

# THE MUSIC BOX

an international magazine of mechanical music

THE JOURNAL OF THE MUSICAL BOX SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN

Volume 12      Number 4



Cyril de Vere Green (1909-1983).

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# INTRODUCTION

THE opinion has often been voiced in your committee that there is a wealth of excellent material in the back copies of our magazine which could well be re-printed in current issues. Nothing came of that suggestion until it was decided to produce an issue made up entirely of items which had already appeared to fill the hiatus between two editors.

In a sense a commemorative issue, it does not commemorate any significant date in the Society's history, published on the 23rd anniversary of its founding. It commemorates all the excellent articles which have appeared over the years, with regret that there is only space for such a small sample.

A sub-committee, with Ted Brown as its Chairman, was formed including Peter Howard, Reg Mayes, John Powell and myself who each put forward suggestions. Our aim has been to produce an issue that reflects as many of the Societies interests and aspects of our magazine as possible and we have restricted our selection to the first eight volumes, feeling that more recent articles might be fresh in the minds of our readers. We have also reluctantly rejected any article that we know has already been re-printed. In its Silver Anniversary Collection our American sister Society printed several articles that would otherwise have been high on everyone's lists and our most prolific contributor, Arthur Ord-

Hume, is poorly represented herein because although he was always generous in first sharing the fruits of his research with the membership of this society, most of it has since been embodied in his books, which every member should have.

So, for many reasons, no one is claiming that this issue contains the best of what has appeared in past volumes, indeed no member of the sub-committee has had all his nominations accepted by the others. Rather than arguing about what does not appear, we all agree that the final selection is a worthy sample and hope that the membership will find it enjoyable.

Jon Gresham.

## CONTENTS

EDITORIAL													
<i>Arthur W. J. G. Ord-Hume</i>	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	131
SOCIETY EMBLEM													
...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	131
LEARNING TO LIVE WITH MUSICAL BOXES													
J.G.M.													
<i>Christopher Proudfoot</i>	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	134
TRIM & TIDY TUNE SHEETS													
<i>Jim Hall</i>	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	135
JOHN E. T. CLARK													
...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	136
THE DRUM SNARE													
<i>Graham Webb</i>	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	137
THE HAMMOND CODE OF PRACTICE													
...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	140
TORTOISESHELL REPAIRS													
<i>D. A. R. Tallis</i>	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	141
STRAIGHTENING BENT TEETH													
<i>Brian Etches</i>	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	141
TRIUMPH TRUTH													
<i>Roger Vreeland</i>	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	142
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR													
...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	143
FROM RAGS TO STARDOM													
...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	144
THE ORGANETTE: ITS HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT													
...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	145
REPINNING WOODEN BARRELS													
<i>Jim Hall</i>	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	150
MAKING THE BEST OF YOUR MUSIC BOX CASE													
...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	152
FROM PIANO SCORE TO DISC OR CYLINDER													
<i>Robin Timms</i>	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	155
TONI PINS A BARREL													
<i>George Eves</i>	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	159

# THE MUSIC BOX

an international magazine of mechanical music

THE JOURNAL OF THE MUSICAL BOX SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN

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# EDITORIAL

DECEMBER 1, 1962 saw the formation of our Society. Some thirty people from all over the country attended a meeting at the Mandeville Hotel, London, W.1. at the invitation of Mr de Vere Green. The meeting voted unanimously in favour of the inauguration of the Musical Box Society of Great Britain.

Those present also agreed unanimously that our President should be Mr John E T Clark whose knowledge and experience in the subject of musical boxes is probably without equal in the British Isles. His book on musical boxes must form a vital adjunct to all our collections. His cheerful, good-humoured nature with underlying dexterity and authority undoubtedly makes "an evening with Clarkey" a very worthwhile experience.

Having already worked so hard towards the formation of the Society, the election of Mr C de Vere Green, a London dental surgeon and a collector of fine cylinder boxes, as Secretary was perhaps an obvious but certainly a most welcome choice.

For Vice-President, Mr G ("Gerry") Planus is well known to many of us for his enthusiasm and sincere appreciation of mechanical musical instruments. A visit to the basement of his South London shop where he keeps "a few" of his boxes (about a hundred or so!) is in itself a worthwhile experience.

The task of Treasurer is always a thankless one and so the generous offer by Mr Frank S Greenacre of Gorleston to fill the vacancy was greatly appreciated. Mr Greenacre has many fine disc machines including a very early 24½in. Polyphon and a 19½in. Symphonion.

Finally a scribe had to be elected to fill the post of Editor to this, the Society's Journal. Mr Arthur W J G Ord-Hume of Sandown, Isle of Wight, was elected in this capacity. Collector of disc machines, he owns a 26in. Fortuna Orchestrion and several nice Polyphons.

## Aims and Objects of the Society

The objects of this Society are to try to bring together all those who collect mechanical musical instruments, or have a sincere appreciation for them and wish to preserve them wherever and whenever possible.

## The Journal of the Society

The Journal is intended as a clearing house for information, news, views, opinions and relevant material. It is thus dependent on the support of you, the individual member, to contribute matter of interest to others.

To be published quarterly, this Journal must of economic necessity assume this duplicated form, but it is the intention of the Editor to maintain a high standard of contents — a wish which the Society is certain every member will share.

A. W. J. G. Ord-Hume.

# SOCIETY EMBLEM

THE Emblem which has been chosen to represent the Musical Box Society of Great Britain is depicted above and is the work of Mr Bruce Angrave. At the request of Members attending the March meeting, your Executive Committee examined a number of proposals for a suitable design including several submitted by Mr Angrave. A final "short list" of designs was prepared and these were presented at the Autumn meeting, Members being invited to state their preference by a show of hands. The overwhelming majority voted for the design shown here and thus adopted by the Society.



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And THANKS to OUR CUSTOMERS from this and many other countries who have entrusted their cylinder boxes to us.

We shall try to continue our work from NEW PREMISES IN BRISTOL from late November.

Jim Colley.

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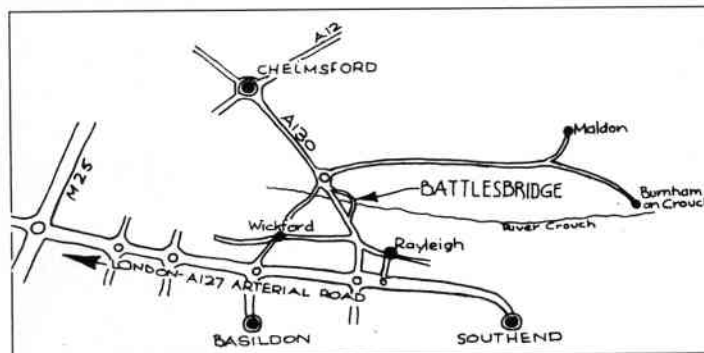
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# LEARNING TO LIVE WITH MUSICAL BOXES

By Betty Lawrence

MY FIRST introduction to a musical box was 35 years ago when I received my wedding present from my husband. He made me a grandfathers clock with a beautiful brass face he had acquired and to add to its rarity and interest, a built-in musical box which he took from its original case and fixed so that it played a tune after the striking of each hour. I was charmed with it and it fitted well into our little stone-built Cotswold cottage. It played four tunes but the only one we recognised was "Il Bacio" and I never tired of them.

