prinsen, Hofbauer and Raffin are leading the way on the continent, whereas Pell, Leach and Dean are synonymous with the small organ building industry in this country.

Organs come in all shapes and sizes from 21 to 45 keys.

For the purpose of this article, I shall be dealing with the Pell 27 scale and the standard scale of Leach and Dean.

I shall also be talking about the musical and stylistical approach of setting music, rather than the physical bonking out of holes in the card.

Before even attempting to set any music for any organ, it is important to study the Bass register and find out what notes you have at your disposal. It is in this area that the success of your endeavours will be determined, for the bass register is the foundation of all pieces of music.

The 27 note Pell scale has a five note bass section; F C G D A. Now, in order to make up a harmonic sequence of a simple "Oompah" or folk melody, we will need in the main, three bass notes for each harmonic key that the instrument will be playing in. While we are still at this early stage, it is just as well to find out how many three-bass harmonic structures we have at our disposal, as this will be a great help later on.

In any musical key, the three bass notes we require are as follows:- The key-note: (1st), the Sub-dominant: (4th), & Dominant: (5th degree of scale). In the key of C, it is thus, 1st - C, 4th - F & 5th - G.

On the Pell scale, we can get further combinations by using this



Kevin Byrne.

harmonic rule of three. For instance, the key of G is 1st - G, 4th - C, 5th - D. The key of D is 1st - D, 4th - G, 5th - A.

So we have three sets of Bass harmonic structures and if we look at the rest of the scale, we can get another one.

On the accompaniment, the notes are G A B C D E F F sharp.

Melody notes are G A A sharp B C C sharp D E F F sharp G A. The presence of the A sharp in the melody register of the scale together with D & F in the Bass, gives us another key for us to change to. The D, which is the 3rd note in the scale of A sharp, can act as a bass note for the missing A sharp in the bass. So by applying the Harmonic rule of three to the key of F, we have the following:- 1st - F, D acting in place of the missing A sharp as the 4th, and 5th - C.

It is not a very happy set up, but in fact, it works very well.

Let us put some of this theory into practice, by studying the harmonic structure of *Tiger Rag*.

There are four key-changes in this tune, so it should prove to be an interesting exercise to see if my theory holds water. We start off in the key of D. (1st - D, 4th - G, 5th - A, in the Bass). There is then a brief skirmish into the key of A, and here it seems that the theory comes well and truly unstuck, or so it seems.

But applying the rule of three for the key of A, we have 1st - A, 4th - D, 5th - E. No E in the bass, never mind, rob the accompaniment E and make him into bass E to complete the Harmonic structure and "Hey-presto" we have our three bass notes needed.

To help us out of this awkward tangle, it is a decided advantage to have some percussion handy as the careful use of bass and snare drums will cover one's retreat & disguise the lack of bass notes. Percussion used sparingly on a small organ will sound effective and enhance the overall effect that the instrument is trying to create. Whereas if it is used in lengthy passages, as it is often done on most books of small organ music, exactly the opposite effect is created. More about percussion later on.

Anyway, having got in and out of this harmonic tangle, we head back to the key of D and make our way to the key of G (1st - G, 4th - C, 5th - D) & just for luck, we can chuck in the bass note A.

Our final key change sees us in the key of C. 1st - C, 4th - F, 5th - G. But, this section plays a harmonic trick on us which means that we have to use all the bass notes at our disposal.

The final 8 bars of the piece has a quick chord progression as follows:- 2 bars/chord F. 1 bar/chord C, 1 bar/chord A, 1 bar/chord D, 1 bar/chord G, half bar/chord C, half bar/chord G, 1 bar/chord C. As you can see, the Pell scale can cope quite easily with this harmonic assault and get away with it, because the scale is so flexible in relation to the number of notes it possesses. If you stick to this rule of three harmonic structure in the bass, your music will sound fine, even if you have to rob the accompaniment register to find your bass notes.

If we not turn to the 31 note scale, the bass department has a disposition of three bass notes. G C D. So, when we apply the rule of three har-

monic sequence here, we only get one key. That of G. But if we look at the accompaniment register of the scale, salvation is at hand.

Accompaniment is: G A B C D E F F sharp.

The important note is the A, as it can act as the missing bass note for the key of D. (1st – D, 4th – G, 5th – A). And, as we saw in the case of the key of A sharp in the Pell scale, we can bend the rules a bit and make this same A come to the rescue in the key of C.

So to summarise the situation, we have:- The key of G. 1st – G, 4th – C, 5th – D. The key of D. 1st – D, 4th – G, 5th – A accomp. and the key of C. 1st – C, 4th – A accomp. in place of missing F bass, 5th – G. Remember that A is the 3rd degree of the scale of F.

A word of warning here, some noteurs use the A, for the bass and accompaniment on consecutive beats. This to my mind, gives the game away and shows that the organ lacks sufficient bass. There are enough notes in the accompaniment register to carry the chord without the A being repeated. So, your card should look like this:-

3/4 time	BEAT	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3
	BASS	A	A	A
	ACC.	C C	C C	C C
		F F	F F	F F

NOT like this:-

3/4 time	BEAT	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3
	BASS	A A A	A A A	A A A
	ACC.	C C	C C	C C
		F F	F F	F F

The repetition of the third in any harmonic language is not good for you.

I felt that the most comfortable key to write in is the key of G for the more complicated tunes, and the key of C for the simpler melodies.

## Repertoire

Bearing in mind all that we have discussed so far, it is no good setting out on some piece like *Jealousy* which requires an organ to be fully chromatic. You will not get away with it as there will not be enough notes.

The Continental noteurs seem to have an endless stock of folk and traditional tunes to draw on and these, the English noteurs and builders are quite happy to copy. If only the English would look

further than the end of their noses, because there is a wealth of Traditional English music begging to be put down onto English mechanical organs. For example, *The Jenny Lind Polka*, *The Hick's Barrel Piano Suite*, (jigs, Reels, polkas etc) and much more.

I have not yet heard *Scotch on the Rocks* on any mechanical organ, absolutely tailor-made for these small instruments. Handel, Mozart, Haydn and Verdi have all been successfully transcribed on to my Pell organ. And perhaps the most amazing coincidence happened when I was transcribing the *Susato* suite. The second movement went down onto the card without hardly an alteration at all. This is even more interesting when you realize that Tylman Susato was a Belgian composer in the 16th Century (This is material enough for an article in its own right).

I know that people like to hear the old favourites like *Robert E Lee*, *Teddy Bear's Picnic* and *Old Kent Road*, but a great deal of these tunes contain certain passages that can do nasty things to these organs. Take *Blue Moon* for instance, a nice innocuous tune from the 20's. That is until you arrive at the middle 8 bars. Here, it shoots off the harmonic register and leaves the small organ stranded for notes.

Even if you were to arrange the tune in the instrument's most comfortable key, which for argument's sake we will call G, this particular section has a C minor Chord and an A sharp Chord. The 31 scale does not possess the wherewithall for either chords and the Pell can just manage the A sharp chord. The only answer is to completely re-write the middle 8 so that it will fit the scale.

Here are some excellent tunes for both 27 and 31 scales.

*Chopstix*, *Shepherd's Hey*, *Portsmouth Clog Dance*, *Hick's Barrel Piano suite*, *Jenny Lind Polka*, *Scotch on the Rocks*, *Christian Soldiers March*, *Dulce Jubilo Jig*, *Barcarolle*, *Donkey Serenade*, *Whistling Rufus*, *Cooper's Arms March Past*, Morris dances of all descriptions, The Yetties song-book to name but a few.

19th century opera and operetta melodies tend to lead you into some severe difficulties, as do early 20th century popular and ragtime tunes.

You must be wary of these, if in doubt as to the organ's capability to give a good rendition, then don't set the tune. But if you still wish to go ahead, then be prepared to do some re-writing if you want to make a decent job of the tune.

## Style

We are still familiar with the established continental styles of noting, which gives the mechanical Organ it's jaunty and carefree air. But there is always room for new ideas, or even not so new ideas as the case may be. Here are a few of my own. There is the Busy style, with melody, two countermelodies, accompaniment and bass all blasting away; very useful in the louder part of marches as it can make the instrument sound bigger than it really is. Beware of over-loading the reservoir, because this is apt to happen on a small organ if you have attacked the card with a machine gun.

Waltz tunes which can sound so dull with their steam organ "Oom pah pah" accompaniment, can be souped up in either of the following ways.