It played its hourly tunes all through the years until the war came and then it would strike up its tune just as we were straining our ears for that first vital bit of news so that reluctantly we decided to silence it. Silent it remained until recently when it was taken out and restored to its original box where it now takes a worthy place among the rest of the collection.

Little did I know when I first listened to its dulcet tones that it was the forerunner of our now vast collection of all sorts and sizes. Talking of sizes, that is the problem of a small house. We have musical boxes anywhere, but everywhere! Upstairs and downstairs and (I like the old nursery rhyme) in my lady's chamber. I have visions that one day the house will be full of musical monsters and we shall have to camp out on the lawn.

As each new treasure has been acquired, the first question has been "where shall we put it?"

On one occasion I remember after proudly displaying his latest prize my husband came up with the inevitable question and I said somewhat tersely "Oh, put it where you like". Some time later he reappeared without the box and I thought no more about it. Next day whilst Hoovering vigorously in our bed-

room, I pushed the Hoover smartly under the bed and, instead of the erstwhile "clang" I was surprised to hear a dull thud, to be followed instantly by the strains of "Annie Laurie" — and the mystery was solved. As I couldn't think of anywhere else for it at the time, I left it there.

That night as my beloved was about to climb into bed, he let out a howl of pain and I sat cruelly laughing as he sat on the side of the bed nursing a bent big toe to the strains of "Land of my Fathers" which unfortunately were not loud enough to drown the expletives emitted by his Lordship.

He moved the box next day to the "space on the landing" where it has since been joined by two others and a large empty box of beautiful wood which unfortunately reminds me forcibly of my last resting place. No, perhaps it's not quite as big as that — it only seems like it . . . .

I remember one box that caused us a lot of amusement which lived on this landing for some time. It was a pipe organ box and one of the oldest we ever owned. It sounded terrible — for all the world like a set of defunct bagpipes. It was hand operated and the only tune I remember was "God Save the King" (it must have been George III!).

Our boys could never resist turning the handle when they passed it and the strains of the National Anthem wheezing out first thing in the morning did nothing to brighten my day. About this time we had a French boy to stay with us and they used to play it outside his door in the mornings to get him up. It was most effective! He would emerge looking like a doormouse waking from his winter hibernation and, with a look of mock horror on his face and with hands over his ears, pleading "Ah, no!"

Although it was valuable, I was not sorry when, during one of our "hard up" periods, we had to sell it. Other than its antiquity it had nothing to recommend it.

We have musical boxes in the garage and an orchestion in someone else's garage. We just ran out of space for that so, on Sunday mornings, we see passers-by standing in the back lane listening to "The Mikado" issueing from the garage across the way as Henry tries it out. I live in fear and trepidation lest one day we find ourselves the owners of a barrel organ, giant Polyphon or fair organ.

Other than my wedding present box I suppose the one I love best is a little hand-operated box dated about 1830. It plays two tunes and is in a plain natural wood box rendered beautiful with years of polishing. The reason I am so fond of it is that it reminds me of a time of despair and its passing. Our second son, when three years old, contracted some childish illness that rapidly developed until in a few days the Doctor was calling twice a day and a specialist was called in. Within a week he had shrunk from a bonny little boy to a poor frail little creature who looked as though a puff of wind would blow him away. Our days and nights were haunted by the fear of losing him and I prayed as I've never prayed before. I remember little of that time except the awful hopeless feeling of being unable to do anything. Every day no change, a little weaker, and despair taking over until one morning a flicker of hope, he smiled, and began to know us again.

Weeks were to go by before he was his bonny self again but during those weeks his dearest toy was "daddy's musical box". At first only a few notes — he was too tired and weak for more, but gradually his strength returned and I would go happily about my work as he wound

it vigorously, getting stronger and stronger and playing it longer each day. Even to this day I cannot hear it without a feeling of thankfulness.

I suppose I must be thankful that the collecting bug hasn't inspired us to collect even bigger things. Last summer on a weekend visit to my sister and her husband in Gloucestershire we were at breakfast one morning when we heard the sound of a slow and heavy vehicle passing on the road outside. My sister looked up and said to her husband "Bill's got his traction engine out" and instantly he was up from the table saying "Come on Henry!" and they both dashed out of the house without waiting to put on coats or change their slippers for shoes. They just jumped into the car and disappeared in a cloud of dust in hot pursuit of the engine. That was the last we saw of them until lunch time when they came home full of excitement to tell us about this wonderful monster, how they had driven slowly behind it

just to savour the smell of hot oil (like a couple of Bisto kids) and spent the morning admiring and playing with it in the local brickworks yard.

A look I well recognise came over my husband's face and he said "You know, someone ought to start collecting those engines before they are all gone". In the words of our French friend, "Ah, no!"

Mind you, it's not only boxes we have to find room for but innumerable spares from empty boxes, odd lids, combs, spare rolls and various other mechanical parts, all tucked away in odd corners. I never know where I may unearth them. Only last week when turning out the chest in our bedroom I found several musical box spares tucked away behind the socks and handkerchiefs in Henry's drawer and a spare roll in a cardboard box in the airing cupboard. I think it happens thus: Henry brings home some spares and leaves them

lying around until I get exasperated and issue awful threats. He then looks around for any drawer or cupboard with an empty space and in they go. Out of sight, out of mind! At least until I find them again.

It is strange what the words "musical box" conjure up in the minds of our friends and acquaintances from those who say "Oh yes, I had an old aunt who had one of those things" to those who think only in terms of the modern variety, some of which are quite nice, but the majority of which are dreadful. We have from time to time received presents from well-meaning friends — a Christmas card playing "White Christmas" — ugh! Or a powder bowl playing "The Blue Danube" and our worst — a musical toilet roll holder which I am happy to say got *accidentally* broken beyond repair within a week. I can't remember what tune it played but it couldn't possibly have been appropriate — or could it?

Vol 7 No 2

## "J.G.M."

by Christopher Proudfoot

*Many collectors have stumbled across those Victorian musical photograph albums containing a small cylinder movement in the back. And many have been the attempts at identifying the maker or the factor by those mysterious initials, JGM. Here Christopher Proudfoot reveals the meaning of those letters.*

AS A gramophone collector, I have always felt that I somehow belong to a lesser breed of mortals than the musical box man, and I suspect that most members of the latter would confirm this as a true fact.

It is gratifying to find, therefore, that my insatiable appetite for talking machines and matters pertaining thereto has led to the unearthing of a tiny piece of history which should gladden the hearts of all devotees of the musical photograph album.

Many of these repositories of oval portraits and seaside snaps contain movements stamped JGM & C. This is sometimes followed by "Made in France" or simply "Paris". Somehow, even in initial form, this sounds a very English treatment of a name, but apparently it has eluded identification so far.

Perusing some old copies of *The Sound Wave* last summer, I came across an article in the issue for August, 1915, headed "Notable Talking Machine Houses". This was number one in the series and was entitled "The House of Murdoch".

Founded by John Gloag Murdoch, who died in 1902, this house owed its existence, I was amazed to read, to "the tiny musical movements, so popular in photographic albums. This led to an enormous trade in musical boxes, followed by other instruments of the automatic variety, viz: Organettes, Seraphones, D.V. Ariels and Celestinas . . .

In the infuriating way of *The Sound Wave* and its rival, *The Talking Machine News*, no attempt was made to treat the subject in any

greater depth, and one was left guessing when exactly these movements were being supplied and who made them in France. All the same, I think that this probably provides the answer to the JGM question.

Who would have thought that the mighty oak of the Murdoch Trading Company (as it later became) would have sprung from such a tiny, tinkling acorn!

The firm of John G Murdoch & Co Ltd was established in the year 1863 with premises at 91-93 Farringdon Road in London. The period of most of the photograph albums seen would appear to indicate a date between 1870 and 1900. The company is known to have traded with the Paris Company of Jerome Thibouville-Lamy.

*Editor.*



# TRIM AND TIDY THOSE TORN AND TATTERED TUNE-SHEETS

says Jim Hall

WHEN repairing a cylinder musical box, and the mechanism and case are repaired and presentable, one is often left wondering what to do about a tattered and torn tune sheet. It can be "backed" by glueing on the back surface a piece of thin card. This should be bigger than the tune sheet. When the glue is set, trim the card on a wooden cutting board with a sharp knife and straight edge. If the edges of the tune sheet are a bit "dog-eared" and there is a wide border on, cut back the edges slightly, and the backing to suit. Do not chiggle with the knife, make one stroke, aiming to cut through the card and into the cutting board. Cut with the grain of the wood. If there is a corner of the tune sheet missing, make up the missing piece, with card of the same thickness, and

glue on to the backing piece. When dry, trim in the design, by using watercolour paints, applied with a small paintbrush. Sometimes the tune sheet is missing altogether, and one likes to provide one, and if possible name the tunes (copy tune sheets are available). Fairly often a box comes to light where there is no tune sheet, and the maker is a bit of a mystery, or one knows the make, but there is no reproduction tune sheet to suit. The size of the sheet can sometimes be ascertained by the holes which the pins of the original one made.

Coloured card can be cut to suit the size, and if this looks rather plain, can be improved upon by drawing in a straight line or two just

in from the edges. I think this is preferable to fixing a spurious tune sheet. I have seen a cheap three bell box with a new Nicole Freres tune sheet, and another with a reproduction Bremond sheet. I think there is room for a nondescript tune sheet (with frilly willies, etc.) designed and produced in a range of sizes to cover most requirements. This sheet by its design would be instantly recognisable to our members as a replacement sheet. It would be better than a home-made sheet, to set the box off, and add the finishing touch, and certainly better than putting a reproduction sheet of a known maker, on a box where the maker is unknown. This sheet could be replaced if the musical box was identified later and a suitable tune sheet available.

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# JOHN E. T. CLARK

JOHN E T Clark, First President of the Musical Box Society of Great Britain, Hon. Member of the Musical Box Society International of America, was born at Bidford-on-Avon on April 17, 1884. His interest in mechanical music started when, as a youth, he was apprenticed to Nicole Freres of London as a musical box improver. This job involved the final justification of a movement, setting the cylinder pins and adjusting the dampers for correct playing. Quickly mastering his trade, he became associated with most aspects of musical box making and assembly and, at the dissolution of Nicole Freres in 1903, he set up in business on his own as a musical box repairer. This trade he followed right up until the time of his death. A man dedicated to musical boxes, he never married, saying once that women knew not how to appreciate musical boxes.

Between the wars, his workshop was at Peckham from where he moved in 1939 to New Maldon. It was at this address that he wrote his book "Musical Boxes — A History and Appreciation", first published in 1948 by Cornish Brothers and subsequently revised and enlarged to be published by George Allen & Unwin. In 1960, he took a flat in Middleton Street, London E.C.1. He yearned to return to the country to relax in semi-retirement and so he moved to a bungalow at Bidford — his birthplace and but a few miles outside Stratford-on-Avon. Surrounded by the country he loved, he continued repairing musical boxes and revising his book, a new edition of which was shortly planned. Failing health made walking difficult but he retained a cheerful disposition at all times. He suffered a stroke on October 12 and was removed to hospital where he died two days later.



It was largely through the effort and enthusiasm of "Clarkey", portrayed in his book, that musical box collectors became aware of each other — the catalyst which was to result in the formation in 1963 of the Musical Box Society of Great Britain. Already a member of the American Musical Box Society International, he was elected unanimously

First President of our Society, a position which he held until 1964 when failing health dictated his resignation from this arduous post. He held the position of Honorary Vice-President at the time of his death.

John Clark was laid to rest at Bidford — his birthplace — by the banks of the River Avon.

# THE DRUM SNARE

By Graham Webb

THE shop is not a big one, as many know, nor is it noted for its tidiness, in fact when a piece is dropped "just inside the door", it tends to stay in that position until sold since it is often impossible to move it further in. Under these conditions, when offered anything really large, I tend to think very carefully because of the upheaval necessary to make room.

Thus when a telephone call brought the offer of a Welte Orchestrion ("not one of the large ones, only ten feet high!") my first thought was towards a polite refusal, but this reaction was quickly stifled by two of my better instincts — curiosity (I'd never seen one) and greed (what's it worth?). So I asked for a little time to think.

Arthur Ord-Hume came upon me whilst I was engaged in this thinking operation and I explained the position to him so that he could share the pain. We decided that the opportunity to inspect such a machine was too good to miss, and so it came to pass that the following Sunday saw the two of us glaring at each other over a "Scrabble" board on a fast train to the far North.

Between Scrabble and lunch we had very little time to speculate on the machine we were about to see, but even if we had, I doubt if the tremendous impact which the thing made upon us would have been any the less. I really should have been prepared for the sound by my first glimpse of the the ten foot high oaken case packed with beautiful pipes. I suppose in truth I was prepared for the music to some degree. What I was not prepared for, and what took me by storm, was the little snare drum. So neat, so precise, so definite, she completely stole my heart and senses. No longer the hard businessman figuring out the profits, planning presentation, working out the cost of transport. No longer the shopkeeper wondering will it fit. Instead it was "How will it go in?". Just a man in love — not with the august boom of the big bass drum, not with the shiny yellow fan of brass trumpets, not even with the

beautiful design of the air motor drive, but with, of all things, a little snare drum.

It had to be mine, that little snare drum. Oh yes, I knew that with it came 192½ cubic feet of Orchestrion which would take up a quarter of the shop and block half the light from the window, but what could I do? I was snared, so to speak.

Arthur felt it too, I know. Why else would a certain carriage on the London train that night hold a pair of maniacs who occasionally looked up from a violent game of Scrabble to grimace and raise a fist at one another and vibrate it as if beating some invisible drum?

Back home, away from the insidious call of the drum, I stood in front of the shop and realised for the first time how deeply I had been under its spell. Reality came upon me, questions began to insist upon answers. How, for example, disregarding the 30in. wide door, was the thing to be got into the shop? Answer — through the window. How to get the windows out? Answer — by trying every way conceivable until, as the pantechnicon containing the little drum and its accessories rolled to a stop, the last bolt broke the last pane of glass as it surrendered to the battering which had superseded the more polite attempts of the preceding ten days.