Crotchet 1st beat as usual, the 2nd and 3rd beats, (normally Crotchet beats as well), can be split up into quavers instead.

Better still, is to have the accompaniment pipes in arpeggios (broken Chords). But best of all is to have a combination of all three styles.

You start off with your old-fashioned steam organ "Oompah" sound, carry this on for Eight or Sixteen Bars, then you can switch over to arpeggios accompaniment for a further 8 or 16 bars and then on to Quaver chords, the permutations are endless.

Another of my wheezes, is to indulge in some two-part counterpoint. J S Bach did it, so why not us Organgrinders.

My method is to simply state the melody and then weave a running accompaniment around it and the bass can go and hang itself. This method can be turned upside down by changing the melody to the accompaniment pipes and the melody pipes can do the weaving. Add a splash of percussion to taste, and we have yet another interesting style of music setting. I find this very useful when one has a tune with a

short and simple harmonic structure and the same piece needs to be played 3 times in order to make a respectable length of tune. *Christian Soldiers March* is a classic example of where this counterpoint can be very effective.

Percussion has a great deal to do with the style of organ setting and before I go any further, let me get on my pet hobby-horse, as I have the thing about percussion. Most percussion on mechanical organs, large or small, do not flatter the noteur or the instrument. The snare drum nearly always sounds like a soggy suet pudding, cymbals are just another name for a dustbin lid, bass drums are normally alright, as are triangles and castanets on larger organs.

But by far the worst thing to my mind, is the employment of tambourine and castanets on small organs instead of drums. If the organ is not powerful enough to cope with drums, then don't have them on at all. The sound of what could be a nice organ is spoiled by the incessant chatter of false teeth, "Oops Castanets", and the boinging of the Salvation Army tambourine.

For the small organ, an old 14" diameter snare drum with the snares removed and the skins loosened, coupled with an 8" splash cymbal will do very well as your bass drum and cymbal.

For your side drum, £35 will get you a very neat 12" diameter side drum that should sound better than any castanets, what is more, it would be easier to control.

So once you have your percussion department set up, don't flog it to death, use it as an instrument which after all, that's what it is. Let it have the odd solo. If it is set up properly, there is no need to be worried about its performance.

How about starting off your marches with two 3-pace rolls, most Army bands do, the Brigade of Guards use a 5-pace roll and the old band of the 10th Royal Hussars used a 7-pace roll. Variety is the spice of life they say.

I wonder how many organ owners have *Our Director March* in their libraries? quite a few I think, but I wonder how many have *Our Director* with the drum solo in the middle as

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printed by Boosey & Hawkes. I know mine does, and so does La Cascade of Dr Oram. There are others I know, but not many.

How's about a drum break of four bars at the end of *Tiger Rag*, to be followed by the last four bars of the piece again. No self-respecting jazz band would not attempt at least one drum solo during a jazz concert.

About the only time we have a drum solo on any mechanical organ, is at the end of an overture, polka or whatever, where they mark in a big drum roll:- **BIG DEAL**.

No folks, the mechanical organ world do not know how to use drums properly and are only just beginning to wake up to their great potential.

The Dutch at the Kunkels Klub are leading the percussion renaissance with their beautiful crisp

standard drumming, but if you ask them to put on *Bach goes to town* on a large Mortier they have in the collection, then you will see why I have been so vitriolic about percussion. Their percussion writing on this book was absolutely exquisite.

I hope this screed has stirred up a few people and if anybody would like to discuss any of the points raised in this article, my name, address and telephone number are printed below.

So you can fire some brick-bats at me if you so desire, meanwhile, a happy bonking season to you all.

Kevin Byrne,  
44 High Street,  
Pewsey,  
Wilts. SN9 5AN.  
Tel: 0672 63417.

© K. Byrne, July '85.

# BERLIN INTERNATIONAL DREHORGEL FESTIVAL 1984

by "The Happy Wanderer" (Leslie Brown)

Thursday,

Welcomed on arrival by Christa Mademann and Kurt Niemuth (The Organisers) at the Magnificent Europa Centre, and installed in the superb Berlina-Penta Hotel right in the City Centre, most of which had been reserved for the visiting Organ Grinders (at special rates) and then on in the evening to the official opening at 8 pm in the Charlottenburg Rathauskeller (Town Hall Crypt) as guests of the Lord Mayor to a splendid supper with excellent entertainment by some of the Organs accompanied by Folk Singers in traditional costumes.

Many well known Organ Grinders and Makers were there from all over the Continent and I was delighted to meet again Josef Raffin (who made my "Golden Wanderer" Organ) and many other friends from Switzerland, Denmark, Belgium and Holland.

Friday Morning,

Among the many large and small Organs playing in the Kurfurstendamm (Berlin's Main Road) were Peter Schuchknecht's Ruth, and Carl Frei "De Hagannar" and further down there were "Bruder" and "Limonaire" Organs among the "Bacigalupos" Raffins & "Hofbauers".

Friday Afternoon,

A long bus tour to see the sights of West Berlin (and a look over the East Berlin Wall!)

Friday Evening,

We all gathered at the Penta Hotel, with an impromptu Organ concert outside! and were then whisked off in double-decker buses (Organs on both decks!) to another reception at the magnificent Axel Springer building on the 18th floor (which overlooks the East Berlin Wall and No Man's Land) an excellent buffet supper was provided, followed by a musical journey (with the Organs) back to the Penta Hotel.

Saturday Morning,

Grand Parade of all the Organs (well over 100 of them) with all the Organ Grinders in Costume, together with many Veteran Cars

and Buses right along the Kurfurstendamm right through the City Centre (all other traffic was stopped) to the Europa Centre, where the Organs played among the Trees and Fountains.

Lunch vouchers were supplied to all the Organ Grinders which were available in almost any Restaurant around, and much free beer in souvenir Tankards was dispensed!

Saturday Evening,

We gathered again at the Penta Hotel (another impromptu pavement concert) and the Buses collected us for a mystery trip to one of Berlin's Lakes, a short Boat trip taking us to an Island in the centre of the Lake for a Musical Barbecue Supper, and another Musical Moonlight journey back at Midnight to the Penta.

Sunday Morning,

A lovely day with most of the Organs playing along the Kurfurstendamm and around the Europa Centre until late afternoon.

Sunday Evening,

Impromptu gathering of the remaining Organ Grinders, arranged by Christa Mademann, we all marched (with Organs!) from the Penta, back to the Europa Square and had a lively Concert, assisted by Christa and friends singing to the Organs and then we marched off playing the Organs right down the Kurfurstendamm and through some of the Berlin Arcades to a small pavement Cafe for an Organ Grinders late supper.

Back at 1 am, (Berlin still very lively at that hour!) up the Kurfurstendamm everybody very happy, and smiles from everyone we passed on the way back!

Monday Morning,

Most of the Organ Grinders left early, but Christa Mademann invited the few remaining, firstly to a little Barbecue among a collection of Old Berlin Street Furniture, and then to her delightful home on the outskirts of Berlin, for a farewell supper on the balcony overlooking a small Forest.

Many thanks for the wonderful atmosphere and kindness to a lone English Organ Grinder, and the superb organisation of Christa Mademann and Kurt Niemuth and to the Lord Mayor and Axel Springer for the lovely receptions.

Leslie Brown.

*(I am a little late in publishing this, but it is still most interesting. Ed.).*

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# TO CLEAN A CYLINDER MUSICAL BOX

by Keith Harding

(Assuming that it is a common type in good playing order).

1. **LOOK BEFORE**  
Ensure that the cylinder is between tunes.  
Let down the main-spring nearly to the stop.  
Remove the movement from the case.
2. **DISMANTLING**  
Strip the movement to assemblies.
  - (a) Take off the comb.
  - (b) Remove the female stop-work (Geneva-stop) and let down the main-spring completely.  
Take off the main-spring with bridges.
  - (c) Remove the tune change lever.
  - (d) Take off the governor.  
  
BEWARE: the endless screw is brittle!
  - (e) Lift off the cylinder, prising up the two end bearing brackets.
3.
  - (a) **IRON BEDPLATE.** Strip, clean and re-paint.
  - (b) **BRASS BEDPLATE.** Clean and polish.  
  