At a blast of the signal horn, thirty heads popped from shops along the Portobello and sixty willing hands converged like some Lavender Hill mob upon the stripped Orchestrion body and its seventeen crates of bits, one of which contained my new addiction. After all the worry, things went surprisingly smoothly, and, with only one crushed foot and a good deal of "to you from me", the deed was done. Everyone at once squatted on the pavement and waited for the concert they had been promised.

Resting after my efforts to get near enough to the organ to get a hand to it, and at least pretend to help, I leaned against the inside sill of the open-to-the-street window — and the climax of the day occurred! With heavy-handed humour, a voice came from the crowd. "Two four-pennies and a lolly please, mister!"

**THIS WELTE ORCHESTRION** is a 44-note instrument similar to that shown on the last page of Q David Bower's book "Put Another Nickel In". In addition to the 44 notes, it has a triangle, a repeating snare drum, a bass drum and a bass drum

roll. A cymbal has been added sometime during its life so that the bass drum hammer also carries a steel striker for the cymbal, both being sounded together.

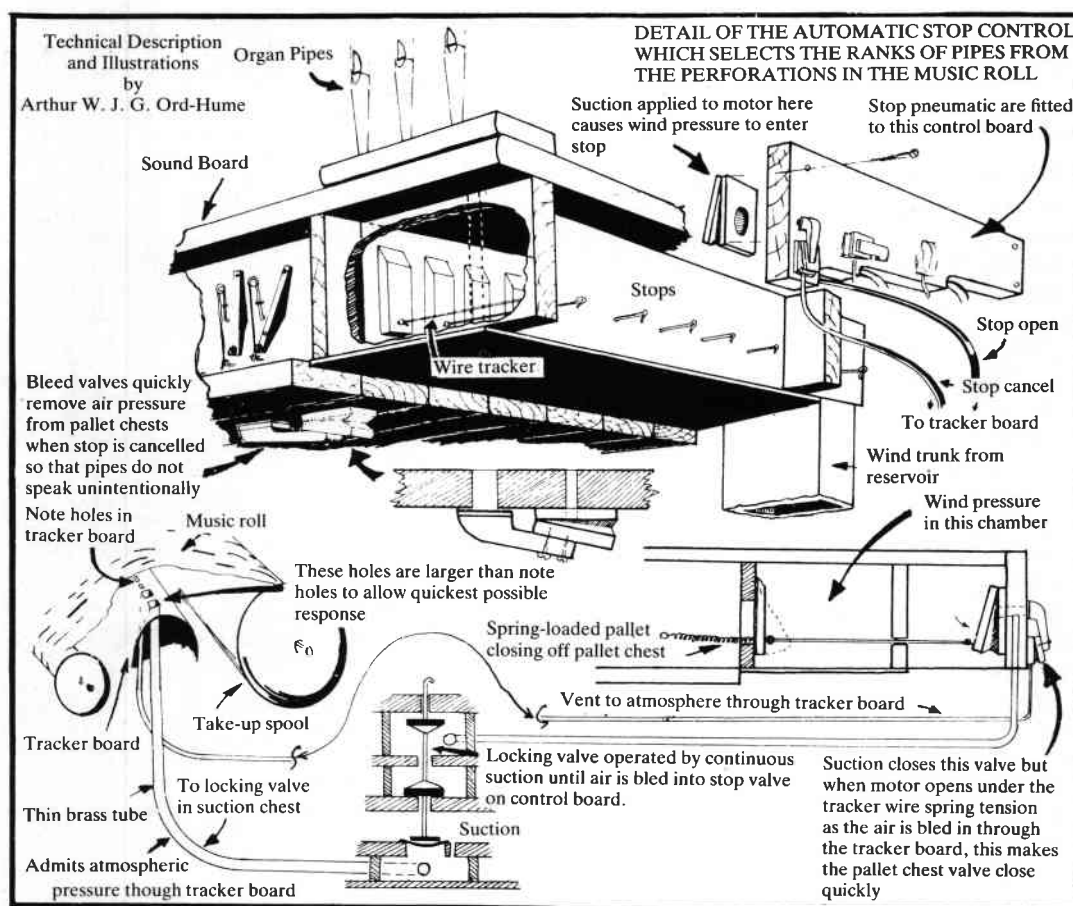
The ranks of pipes comprise, from front to back, metal flute 2ft., trumpet 4ft., metal salicional 4ft., wooden violin 4ft., open wooden principal 4ft., wooden stopped diapason 8ft., gamba 4ft., and a wooden 4ft. unison.

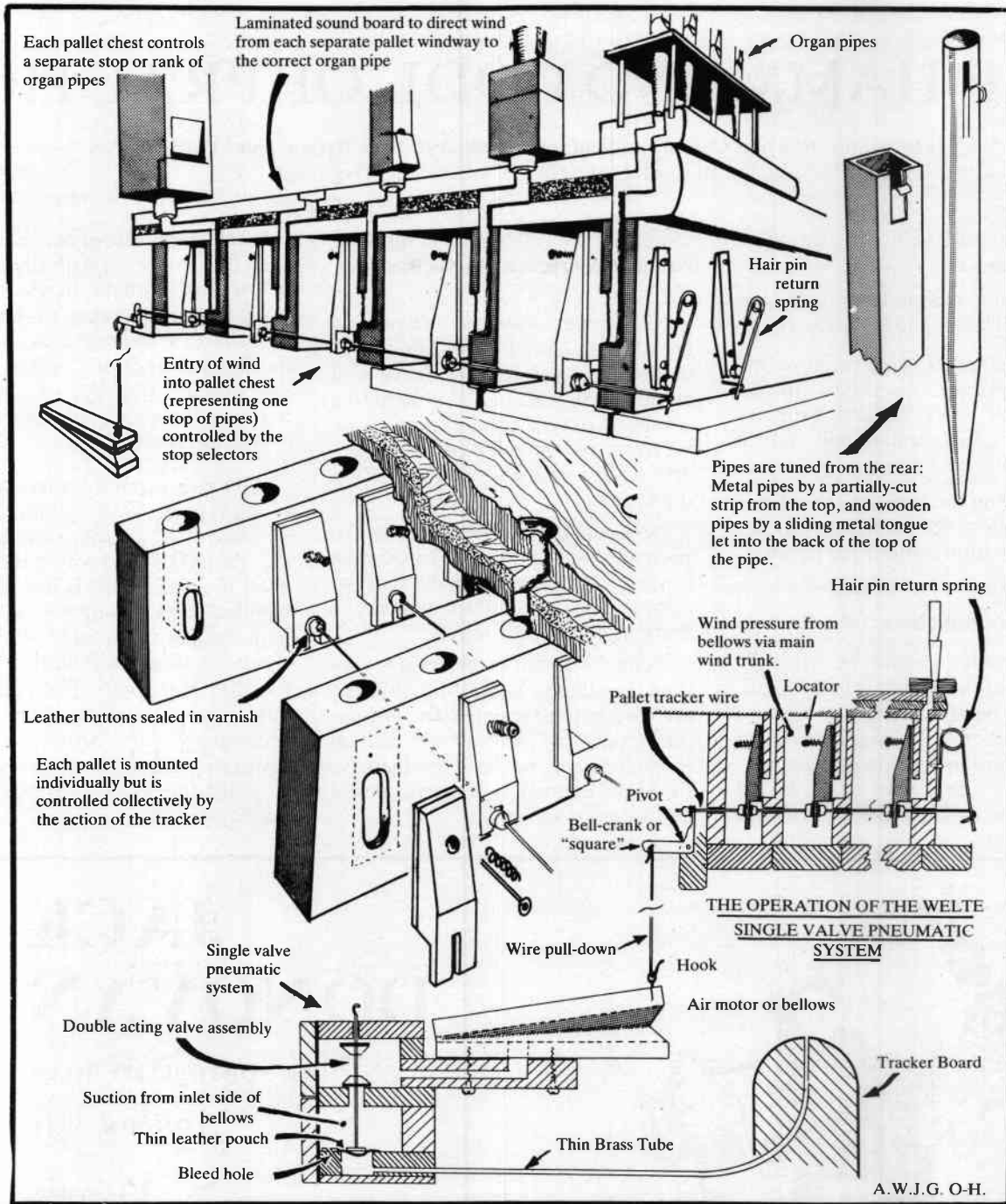
Particularly interesting are the trumpets which are, of course, reed stops. The entire foot, boot and shallot is made of wood, closely fitting and most accurately made. The resonators are of brass and seamless.