Clean out all holes.
4. **SCREWS**  
Smooth and polish all screws. Keep them identified.
5. **MAIN-SPRING ASSEMBLY**
  - (a) Take apart the assembly. Knock off spring barrel cover. Soak the spring barrel with the main-spring in place in paraffin for a few hours. Drain off the spring and rinse in white spirit.
  - (b) Clean and polish all other assembly parts. Use clock cleaner solution.
  - (c) Dry the spring. Polish the spring barrel, peg out the bearing hole and the one in the spring cap. Refit the arbor. Lubricate the spring with two parts graphited grease and one part turret clock oil. Press on the barrel cap.
  - (d) Re-assemble clicks and springs.
  - (e) Put into the arbor the left-hand bridge, ratchet wheel, handle and washer, knock in taper pin. Fit the male stop knock in its taper pin.
  - (f) Re-fit assembly to bedplate.
6. **CYLINDER**
  - (a) Take out the arbor. Polish the cylinder. Finish with plate powder. Peg out the end holes.
  - (b) Strip the arbor of drive pin and tune-change star, clean and polish each part.
  - (c) Oil sliding parts of arbor and back of tune-change star re-assemble the arbor and fit to the cylinder.
  - (d) Clean bearing brackets pegging out bearing holes and refit the cylinder to the bedplate. Turn to see it's free.
7. **GOVERNOR ASSEMBLY**  
  
BEWARE! Endless screws are brittle!
  - (a) Dismantle to components. Mark the potence setting.
  - (b) Clean all parts in clock cleaner. Peg out pinions and holes.
  - (c) Polish the endless screw with chrome cleaner (Autosol Solvol). Check the top pivot for a polish dome. Re-place the jewel if needed.
  - (d) Assemble the governor, oil the jewelled hole whilst accessible. Line up the potence precisely. Lubricate all pivots and the endless screw.  
Try the governor with thumb pressure, adjust the depthing only if you have to. Look to see that the endless is safely depthed in the second wheel. Fit the assembly to the bedplate.
8. **TUNE CHANGE LEVER**  
Polish this and screw it to the bedplate. The shouldered screw should butt onto the bedplate, tighten without straining the small thread.
9. **LOOK AFTER**  
Check that all fixing screws are home and parts mating to the bedplate. Run the movement to see that all is well. Carry out pin straightening.
10. **THE COMB**  
  
BEWARE! Comb teeth are brittle, tooth tips are very thin, dampers are easily destroyed.
  - (a) Scrape off rust.
  - (b) Clean with brass brush and paraffin.
  - (c) Clean between leads with card.
  - (d) Do nothing to take metal from the teeth, the treble notes are quickly put out of tune. Polish the top of the comb with chrome cleaner.
  - (e) Fit the comb, screwing-down from the centre outwards. If there is a cone-screw do it up after screwing down the comb and finally tighten the comb screws.
11. **LISTEN**  
Play the movement and oil the pins.
12. **FINAL**  
Fit the movement in the case ensuring that nothing is loose or rattles. Bedplate wedges are often used, unless these are replaced the movement fixing screws will distort the box when tightened.

## GENERAL

**EXAMINE** each part for troublesome defects whilst the movement is dismantled.

**MACHINERY** if available can be a great help but buffing machines can ruin finely made parts.

**EMERY STICKS** are good for refinishing small flat surfaces.

**GLASS FIBRE BRUSHES** are good for taking black spots out of brass.

**OIL.** Use not too much but just enough to be held by capillary action and surface tension in the oil sinks.

**ABRASIVES** must be kept out of machinery, meticulously remove every trace of emery, metal polish and chrome cleaner etc before assembling any part.

**CLOCK CLEANER (HOROLENE).** Dilute one part of the concentrate in seven parts of water, ventilate the room!

Immerse all parts completely, brush them to obtain a good finish.

Soak for several minutes up to an hour depending on condition.

Soak after in clean hot water. Dry parts one at a time quickly. Avoid touching clean brass.

**BEARINGS.** Clean out bearings with pegwood. Look through them to see that they are shiny and clear.

**PITH** is useful for running governor wheels on to clean them.

**SOFT WOOD** can be used to polish large brass wheels.

Emery sticks.  
Little scrapers.  
Brass wire brush.  
Graphited grease.  
Glass fibre brushes.  
Plate powder (Goddards).  
Rust remover (Naval Formula X300).  
White spirit.  
Methylated spirit.  
Binding wire.  
Polishing paper – crocus grade.



Fred says she can have her job back if she wants it....

but not if she hasn't paid her subs!

## THE TOOLS FOR THE JOB

A good light.  
A good work bench.  
A range of screwdrivers – a little thinner than the average.  
Wire brush (stiff, steel).  
Paint stripper.  
Detergent.  
Hot water and a sink.  
Metal Polish (Brasso).  
Gold Paint (Sovereign Gold).  
Polythene bowl with lid.  
Paraffin pan.  
Rags.  
Tissues.  
A fine file or two (Stubbs cut 4 & 6).  
Clock cleaner (Horolene).  
Peg-wood.  
Wooden support blocks.  
Hammers.  
Punches.  
Pliers various.  
Clock oil and turret clock oil.  
Hypodermic needles.  
Pith.  
Chrome cleaner (Autosol Solvol).

## WHY NOT JOIN US?

The world of mechanical music contains a wealth of fascinating details for the collector, whether his interest be primarily musical or mechanical. To be able to repair a damaged musical box, it is true, you need to be something of a musician as well as an engineer, but many people who are neither gain immense pleasure from these fine examples of nineteenth-century craftsmanship. On the other hand, many amateurs have found that, given plenty of patience, the restoration of a pneumatic instrument such as a player piano or a player organ is by no means beyond their capability. By joining the MBSGB you will be able to make contact with specialists, both professional and amateur, who will offer help and advice on any particular problems in mechanical music. The annual subscription is £8 plus £1 joining fee (\$17 plus \$2.50 USA; \$20 plus \$3 Canadian). If overseas members would like all communications sent by airmail, US members should send \$34 plus the \$2.50 joining fee, and Canadian members \$41 plus \$3 joining fee. Far Eastern members can have airmail for £16 plus £1 joining fee. If you would like to join the Society, please complete the application form on page 81. You will not be disappointed.

# A STECK PIANOLA

by R. Booty

MOST player pianos tended to be of a standard design and varied little from a norm. Internally the Steck Pianola pictured here is like any other late Aeolian but externally it shows itself to be just a little different in style. It is now some years since I saw and photographed this player, but I recall clearly the date 1936 in transfer on the iron frame, prefixed by, if my memory and a magnifying glass serve me right, "Registered Design in Great Britain."

With rounded and stepped case ends it reminded me of the architecture and fittings of an Odeon cinema. It was bright sounding with a responsive unrestored pneumatic action and very heavy, more so it seemed than most players.

There was however what appeared to be a design fault which prevented the lid from staying open of its own accord. To be able to play safely by hand without the risk of crushed fingers, you had to ensure the music stand was down and in front of the upright lid. Likewise, playing along with the rolls also presented a problem. With the lid up the bottom part of the spoolbox was obscured and on top of that you must not forget that to keep the lid up the music stand had to be down, thereby effectively imprisoning the roll once it was in the spoolbox. A most unusual piece of designing!

1936 is a very late date for this possibly English made Aeolian so I wonder how many of this style would have been manufactured. Although I have not seen another, I am assured by player fans that others do exist. Perhaps a relatively high percentage of those made have managed to survive because, in player piano terms, they are quite recent.

## Roll lists

Until I purchased Reg Manders *Meloto Dance Roll Catalogue* at the Brentford Music Museum, I had not put much thought to the date on the Artistyle music roll list shown here. Contact with Mr Manders and resulting queries to him, produced the answer that October 1941 was very late for a roll list issue. Lack of materials, mainly paper, caused a cessation of roll production until about 1946 or '47 when Universal Music Rolls became available. They were made by *The Music Roll Manufacturing Co Ltd* at Hayes, Middlesex, successors to the *Universal Music Co Ltd*, who had made Regent and Artistyle rolls. But business was not to be had after the war and with continued paper shortage the Hayes works closed. On closure the late Gordon Iles, who had worked with Aeolian, obtained two of the perforating machines and set up Artona Music Rolls at Ramsgate.

By 1954 roll production was obviously proceeding well as Spring, Summer, and Autumn catalogues, all containing new roll issues, were released plus a shorter Christmas list. Artona were at that time the sole British roll producers, charging 7/6 per roll, a price which was to remain static until at least 1960. The Spring 1955 list records nearly 500 titles.



1936 Steck Pianola.

With the list was a letter from the Music Roll Section of R Smith & Co Ltd. Smith was at 210 Strand from 1908-1976. Previous to this the company was at 188 Strand from 1901, in which year alone we have a full name, *Richard Smith & Co*. During the entire period they were music publishers. A further note, dated 1955, has the address, R Smith & Co Ltd, The Warehouse, 67 Station Road, Hayes, Middlesex. The last part of this address has been blanked out and 24 West Cliff Road, Ramsgate, substituted. In an obituary for Gordon Iles on p265 of Vol 1 of *Music & Automata*, Arthur Ord-Hume states that Iles formed a business in partnership with Reuben Sloman. Sloman's initials, the same initials in R Smith & Co, and the knowledge that it is not unknown for a Jewish name to be anglicised for business purposes, led me to make enquiries. It turned out that Sloman would quite likely be altered to Smith. So maybe there is a connection, has anyone more definite information?

Gordon Iles remained at work until his retirement a few years ago. One of the ex-Artona perforators is now hard at work again, producing Ambassador Music Rolls at Slough for the *Autoplayer Piano Company*. The main difference between now and 30 odd years ago though, is that these perforators now no longer are the sole producers of rolls in Great Britain, the rise in interest in players has prompted the building of at least three new operational roll machines.

My thanks to Reg Manders for his knowledgeable help.

© R. Booty, 1985.

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## OBITUARY

### Heinrich Brechbühl

ON JULY 6 – only 12 days before the opening of the 3rd Organ Festival of Thun – our friend and member **Heinrich Brechbühl** passed away.

Right in the middle of his many activities, during a discussion, he was struck by a heart attack. It came as a shock to all of us who knew him, and there are a great many. H B was known all over the world by enthusiasts of mechanical music instruments. As a very alert and active collector he acquired one of the largest and most interesting collections on the continent. His name was well known and his advice was sought of in many societies and museums in this field. He also was asked to participate in restoring the clockwork mechanism in the famous Clock Tower of Berne, Switzerland.

Heinrich was born Sept 2, 1930 near Zollbrück in the well known Swiss region of the Emmental. He was the youngest of four children, his father was a blacksmith. Still a child, he lost his father, who had an accident in the mountains. After his 9 years of school in Zollbrueck, he spent one year in the French-speaking part of Switzerland to learn the language. After an apprenticeship in Berne as a mechanic of electrical apparatus like telephones etc he found a job designing and installing alarm systems. He spent some time in Ghana, West Africa, doing competent work in this field.

Then, back in Switzerland, he had his own workshop in the town of Steffisburg, near Thun. At this time he was 29 years old. He got married, and he and his wife had a son and, 18 years later, a daughter.

He business grew rapidly and the workshop had soon to be enlarged. In 1968 a factory hall was acquired and the enterprise grew to have a fairly good size output in electronic apparatus and plastic moulds.

In 1980 H B had to face earnest problems with his health. He retired from the firm he had founded and devoted most of his time to his hobby. Since the early days of his life



Heinrich Brechbühl.

Picture taken at Thun Festival, 1983.

he liked and admired handycrafts, especially clockwork and mechanical gadgets of a past time, like musical boxes, singing birds street organs and the like. He studied all the literature available about these items and got to be quite a well-known authority. He was the initiator of the first International Organ Festival in Thun which was, in spite of the rain, a big success. The second one, in 1983, had grown to a real monster festival and now, in 1985 it is the will of his family and all the organisers, that the third Thun festival will take place. Knowing Heinrich, it is certain that he would say: "Never mind, get going". But something will be amiss. All those of us, devoted to mechanical music will not forget him.

Thanks to H B a great many more people became attentive to those precious things of the past, and many an instrument was saved from decay and destruction by him or through his good influence.

Our warmest condolence to his family and a salute to our friend who passed away far too soon.

Henry Waelti.

#### DO YOU WANT TO KNOW YOUR MEMBERSHIP NUMBER?

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The second two numbers give your year of joining.

The third set, of four numbers, is the month and year the address plate was made up or amended.

Ted Brown.

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## Letters to the Editor

To Reg Waylett.

Dear Reg,

We have all heard of the stacked comb, and perhaps you have seen one of these scarce items – but – have you ever seen a stacked cylinder? I found this instrument recently at my clockmaker's house. It is quite modern, circa 1960, and is of Japanese origin. I enclose a photograph.

The instrument drives (with friction) the big black wheel, but that is not the most interesting point. The comb has 31 separate teeth held together by a bar, which you can see on the picture. The cylinder consists of brass wheels separated by smaller wheels. Sometimes each brass wheel is separate, sometimes two of them are linked.

There are two airs on the cylinder, both being German songs. The governor (you cannot see it on the picture) is normal, except that it is at the right hand end of the instrument.

The drive mechanism consists of two cylinders. The upper one houses the spring, and the lower is empty and only a bar is run through it. When pushing this you release the air brake, and the instrument is set in motion. After one complete revolution of the spring the instrument stops, but by then both tunes have been played six times!

And now another snippet for you to consider sending to Bob Leach for the journal.

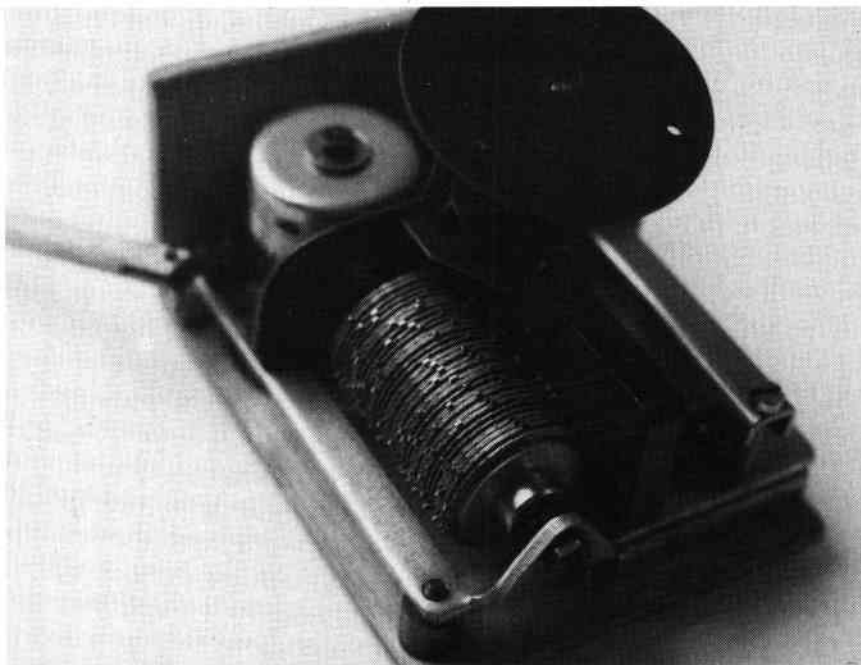
It refers to the Komet article published recently.

The other day I secured a picture from a German magazine the original trade mark of the Komet and I send you this "Schutz-Marke" illustration.

Yours sincerely,

Drs L Goldhoorn

Vergiliuslaan 10  
3584 AM Utrecht.



We can refer to **Gerry Planus** as the senior living member of our Society because he was the original Vice-President of the MBSGB, the late **John Clark** being the President. This inaugural meeting took place at the Mandeville Hotel, London W1, on December 1st 1962, at the invitation of the late **Cyril de Vere Green**. So, anything our Father-figure writes should be taken seriously, but, how can one take his extremely funny letters seriously?

**Keith Harding** has referred to the part he, Keith, played (a little later on) in putting the journal together as "fun" and our present Vice-President, **Stephen Ryder**, of America, has written in our journal that the approach to our hobby of studying mechanical music should contain a high degree of fun.

With these points in mind, for better or worse, I dare to publish extracts from the venerable Gerry's letters.

"Mr R Leach (May 8, 1985)

Mr R Leach (there is a broadcaster, TV Announcer, celebrity with the name of Leach. He is beautiful, handsome debonair bloke wot does a programme about rich and famous people, and gotta brain with it, is he a chip off the ole block?).

I just received *The Music Box* magazine for May 1st 1985, just as I was gonna put a full page advert in on behalf of my protegee/apprentice, **Dario Valenzuela**. He is an Inca from Peru who has been working and learning (poor chap) with me for the last seven years. I accused him of sacrificing virgins to his Gods on top of pyramids but, as usual, he blamed the Mexicans. Anyway, I sent the advert in regardless.