The organ is dismantlable at two levels — the soundboard and the deck or chest level, and the case is an excellent piece of cabinet work comprising hinged panelled doors which are either secured with turn-buttons or with hinges. The primary framework is doweled and screwed but, even so, assembly of the case is remarkably quick.

On arrival, the organ was suffering from shortage of both wind and suction (the feeders take air from the running of the valve chest and thus provide pressure for the pipes) and a massive cypher on two stops plus other sundry malfunctions of speech on other ranks. The subsequent rebuild gave ample opportunity to inspect its principles of operation, patented in 1897, and other details.

The pneumatic action operates on the fundamental single valve system in which suction is applied to a running upon which are mounted a number of leather purses. The instructions to sound a note consist of a perforation in the paper tune sheet which admits the atmosphere to the partial vacuum in the airway between the tracker board and the chamber under the purse. When a note is required to speak, the atmospheric pressure lifts the leather purse, so lifting a double valve contained in a separate air-tight chamber to which is attached a small pneumatic motor or bellows. When the valve is lifted, the air in the bellows is immediately extracted by the partial vacuum in the running.





The action of extracting this air causes the bellows to collapse and this motion is used, via an eye hook and a wire pull-down, to shift the pallets in the organ wind chest. The suction part of the organ thus comprises this valve chest and its bellows motors, one for each note.

Suction is provided by the inlet side of the pressure bellows under the organ deck which are fed by three double-acting feeders driven by a linkage from a large drive wheel on the back of the organ. This, in turn, is driven by an electric motor.

The stops are automatically controlled from the music roll, locking valves coupled to small bellows (motors) being used.

The illustrations depict the features of operation and show the pneumatic action.



# THE HAMMOND CODE OF PRACTICE

The Restoration and Conservation of man-made Antiques, Bygones and Works of Art  
(with special reference to mechanical Bygones)

The Law of the Conservation of Antiquities says:

“Antiquities cannot be created but are readily damaged or destroyed.”

It is also said that an owner is only the temporary custodian of an antique or work of art. Properly cared for, such things will outlast many owners.

All having the care of such articles should follow the general principles of conservation as outlined below.

## All Owners and Users

The articles should be properly stored out of harm's way and, wherever possible, in an atmosphere considered suitable by prevailing expert opinion, taking special precautions as necessary (e.g. use of fungicides, insecticides, corrosion

inhibitors, away from direct sunlight, conditions of controlled humidity etc).

Keep your antiques clean and regularly maintained but know your limitation in this respect, leave well alone and if need be, take them to a specialist expert from time to time for examination and overhaul every one to five years, depending upon the article.

Do not ask or expect a restorer to permanently “improve” an original beyond its original appearance or performance or imitate a maker's mark upon an alien article.

Remember that restoration is very time consuming and although there are certain limitations to the accomplishments of the most skilled restorer he can, nevertheless increase the visual appreciation, performance and value of an article.

**Mechanical Devices** should be used in accordance with the maker's instructions, where available, and operated from time to time but never left for long periods under full mechanical tension, connected to any source of energy or run down part way through a mechanical cycle or musical piece.

All loose, separate, spare (or even broken) parts, keys, cylinders, discs, records, instructions, storage cases etc. should be kept within the article itself or, where this is not possible, labelled and positively identified with the parent article, which itself should contain a reference to the location of its parts. Such parts and any relevant information should accompany any article sent for restoration. It is sometimes difficult to judge the shape or function of a missing piece.



## JACK DONOVAN

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# TORTOISESHELL REPAIRS

By David A. R. Tallis

TORTOISESHELL comes from the hawks-bill turtle for which it forms the protective covering for its back. It grows as plates which overlap each other to one third of their total area. The plates are arranged with a line of five down the centre of the back, with four either side of the centre-line, each turtle having 13 plates in all.

Its advantage over horn is that tortoiseshell can be brought to a much higher polish and is naturally decorated in a wide range of colours and patternings. It can be worked in the same way as horn but requires greater skill since it is more brittle. Under the influence of heat up to about 150°F tortoiseshell can be bent to shape quite readily but, if the temperature is raised too much, its basic structure can be attacked and the shell will start to swell, crack and split. At even higher temperatures the shell will char. It is an amorphous material and can thus crack in any direction but, if it is viewed by holding it up to the light, or in reflected light, it is possible to see lines indicating its rate of growth. Only one adhesive has proved practical with tortoiseshell — Araldite.

## To Polish Shell

Use medium wet/dry paper with water and sand down until the surface is flat. If adhesive has been used, rub until all signs of the Araldite have been removed. Scratches left by the first treatment are removed by using fine wet/dry paper. Now apply pink burnishing paste with a soft cloth, rubbing in the direction of the previous polishing until all roughness disappears. Polish with a dry duster but, if scratches still show, repeat the treatment with fine paper. To re-polish dulled shell, you can use metal polish such as Brasso.

## Tortoiseshell Repairs

**A Crack.** Force the crack apart and insert Araldite with a modelling knife or small spatula. Hold the crack shut with an elastic band and allow it to set — on a radiator if available. When hard clean off and polish.

**Joining a break.** Clean the pieces, but be careful to preserve the profile. Apply a minimum of Araldite to both surfaces, making sure all of each surface is coated. Press the pieces together and leave on a radiator to set. Constantly check the joint for position until it can support itself. When hard, clean off and polish.

**Missing piece.** Make the profile of the missing area easy to match. If possible make it a straight line or a simple curve. Look at the patterning and select a piece of shell which matches it as nearly as possible. Cut the piece to the profile with a metal fret saw, but keep the piece oversize. File away by small degrees until the piece fits snugly. Do this by holding the piece in place and filing only at points of contact until the contact is complete. Keep open side proud to avoid any chance of the piece ending up too small. Stick in the piece, allow it to set thoroughly, sand down level and then polish.

## Useful Tips

If angular or curved pieces are to be joined, the adhesive will be sufficient on its own. If the joint is straight and unsupported, it is better to peg the pieces with short lengths of shell dowel. Whenever possible, fill a gap with shell — Araldite will show although it can be disguised by the addition of a little lamp black. Tortoiseshell can be welded by pressure under steam heat. When remaking an old join, clean off all traces of the old adhesive first. You can impart a good shine on to tortoiseshell using the palm of your hand.