I'm writing a book which covers a period of six years. I got as far as 85,000 words and a mate of mine who is a publisher encouraged me by saying, "Put all the rubbish you have in your head down on paper. I can always cut it out!"

I showed him an article I'd written, He got out his editorial pen to cut bits out. When he showed me the article there was nothing left!

There is a deathly hush in the Keith Harding Dept. What happened? You don't have to answer any questions or even reply.

Am pleased to hear that you are doing well professionally is what I wanted to say, and I'm pleased also that you chose to look after you and your family's interests rather than... (deleted by the Editor...)... I'm wiv yer matey. I finks yer does a ..... good job, Mate, no matter what them others say. You may publish that or ..... (deleted by the Editor..) My best wishes and Bloody Good Luck to you and Yours.

**G. Planus** etc etc etc etc etc

And there's more, but I've deleted it.

Thanks, Gerry, I get the message, and, I love you too.

(Bob L.)

Also had a letter from that genial generous friendly soul, **Jim Colley**. The letter is rather critical. If I leave out the criticism, this is how it reads:

Dear Mr Leach,

.....  
.....

Yours sincerely,

A J Colley (Not for Publication)

I shouldn't think so, Jim. As I said to Gerry, (for different reasons), I love you too.

(Bob L.)

The next letter is from a really debonair gentleman, and great musician too, **Brian Oram**. I wonder if Brian and his charming

● wife remember those breakfasts in Hannover when, with Fiona and myself, we pinched bread rolls (far more appetising than piano rolls), packs of butter and pots of marmalade, to nibble mid-day.

It has been stated by Professional Noteurs that their clients require music to be set in the traditional manner. However having a number of books which are sixty years and more old I do not find anything "traditional" about them. The use of the drums is sparing and when used it is to great effect. I have also noticed that whereas in a song which is normally is pronounced, and where the singer takes a long breath the music is comparatively quiet and not everything playing at once with a cacophany of drums and general percussive noise. However many Arias are composed and arranged by the 19th Century Musicologists in a manner which requires brilliance where the singer has a rest, which is different from the cacophany which is too often heard. Brilliance can be obtained by using the octave of the melody part or at a higher pitch. In an orchestra this is obtained with the strings, whilst the wood wind is very often used when singers are singing.

Not being a drummer (I played the bugle and trumpet in the school band) my knowledge of percussive instruments other than the piano is limited so that in the "Grasshoppers Dance", where at the end one normally hears the side drum bashing away 19 to the dozen I have used instead the highest notes available in the chord as a sustained trill. One can almost imagine it as being the death throes of the grasshopper.

However we are considering the organ, which is, after the orchestra, the most versatile method of making music. One can even without the use of Registers obtain a range of tonal qualities which are just not available on, say a piano or clarinet. With the exhaust pneumatic system one has a built in tremulant which can be varied at will, just by the use of the slots in the card. In many ways the mechanical organ is a far more sophisticated instrument than the manual counterpart because single chords can be accentuated to a degree quite impossible with a manual instrument except with some computerised organs in Germany, where the Registers are set in advance and the organist does not have to worry about thumb pistons. In any case they are usually in the wrong place anyway. This assumes that an organist can play as accurately as a mechanical organ.

Another matter which I do not understand is why so much music is not phrased. The phrase marks are in the music so why not use them. As my old Music Master used to say after I had played something. "Read the Music". If music is not phrased properly it sounds flat and uninteresting, even when it is being played against the noise of fair ground machinery and traffic. As a final point it is said that Bach never phrased his music. This is just not true. He did, but he never put it into the score because he knew where the phrases started and finished and he had little concern for other musicians.

Brian Oram,  
Mechanical Organ Owners' Society,  
Diplands Court,  
St. Mary Bourne,  
Andover SP11 6AP.

Here is an informative and much appreciated letter from the real Jim Colley, my friend. (Ed).

Visit to the collection of mechanical music of the Pitt Rivers Museum and Department of Ethnology and Pre-history, University of Oxford.

The items were acquired as part of the objective of the founder of the Museum of showing the development of man from prehistoric times by means of his artefacts. Most of the mechanical musical pieces were added by a Curator, Mr T K Penniman from 1940 to 1950, and their location is noted by John E T Clark. I saw them during the 1950 period when they were stored in very cramped conditions in the office section of the main buildings in Park Road. In 1976 I approached the Curator, Mr B A L Cranstone and obtained his permission to photograph and record the items which had now been moved to a Victorian house in Banbury Road. My son Richard and I spent three happy days on this task and presented our labours in the form of an illustrated talk to the Society. Any hope of a visit by our Members was completely ruled out because of the space limitations at

that time but by 1984 things had improved. Upon contacting Mr Cranstone it proved possible to arrange a visit with Dr Hélène La Rue, Assistant Curator of Ethnomusicology.

So it was that at 2 pm on Saturday March 9th our Members were at last able to see such items as an enormous Plerodienique, fine early fusee driven pieces, an Eroica, a 24½ inch Polyphon, and a gigantic full orchestral by Meyermatrix. Other fine pieces were a revolver box, an interchangeable Nicole on a particularly good cabriole legged table, singing birds, a Canon Wintle barrel piano and three chamber barrel organs. Dr La Rue was generous enough to give up her afternoon to show the items to us. There are still severe financial problems which prevent the collection from being put on public display and it is certain that those members who were present were privileged in seeing so much under such cramped conditions.

I understand that a Friends group is now operating so any members wishing to give financial and other support will be able to do so.

Jim Colley.



Dr. La Rue. Oxford, 1985.  
Sent in by Alan Wyatt.

4th Sept., 1985

Dear Bob,

The following two items relate to the Spring meeting at Oxford. It was my fault they missed the last Journal, however I feel it is important that they be published fully in the next edition of the Journal.

Firstly, the report enclosed kindly written by Jim Colley giving a description of the more notable instruments in the "Pit Rivers" collection. Secondly, the curator, Dr La Rue has forwarded to me the enclosed "Letters Patent" of an unusual instrument called a "Cecilian". She requests any information members can give on this. I feel it would be very rewarding for her kindness in opening the museum to us last spring if we could help research the "Cecilian" for her. I also enclose a photo of the instrument taken by myself, please return sometime.

Amsterdam Trip 1st-5th April 1986 as per enclosed letter. Members wishing to join are requested to apply as soon as possible.

Spring Meeting 25th-27th April 1986, Calvert's Hotel, Newport, Isle of Wight, (as enclosure). Please enclose same as an insert in the next Journal as we are looking for early reservations.

Thanks for your help, sorry it's such a long list this time, but it's nice to have the meetings arranged.

Regards to Daphne,

Beast wishes

(I think he means "Best wishes". Ed).

Alan Wyatt.

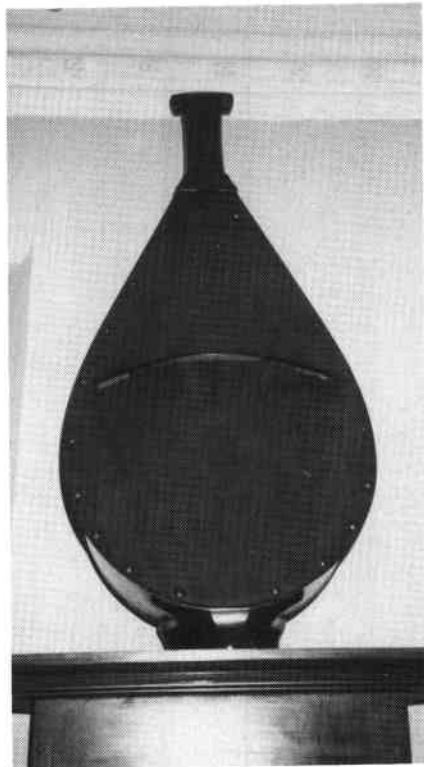
The Willows,

Landbeach,

Cambridge,

CB4 4DT.

Tel: 0223 860332.



The Cecilian.

The Editor,

Dear Sir,

A few years ago, I bought a badly damaged Musical Box with three bells in view and ten tunes on a six inch cylinder similar to that pictured on page 253 of the David and Charles reprint "Gamages Xmas Bazaar 1913", No W3 at 38/6d.

The Tune Sheet is missing, but having completed a re-pin and replaced three teeth and six tips missing from the comb, the box plays its programme of "popular tunes" once again, and I am able to recognise three of them. These are No 3 Marching through Georgia, No 7 The Yankee Doodle Boy, and No 10 La Donna é Mobile.