# STRAIGHTENING BENT TEETH

ONCE in a while you will find on a musical box which has suffered a run or some similar damage that the comb has one or two teeth which may be bent up. Occasionally, you may find one which is bent down. One way of straightening a tooth like this is the way the makers used to do it — dressing it by tapping on the top of the tooth with an anvil underneath. This works in about six cases out of every ten, so that the risk of broken teeth heaped up under the workbench is fairly high.

An alternative method is to use a soldering iron to relieve and then replace the temper. It works very well. Here's how to do it.

Select an electric soldering iron with a clean copper bit large enough

to work on the tooth without touching the adjacent one. Don't use too small a one as it will take too long to heat the tooth.

Start by coating the tooth with soldering flux or a proprietary fluid such as Baker's. Now push the tooth down by an amount equal to about twice the amount the tooth is out of alignment. In other words, if it is sticking up 3mm, then put it 3mm below the other tooth tips.

Heat up the soldering iron and charge the tip of it with solder and now carefully proceed to tin the top surface of the tooth. Work on the top surface whether the tooth has to be bent up or down. As soon as the solder starts to take to the tooth

surface, take the iron away, but keep the tooth held down for a few moments. When you release it, you should find that it has moved back into alignment. Short, thick teeth may need several attempts before they resume their proper location.

Complete the job by carefully scraping the cold solder off the tooth and then carefully remove all traces of soldering flux — it is highly corrosive. Finally paint the comb in paraffin oil and wipe it off with a clean rag.

You will find that the tone of the tooth will not have been affected by this treatment and, most important, the tooth will now stay in alignment!

Brian Etches.

# TRIUMPH TRUTH?

*Member Roger Vreeland of New Jersey, USA, sent in the following piece to your Editor, assuring him that it was absolutely true. The story is so poignant, sad and touching that we print it exactly as received . . .*

LAST week I happened upon some information concerning the maker of the Triumph music box. While skirting a riot on the east side of New York City, I spotted an aged female pushcart vendor selling pizza flambee. Nailed to an upright on her cart was a sign — a pizza painted upon a music box disc. Avoiding a club wielding bus driver who had mistaken me for a visiting Englishman, I made my way to the cart, bought a wedge of pepper and sausage, and inquired about the sign. A feted encounter! This aged lady was none other than Cleo Triumph, daughter of Sam Triumph the manufacturer of the Triumph music box. Cleo told me a doleful, dreadful tale which I will briefly recount here.

Although Sam made disc boxes, it seems that he was fascinated by cylinder mechanisms and decided to build the largest cylinder music boxes that had ever been made. In a loft above the Triumph factory he designed and constructed a huge pinning machine — one which would, when programmed, automatically pin one cylinder after another. Complete with comb, the spring-driven mechanism would also test-play each cylinder before its removal. Everything progressed smoothly until one day Sam slipped on a bit of spilled pudding and fell squarely into the machine. The locks snapped shut, Sam began to revolve and, tune by tune, was slowly pinned to death. Some time later he was discovered by a workman who rushed down into the factory yelling "The Governor's been pinned".

It proved impossible to extricate Sam from the machine, so he was placed on view still in its steely embrace, with floral pieces tastefully before the comb block. One friend, a wheel cutter, observed through tears that Sam had been pinned for 12 airs — "and beautifully, too". Another commented that it was a fitting end as Sam had had music in his soul, and in passing had become a veritable instrument himself — "He'll need no harp up there", he said, "though I do think Sam would have appreciated a harp attachment".

The grave had to be made large enough for Sam and the machine, requiring something over two plots. The circumstances were so extraordinary that the crowd at the final farewell was unusually large. As Sam and his machine were lowered into the earth a lever was accidentally moved. What happened there was a sight to see . . . and to hear . . . and to remember . . . and, in years to come, to tell to strangers, embroidered with the embellishments that occur to one as the years passed. Sam had been pinned but not tested, and the lever had moved him to the comb and started the mechanism. As Sam was lowered he also revolved, and it became apparent that he had been pinned with his favourite hymns. No sweeter sounds were ever heard than when Sam revolved and furnished the music for his own funeral. Onlookers were stupified, and a few fainted, as they heard "In The Sweet Bye and Bye", "Hold the Fort", and "Bringing in The Sheaves". Only number 12, the last air was not a hymn but the Triumphal March from Aida.

Most of the curiosity seekers were strangely quiet, feeling that they had witnessed something more than what they had bargained for, but one calloused chap remarked that although he'd heard of people spinning in their graves this was the first time he'd actually seen it happen. Another, no admirer of Sam, "figgered" that Sam was bound for the great barbeque below as he was being buried on a spit. Two determined members of the Ladies Aid Society approached the minister and demanded that Sam and machine be permanently emplaced above ground where he could be played for the solace of future mourners in the cemetery.

Sam's employees decided to purchase a suitable monument for him, and all contributed to the fund. One workman was chosen to be the representative of the group, and to accompany Sam's wife to the stone cutters' to make a selection. Poor man! Overcome by his responsibility and in some confusion, he said to the proprietor, "Sir! We've come to buy Sam an end stone!"

#### LAST WORD

WHEN A CLASS of girls at a Braintree grammar school was asked what a virginal was, one answered: "A young piano that hasn't been played yet".

#### NOTICE

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

## Letters to the Editor

*The following letter has been received by the Editor from a Member who prefers to remain anonymous (name and address supplied):—*

As a member of both the Musical Box Society of Great Britain and the older Musical Box Society International (of America), I feel I should write and voice my dismay at what seems to be a growing tendency amongst collectors in certain quarters. Perhaps I can be the first to warn against the substitution of real musical box enthusiasts by the "what's it worth" speculator.

I have never sold a musical box in my life. I collect and, within reason, I am not really concerned with the price I pay so long as I get the piece which I really want at what I believe to be a fair price. If, then, somebody tells me he bought a similar item for half the price — or twice the price — then that is just unfortunate for one or the other of us. I maintain that it is impossible to put a valuation on a musical box. To attempt to do so is both fatuous and demeaning.

So often I am asked how much a particular item is worth. As our Editor once wrote, I always answer that the value is with the collector and thus is quite indeterminate. As an obsolete piece of ethnology, they are worthless. The rise in the prices of musical boxes is only to be expected. There are too many "dealers" in the game, all assuming that they know at least as much as the collectors to whom they are trying to sell their wares. I have been collecting since before some of them knew which end to put the key in. But what is more unfortunate is the attitude adopted by some of our American friends who seem to be so hypnotised and pre-occupied with prices and values that one really wonders what their true reasons are for collecting at all. It is because these people establish prices that we must concern ourselves with them. Speaking as a collector, I do not believe that collectors should be speculators in as much as they ought by definition, to put the collecting part as of major importance, instead of worrying about how much they can expect to net by selling their "collections".