I would, of course, like to know what the other airs are, and it occurs to me that if these cheap boxes were made in large numbers, there may be a fellow member with a box having a cylinder pinned for the same tunes, and if their tune card is intact, they may be kind enough to name the other titles for me. The Society Journal is always a welcome sight on my front door-mat and the articles by HAV Bulleid have been most helpful to me while repairing my box.

He has the uncanny knack of dealing with the very item which currently puzzles me.

Yours faithfully,

Mr D. J. Riches,  
121 Hounslow Road,  
Feltham,  
Middlesex,  
TW14 0BB.

Hello Bob,

6th August, 1985

Just received *The Music Box* and enjoyed reading your notes and others.

So sorry we will miss the Sept. get together at Aberdeen. We had hoped we would be able to make it but have other obligations that will make it impossible to meet with you all this time. Would you please express greetings from Jeanette and I to the friends of the Society.

Actually, we will be leaving for England on 3rd Sept. and take the train from London up to Edinburgh on the 5th and spend a week at the University. Then we have a week at the University of Durham and the last week at University of London from 20th to 26th of Sept. Will (after 26th) probably spend about two weeks in southern England to see what we can find in good buys in music boxes. Any contacts you might suggest would be appreciated.

By the way I just went over my list of discs (15 1/2") for the Regina and Polyphon and found the list in Graham Webbs book most helpful. I did note that several of my titles are numbers that he has missing and thought you might send this list on to him to help fill out his list.

We do hope you have a great autumn meeting. Please give my best regards to your wife. We are hoping you would be able to come to the annual meeting on the Queen Mary at the end of this month. 'Tis a busy time and it looks like we will have over 600 at this time. 'Twill be a bit frantic for us as we are having "open house" on Monday, 2nd Sept. for the guests at the annual meeting.... and then have to leave on Tuesday the 3rd?

Best regards,

George & Jeanette Speake,  
5104 Bounty Lane,  
Culver City, CA. 90230,  
(213) 837-4517

30-8-85

My good friend **Frank Holland** is a man of infinite compassion. He is also a man of great passion, as the following letter indicates. (Ed).

Mr Andrew Faulds MP 21.4.85  
House of Commons,  
London, SW1.

Dear Mr Faulds,

REGAL CINEMA, EDMONTON

I am infuriated to have just heard that the fabulous Regal Cinema, Edmonton, is to be demolished. The organ has just been removed to go to Barry-fait accompli.

But the theatre I am told has just been done up, painted, new lavatories etc. There is a 40 foot revolving stage there, and a rising platform in the pit big enough to raise a full orchestra. This I think is tragic.

In America, they are now preserving all the large cinemas, and small ones are coming back in this country. On the continent they are returning.

I am sending copies of this letter to whomsoever I think may be able to help to throw a spanner into this demolition, and I only hope that someone will step into the breach to save it and run it - who knows, how far into the future?

I do not want it. Here is my appeal for the Luxor in Twickenham, £1/2 million I am hoping for - with a couple of millionaires in the background on strings. If I ever get Salomons' Science Theatre at Tunbridge, I should take the cream of my collection there. I'll NEVER give that up - which you started for me years ago.

I cried when they took up the London trams, which could well have come back by now. Compare with Germany - trams everywhere!

There is no need to answer this. I leave it to you! Kill the graft and corruption! Some magnate probably wants the site!

Yours sincerely,

Frank Holland, M.B.E.

The Musical Museum,  
368 High Street,  
Brentford,  
Middlesex,  
TW8 0BD,  
England

**Patrons:** Joaquin Achucarro, Claudio Arrau, Elmer Brooks (USA), David Buchan JP, Sir Hugh Casson, Shura Cherkassky, Maurice Cole, Arthur A Court, Ena Baga, Neville Dickie, Kenneth Gartner (USA), Michal Hambourg, Sidney Harrison, Henry Heller (USA), Florence de Jong, John Lill OBE, Keith Nichols, André Previn, Joshua Rifkin (USA), Joseph Seal, Henry Z Steinway (USA), Lord Strathcona, Val Westerman, Margarete Wit, Barclay Wright (Australia), Wilfrid Van Wyck.

6th August, 1985

Dear Mr Leach,

You may like to print the enclosed photocopy in *The Music Box*. I have the original tune sheet which is available **free** to the present owner of its box.

It is possible that a member now owns this box.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Miles,  
"Rock Cottage",  
Mountfield,  
Robertsbridge,  
East Sussex.

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A. 1876.

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- 5 Mose in Egitto — Hymne de pretres — Rossini
- 6 Judas Machabée — see the conquering hero com<sup>d</sup> Handel
- 7 Märschen aus schöner Zeit — Palse — Faust
- 8 Cloches du Monastère ————— L'Écluy



FABRIQUE DE GENÈVE

Lith. A. Heug, Genève & Auvergne

Patent for the Cecilianum.

1863 JUN 5



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A.D. 1863, 5th JUNE. N° 1401.

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**Musical Instruments.**

**LETTERS PATENT** to Arthur Quentin de Gromard, of Paris, France, Gentleman, for the Invention of "**IMPROVEMENTS IN MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS.**"

Sealed the 1st December 1863, and dated the 5th June 1863.

**PROVISIONAL SPECIFICATION** left by the said Arthur Quentin de Gromard at the Office of the Commissioners of Patents, with his Petition, on the 5th June 1863.

I, **ARTHUR QUENTIN DE GROMARD**, of Paris, France, Gentleman, do hereby  
5 declare the nature of the said Invention for "**IMPROVEMENTS IN MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS,**" to be as follows:—

The Invention relates to a new arrangement of musical instrument provided with chromatic keyboard, vibrators, reeds, or other sonorous bodies and swell bellows, and by the said instrument any music written for violencello, violin, or  
10 other instruments of that or other classes may be played in its proper style and effect, some of the improvements being also applicable for modifying various existing musical instruments. The general shape of the instrument resembles that of a violencello; the front part of the neck is provided with a  
15 acts a bell-crank lever key, each of which keys is connected by a thin wire passing through a corresponding perforation of a perforated plate to one arm

Price 4s 6d

---

*De Gromard's Improvements in Musical Instruments.*

---

of another bell-crank lever or square, the other arm of which is connected to a valve of india-rubber or other suitable elastic yielding material, for allowing the wind from a pair of bellows, after having entered into a swell or wind box, and in the vibrator pipes situated in this box, to cause the vibrating or sounding of that vibrator or reed of which the valve has been opened. The wind or 5 swell bellows are situated in the lower part of the instrument; they are separated from each other by a partition board, and act in succession, a proper reciprocating motion being imparted to them by means of a handle from the outside of the instrument in the manner of a fiddlestick. Each vibrator is fixed in its own sounding pipe, the latter being fixed in the wind box, and each vibrator 10 may be provided with a moveable bent wire pressing thereon in order to bring the vibrator to the required pitch. The sounding pipes are set in series of horizontal rows or tiers of semi-tones according to the chromatic scale, the octaves form the vertical rows; the keys of the keyboard are set with their chromatic or semi-tones in vertical tiers, and the fifths in horizontal ones; by 15 preference a keyboard of six horizontal and thirteen vertical tiers of keys is used. The vibrators or reeds with their pipes may be replaced by flute pipes with proper perforations and key valves; by preference a scale of four octaves is used. Instruments of a more complete description may be constructed; these will be provided at the back of the neck with a set of keys (by preference 7) 20 to be actuated by the thumb of the left hand of the performer, whilst the fingers of this hand actuate the keys at the front part of the neck, the thumb keys serving only for giving one or more octaves, in that case one of the arms of the above-mentioned bell-crank levers for the valves is provided with one or more shifting rods fixed to a pin turning in this arm, and which rod, being 25 connected by a wire to one of the thumb keys, may be worked at pleasure, or by being stopped cause the valve to open. The valves and springs acting on them are by preference of india-rubber, the vibrators are of brass or other suitable metal, and made thinner and narrower towards their free end than at the seat. Parts of these improvements may be applied to existing instruments: 30 thus, for instance, the chromatic keyboard, keys, and valves may be applied to other classes of wind musical instruments, such as flutes, flageolets, hautboys, and similar instruments, to cornepeans, and even to stringed instruments, in this latter case hammers being made use of instead of the valves.

---

Stock, Essex.  
4th July, 1985.

Dear Bob,

I am sorry to say you have been a little too free ascribing my name to pieces in the last issue of *The Music Box*, Vol 12, no 2. I sent in the group of six player advertisements starting on page 41, but that is all. You have incorrectly credited me with the Strauch player action catalogue starting on page 48.

Regretfully pages 68 and 69 are straight copies of page 127 and 128 of volume 10 of *The Music Box*. Again these are not mine, having in the original instance been sent in by Ted Brown whose wrath, like that of the originator of the Strauch piece, I have no wish to kindle.

Yours sincerely,  
Roger Booty.

**Jim Weir** sends a friendly and amusing letter about there being two sides to every complaint, a sort of "your enemy is never 100% in the wrong" homily. The cheery tone of his letter can be guessed from this gem of a complaint about the front-page picture of the last issue of the journal (Vol 12 No 2 Summer 1985).

Dear Bob,

One argument I do have with you is by what right is *The Music Box* threatening that poor little Scottish piper with a nasty English canon?

All the best,  
Jim Weir.

(Hope the picture didn't cause any trouble at the Aberdeen meeting – but, Heck! – I've just remembered – it was **Robbie Gordon** himself who sent me the picture. Ed).

Dear Bob, 12th July, 1985.

How are you? You got me kind of worried about the missing journal, and not hearing from you personally. Are you on strike? Take an example from Heinrich Brechbühl and slow down!

We are ok, the whole family. I'd thought of coming to GB this year, but I'm afraid we will not make it (I also have to slow down a little). Yesterday we were at the funeral of HB. There was a big crowd, people from as far as Berlin.

So I hurry to send you the information for the next journal (I hope you manage to get it placed).

Greetings (also to Reg Mayes),  
Hank Waelti.

Dear Hank,

Thank you for your letter, and the good wishes. My apologies to you – and all our members – for my lack of effort "Music-Box-wise" this year, but I wrote and published the very successful hardback **Marguerite Wolff, Adventures of a Concert Pianist**, and now I am researching **Vergie Derman and the Royal Ballet**, which will be published in 1986.

No – despite your justifiable suspicions, I am not on strike. I have never been on strike for a single day in my life – and at one time I was a paid-up member of three unions at the same time, I'm still happily working (scribbling) seven days a week – but – I cannot do *The Music Box* anymore because one third of my time is no longer available for this agreeable, but time-consuming, function.

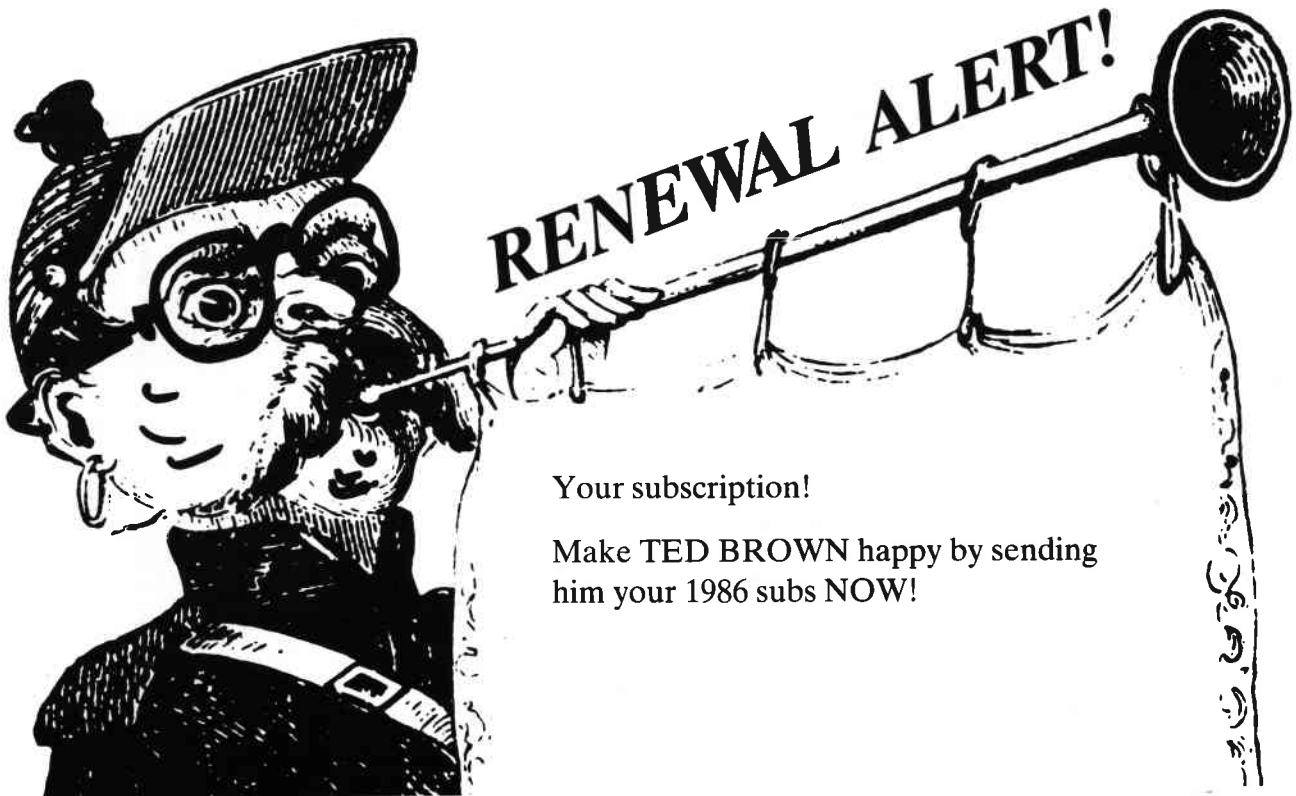
It has been an adventurous five years – and I have made many excellent friends, none less than you, dear Hank. Last time I saw you was in Thun. Next time you are in London give me a ring and I'll take you to The Savage Club, where they sell *real* beer.

Happy New Year to you and Ruth, and to all our one thousand members.

Being an editor is one of those rare jobs, like Company Sergeant Major where, at the end of the journey, even your enemies are friendly.

(Bob L.).

## Final Call!





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Please send subscriptions to:

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207 Halfway Street,  
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England.

(Tel: 01-300-6535)

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Player, 1924, unrestored but in reasonable  
condition. £1000 – o.n.o. "STECK" Pedal/  
Electric duo-art, unrestored but in good  
working order, with 30 rolls £950.  
"KLINGSOR" Gramophone in near mint  
condition, all original £600. Tel: Mr Chesters  
0706 224617.

**Battery Operated** bubble blowing monkey,  
£35. Lots of 88 note Pianola rolls. Tel: (0580)  
880614.

**Musical Box Society Magazines.** Complete  
set of "The Music Box" from edition No 1  
Winter 1962/63 to date. Mint condition all in  
binders. Offers invited. Buyer to collect or  
pay carriage. Heap, 7 Victoria Crescent,  
Queens Park, Chester.

**For sale** – the following items due to general  
clear-out and tidy up.

12 Atlas Organette Discs £5 each; 9 5<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"  
Polyphon discs centre drive £5 each; 1 19<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>"  
Polyphon discs £20; 1 Gasparini Fair Organ  
book arranged as a continuous strip labelled  
"polka" and with original Gasparini stamp  
£40; 35 74 note Hupfeld Claviola & Solodant  
piano rolls £2 each; 15 original Duo Art rolls  
in boxes £6 each; 1 Orpheus Grand Roll £4;  
80 46 note Player organ rolls (fit Aeolian 46  
noteplayer) £3 each; 60 88 note player piano  
rolls 50p each; 80 65 note player piano rolls  
50p each; 58 Welte Orchestrion Rolls suit  
Nos 1 to 7 £18 each.

14 note paper roll **Orchestral Organette** with  
with 14 music strips some damaged, £240;  
Atlas Organette with ten discs, £450; 5<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"  
hand turned Polyphon with 8 discs £200;  
Edison Home Phonograph with Sun Flower  
Horn few cylinders £575; Turtle Shell Snuff  
box with two tune movement by Bordier. Box  
requires new base, movement plays well.  
23 section comb 69 notes £300. Drum and Bell  
Box (hidden) 90 tooth comb 6 drum sticks and  
three bells 10<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>" × 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" cylinder, requires  
new dampers, some pins bent main gear drive  
six teeth broken, requires re-dampening and  
bearings re-bushed on gear train. 8 tune.  
£150.

Rolls and discs to be sold as separate lots,  
cannot split lots. Customer pays carriage.