However untenable the situation hitherto,

things are getting much worse now and all hell can be expected to have been released following the publication of an American book on mechanical musical instruments. In this, the author gives what he believes to be a rarity and price value for some instruments. The evidence upon which he has based his approbation is not given, but what he has done is to sharpen the awareness of his readers as to the the money which can be made by dealing and speculating rather than collecting. It has largely put an end to the enjoyment of collecting for the true collector must now find his motives suspect. Collectors in other spheres will shun him as a potential wide-boy. In the six years which our Society has existed, it has seen many changes and achieved a great deal, particularly with the spreading of knowledge. But it has also attained a lot of the inevitable commercial trappings and seeded a rot which I for one am thoroughly sickened by. I do not want to see the true collectors or the aims of our Societies exploited by small-time speculators who will surely destroy both collectors and themselves given sufficient time.

## Vol 3 No 8

*The Revd. Jonathan White writes:—*

The anonymous letter in the Summer issue of *The Music Box* about collectors, dealers and values, raises a lot of issues and interesting problems. To answer them all, one would have to plumb the depths of the human psyche, and it would not be appropriate to attempt this here. But clearly, there is a fundamental question which is inescapable, and it is this: "What makes a person collect musical boxes, — or anything else for that matter?". The answer will be complex, and vary from one individual to another. But for most people there is likely to be a mixture of motives, — including the aesthetic appreciation of beautiful things and superlative craftsmanship, but including, many other motives as well. After all, one can appreciate beauty and craftsmanship without *owning* the article which displays these attributes.

And here we come to the crux of the matter. The collector is essentially an *owner*. And collecting is frequently indulged in essentially to satisfy the desire to own property, and lets face it, to own more and better property than others. Collecting may also provide an escape from the pressures of modern living (which is very necessary sometimes); or it may provide a way of losing oneself in the activity of collecting; or it may provide a way of finding identity for oneself in the security of like-minded people. All these, and aesthetic appreciation too. But because the latter is clearly the most acceptable motive, we tend to rationalize the others in terms of this, and deceive ourselves into thinking we have no primitive and lustful motives in pursuing our hobby!

By all this, of course, I am trying to show that in the matter of musical boxes, the motives of collectors, "true" or otherwise, in their collecting, are not necessarily any purer than the motives of dealers in their dealing. Indeed, it could well be the case that the aesthetic motive of the appreciation of beauty is purer and better developed in the dealer than in the collector, simply because he can enjoy this appreciation without the need to possess and own, and keep to himself the object of his appreciation. As to monetary values which are apparent when a musical box changes hands, these *are* assessable because they bear little relation to the quality and aesthetic desirability of a musical box, but rather to the number of musical boxes on the market at any one time relative to the number of people seeking to buy them at the same time. This may be an undesirable situation in many ways, but it is pretty basic to the economic system of our Nation, and in any case does have its good side as well as its bad, — not the least because it makes a musical box less likely to suffer the fate of being neglected, broken up or thrown away.

It seems to me that those of us who enjoy musical boxes as a hobby have much to thank the dealers in this Society for, — not only for keeping musical boxes in circulation, but also for sharing the vast knowledge they accumulate with the rest of us, both through personal contact and through the pages of this excellent Journal. May they continue to thrive and prosper!

## Vol 3 No 2

### IT STILL HAPPENS!

A lesson from "Work" magazine of January 1892, found by Gerry Planus, is still applicable today. Would that we could still buy a comb from Geneva for thirty bob!

**Musical Box Combs.** — J. B. (Kennington). — You did a most foolish thing by unscrewing the flyers or fan part of musical box. Had you read the chapter on musical boxes, you would have seen that the driving part containing mainspring must be at rest — no pressure on the barrel with pins in it. I stated it clearly, so that no one could make a mistake. The same accident has resulted in the destruction of hundreds of good boxes. I see it is some time ago that this occurred, so it is evident you have not seen the pages of WORK. So many of the teeth are gone, that repairing is out of the question; and if you will look at the barrel with a magnifying glass, you will see one tune destroyed — that is, the pins that acted on the teeth of comb will be bent, and lots broken. That you can remedy (see chapter on Musical Boxes), but you will require a new comb; and if box has the maker's name upon the card — which it will have — also the *number* of the box, you can get a new comb to exactly fit and with the least trouble; it will be Geneva, Switzerland as no one in England sells them. The cost will be about 25s. to 30s.; carriage extra — J.S.

# FROM RAGS TO STARDOM

A modern version of an old, old story

ONE day, many months ago, a young lady who was down on her luck was found by a Very Kind Man. She was in the hands of some men who had undertaken to get rid of her, for a fee, for the man whose absolute possession she had been for years. The young lady was truly in a very bad way, she was in a run down condition, extremely maladjusted, and in fact, found it difficult to do even the simplest of tasks. When sat at a piano, an instrument she had played all of her life, she was unable to play a note, or even make a pass at the keyboard with her tired little hands. Even her clothes looked tired. She had long since lost her own beautiful dress which she had worn when first taken from her home. She was now reduced to a covering made from pieces of a curtain, and not very well made at that.

Luckily for the unhappy young lady, the Very Kind Man was able, from a vast experience of dealing with similar sad cases which had come his way from time to time, to see through the surface of sad despair to the beauty and basic quality of the person who still existed behind the ugly facade. Equally lucky for her was the fact that the VKM had no intention of making her his own plaything but, if successful in taking her from the agents of her master, had no more reprehensible intention than to find her a good home where she could become again the elegant beauty she had once been.

To cut a long story short, the VKM's bid to obtain the custody of the young lady was successful and he took her, not to his home, where his wife and children might have taken exception to his unusual guest, but to his place of business. For this was not only a VKM but also a very sensible one. When they reached his place of business he took her straight to a room which he kept for such purposes and made her comfortable. Such was his desire to make her feel at home that he had even bought the piano at which she had so often played in the happier days.

When she had been installed in her new, if temporary abode, the VKM waited impatiently for the

time when he could escape from his affairs so that he could get on with the task of helping her. At last he had an hour or so free and, full of anticipation, he went to the room in which she was waiting, still sitting listlessly in her old makeshift clothes, too far gone to do anything but gaze into space with her large expressive eyes. The very first thing the VKM did was to strip her of those unsuitable clothes, eager to gaze upon what lay beneath.

No, dear reader, do not draw back in disgust at the VKM's behaviour. Remember that he *is* a VKM and that, in unclothing his young charge, he is doing so only to discover exactly how far her young body had advanced along that road to ruin on which it has been started. He took his time in examining her most carefully and completely and was at great pains to note her every reaction to his probing and pulling about of her limbs. When he was done with her he felt that he now had an intimate knowledge of her and would be able to help her all the more. Having taken some photographs of her, still in her unclothed state, he left her, since business was calling once more.

Now the VKM had a friend named Grace Thompson, who lived in Harrogate and who was well used to his burning desire to place poor strays who came his way into homes where they could be given the loving attention they needed to be able to once more hold up their heads in pride (and do other things). In fact, Grace Thompson was one of the very few people he believed skilled enough in this field to be trusted with the vital work necessary for his new young lady. He sent Grace Thompson a description of the young lady and his opinion on what was needed in the way of care and attention, this together with the photograph. Grace Thompson, who was the feminine equivalent of a VKM, and knew from what she was told, and the photograph, that the task should be most rewarding, decided to take the young lady into her home. The decision having been reached, Alfred, Mister Thompson, said that he would go to London to

collect the young lady and bring her home. Alfred did not at all mind having a young lady about the house, he often helped Grace with her work of rehabilitating these hapless creatures. It must be admitted here that the VKM accepted a handsome amount of money for passing over the young lady, but not matter, she was now in safe hands.