Devon Museum of Mechanical Music,  
Mill Leat, Thornbury nr Holsworthy, Devon.  
Shebbear 483 and Milton Damerel 378.

**Discs for Sale.** Polyphon 11" (some early zinc),  
Kalliope 13<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" – mint, Britannia 9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"  
Polyphon 15<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>"  
Symphonion 14<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"  
Symphonion 11<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"  
Imperial Box – suitable 9"  
movement. John and Eunice, Maden,  
051-625-1518.

### WANTED

**POSITION OPEN** for qualified restorer of  
cylinder and disc musical boxes. Must be  
capable of high quality work, and be willing to  
relocate to the central California coast near  
Santa Barbara. Ron Palladino, 1656 Fir  
Avenue, Solvang, California 93463, U.S.A.  
(805) 688-6222.

**CASE WANTED** for Paillard Sublime  
Harmony movement. Approx. inside dimen-  
sions 17<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>" by 5<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>". Length between side  
holes approx. 13<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>" (but not critical). Also  
Gem Roller Organ Cobs. David Snelling,  
P.O. Box 23, Douglas, I.O.M. (Tel: 0624-  
823483).

**Barrel Piano's** working or distressed, also  
parts. Please write giving details and price.

**Zoetrope** and animated card strips.

**Duo Art** Pianola rolls.

Alan Wyatt, The Willows, Landbeach,  
Cambridge. Tel: 0223 860332.

**13" interchangeable cylinders** (6 tune) wanted,  
also 17<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" Stella and 15<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>" Symphonion cases  
(can offer Adler Fortuna case in exchange).  
Tel: (0580) 880614.

**BARREL PIANO**, automatic or hand  
cranked. Condition immaterial provided  
barrell in good order. Colin Williams, 61  
Hardwick Lane, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk.  
Tel: (0284) 66663.

**COMPLETE CASE** for 24<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>" Polyphon –  
with or without disc storage compartment.  
Tel: Sue Wedlock, Timsbury (0761) 71516.

**DISC BOX MOVEMENT** between 16" & 22".  
Anything considered, silly price paid or  
exchange cylinder musical box. **Selling 100+**  
**Duo-Art** Rolls, all classical, some gems  
£6 each. Brian Chesters, Rossendale (0706)  
224617.

**Wanted:** Red Welte rolls, Duo-Art rolls, any  
quantity, rolls for 40-key Tanzbär (paper  
width 6 inch). Offers to: Klaus Peuler, Zu den  
Mühlen 6, 4358 Haltern, West-Germany.

**Monopol** 14" rim drive discs. Orpheus 12".  
John and Eunice Maden, Tel: 051-625-1518.

**8" Helvetia.** Details of comb tuning scale  
required. I have 9 discs available for copying  
in return. Strip playing ariston music required  
to buy or to copy. Ted Brown, 01-300-6535.

### Advertisement Manager;

John Powell,  
33 Birchwood Avenue,  
Leeds, 17,  
West Yorkshire,  
LS17 8DJ  
England.  
Tel: 0532 663341.

## Subs for 1986

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## THOUGHT FOR THE MOMENT...

Have you arranged  
payment of your  
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Pay Now, – and a  
Happy Christmas  
to you.

*Congratulations & Best Wishes  
to our new Editor,  
Graham Whitehead.*

Bob Leach.

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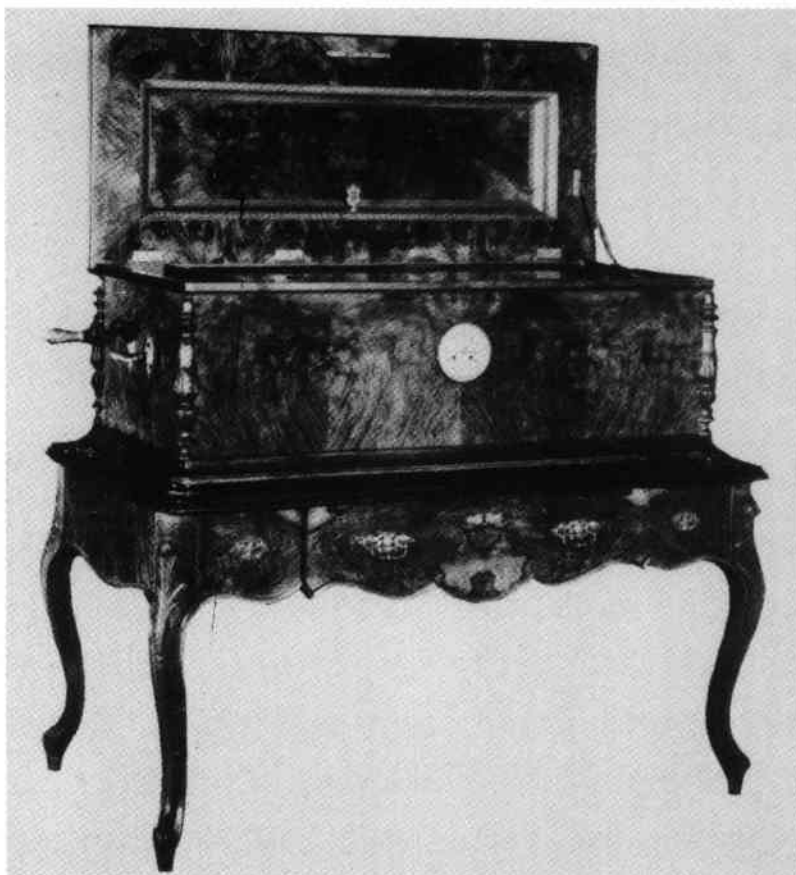
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## Mechanical Musical Instruments and Automata

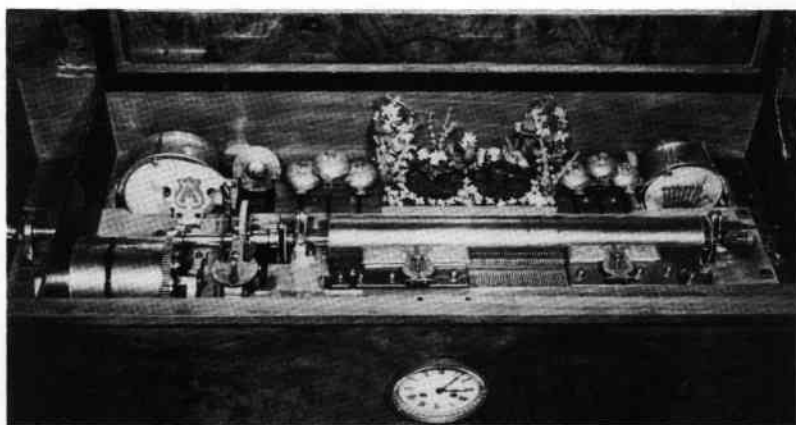
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LONDON

WEDNESDAY 5TH FEBRUARY 1986



A Gueissaz, Fils & Cie Grand Orchestral Interchangeable Cylinder Musical Box on Stand, c. 1901, made for Prince Mirza Reza Khan Afra special envoy to the Shah of Persia. Sold in January 1985 for £20,000. Sotheby's hold three sales per annum including mechanical musical instruments. Catalogues, profusely illustrated throughout, are available by subscription at a cost of £15 per annum. Closing date for entry 29th November 1985.



Enquiries: Jon Baddeley

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Sotheby's, 34-35 New Bond Street, London W1A 2AA. Telephone: (01) 493 8080. Telex: 24454 SPBLON G

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**Henri Metert. 1854 (Switzerland-England)**

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**Gerald Planus.(England-U.S.A.)**

**Dario Valenzuela. 1985.(Peru- Inca-U.S.A.)**

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Each sat at the side of the other and learn't.

It gives me (Gerald Planus) great pleasure to announce that

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Having now worked with me for the last seven years is a competent craftsman in the Art of Music Box and Disc machine restoration.

He is skilled in all the requisite branches of restoration from the inlaying, repairing and re-finishing of cases, to the designing and making of the most intricate missing parts, and restoring the mechanism itself completely. Organ work, bellows repair, reed making and re-tuning, Teeth repair and tuning. Wheel cutting and cylinder re-pinning are all only a part of his skills. He also has a unique ability for discovering and rectifying unusual tonal and tuning problems, and has the advantage of referring to the hundreds of tuning charts compiled by me of over seventy-five different makers and tuners. It gives me great pleasure to recommend to you.

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