Grace Thompson, having greeted the newcomer with her customary open hearted warmth, set to work immediately to bring her charge back to the full life she had once enjoyed. Nothing was too much trouble if it enabled the young lady to return to the full glory of vigour and beauty. She took months to work on every tiny facet, always kind but always efficient.

Meanwhile the VKM was visited by a man who worked for some moving picture makers who were looking for some interesting personalities to star in a moving picture which was to be made with Lord (Laurence) Olivier and Michael Caine. Knowing that Grace Thompson had been most successful with, among other needy souls, the young lady, so successful in fact that the young lady was now able to play her piano as brilliantly as ever, and was beginning to look really beautiful again, the VKM suggested a visit to Grace Thompson.

What a happy result there was. The young lady, now in blooming health, is to star, with no less than seventeen of Grace Thompson's other charges, in the moving picture called SLEUTH. Such is Grace Thompson's care for her young lady that she insisted that no one but she should make the clothes in which her young protegee will star. From the photographs we publish here it can be seen just what difference Mrs. Thompson's ministrations have made. In particular note the young lady's dress. What perfection in its elegance of pearls and ruching and lace. Our dear readers are strongly recommended to go to see this moving picture. Think of it, not only does it have stars of the magnitude of Olivier and Caine, but the rest of the cast is ENTIRELY made up of the charges of Mrs. Thompson.

G.W.



# THE ORGANETTE IT'S HISTORY & DEVELOPMENT

By R. A. Moss

## Historical Significance

EASY terms, low deposits, high-pressure advertising and warehouse-to-customer sales are popularly depicted as a feature of life in the present age. However, turn up an 1898 edition of the Strand magazine and one is confronted with fantastic too-good-to-miss, think-what-you-save offers such as "The Autoharp — easy to play, easy to buy", "Seven Year Old Rye — direct from Distiller to Customer", "The Y. and N. Patent Seamless Corset (3000 Testimonials) and . . . "The Excelsior Organette — even a child can play it! Bulk purchase enables price reduction from £3 to 23/6d. Send 5/- deposit and 12 monthly payments of 1/8d".

The Manufacturing Age, as epitomised by Henry Ford, was beginning, Oil lamps, American clocks and rolls of wallpaper were being produced in their thousands. Two widely separated countries served as the birthplace for the Organette — Germany and the United States and, from both these countries, came the manufactured Organette. Produced in great quantities their sales were handled — and stimulated — in many cases by agents. With a Gem Roller Organette, complete with three cylinders, available in the US for as little as £1.12.6d., here were Organs for All!

## Hurdy Gurdies

The most mis-used title in the history of Mechanical Musical Instruments is probably "hurdy gurdy". It is sometimes utilised by enterprising (or less scrupulous) "antique dealers" to good effect by endowing an organette with a shoulder strap and calling it a "hurdy gurdy". When considering the history of the organette, it is interesting to follow the development of the use of the term "hurdy gurdy" and see how it became applicable to several quite different instruments, the organette included.

The original hurdy gurdy, also known as a rote, was a type of violin or guitar, the strings of which were caused to vibrate by a hand-cranked wheel, thereby producing a droning sound. The term "grinder" may have

originated with this machine. The use of this ceased in the eighteenth century when the "organ grinders" began to use the fully automatic barrel organ, the portable variety then receiving the title hurdy gurdy. At the end of the 18th century, free metal reeds, as used later on in the organette, were perfected and towards the end of the 19th century they were incorporated in hurdy gurdies so that machines with a larger range of music for the same portable weight and size could be made.

Now, the Gem Roller Organ was similar in design, although considerably smaller than these later hurdy gurdies, even the sound being comparable. With the present rarity of these hurdy gurdies, the title easily passes to any organette.

The conclusion of this story came with the final instrument to receive the title — street barrel pianos, also known by the equally falacious term "barrel organ" or "piano organ". These superceded the portable reed barrel organs and the operators of barrel pianos are still known as "organ grinders!".

## Historical Background

In the same way that Edison in the United States and Cros in France apparently worked independently towards the invention of the phonograph, the organette was developed along independent paths in France and the United States.

It is probable that the story began in France. In 1846, A F Debain made an automatic player of keyboard instruments. This was called the Antiphone and was claimed to replace the organist. The fingers were actuated by iron pegs set into a moving flat piece of wood. In 1852, de Corteuil substituted a perforated cardboard strip for the iron pegs and wooden plate, the holes in the strip controlling the fingers of the player machine. Working in Nantes, J A Teste developed from de Courteuil's machine the first recorded organette in 1861. He called it the Cartonium. A stiff perforated cardboard disc passed between a metal plate and the lid of the Cartonium, thereby pressing down fingers which, in turn, closed valves to the reeds from the

wind chest. A perforation in the disc released a finger, opened a valve and a note sounded.

The Germans, being a manufacturing nation, took up the idea of the Cartonium and all German organettes work on Teste's principle, although in some cases the cardboard disc is replaced by a metal disc or continuous cardboard band.

In the United States, E. P. Needham invented the simple idea of perforated paper passing over channels in which reeds were fixed, the channels leading to an air-chest. The patents covering this idea were sold to the Mechanical Organette Company which began production of this type of organette in 1876. Although no organettes appear to have been manufactured in France, this country may claim, in addition to Teste's principle, the inspiration for the American pneumatic organettes which followed those working on Needham's principle.

C F Seytre of Lyons patented in 1842 his Autophon which played from perforated cards. Hammers were pneumatically caused to strike the strings in the instrument. In 1863, Forneaux produced a pneumatic piano player, the fingers of which would play a normal piano and this led on to R W Pain's player piano, a self-acting piano as distinct from Forneaux's piano player. Pain's piano was built in the United States for Needham and Sons in 1880 and about this time the pneumatic principle was applied to organettes with the advent of the Celestina. To complete the perspective, Welte introduced paper rolls for Orchestrions in 1878 and E S Votey was granted his patent for the Pianola in 1897, this being the final stage in the development of the player piano.

The roller organ which was operated by a small wooden barrel was introduced in about 1880 and the idea for this design probably came from the larger metal-reed hurdy gurdies being produced at that time. The lateral movement made by the cylinder turning on a spiral was already in use on barrel-operated Orchestrions.

## Description of Models

**1. German:** Of the metal disc machines, the Atlas came in two sizes — 12ins. and 10<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>ins. The latter model had eighteen notes and this make had the action as a separate unit to the case whilst the rival Ariston incorporated the case in the action as the wind chest. The Ariosa, Intona and Phoenix were all similar and again came in two sizes. The familiar zinc discs with the cut-out centres provide an easy recognition factor. The sizes were 12ins. external diameter by 7ins. internal and 8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>ins. external diameter by 3<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>ins. internal. As compared with the plain slots of the Intona which pressed down all the reed pallets except those that were required to play, the Amorette was produced having punched slots which were circumferentially flanged. In this machine, the flange was arranged to press **down** the reed pallet link to sound the note. Amorettes were made in at least two sizes, the smallest had sixteen notes and the disc was 8.8ins. diameter and another, known as the "No. 18", played eighteen notes from a 10<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>ins. disc. The discs were interchangeable with the Atlas.

The Manopan and Victory organettes are examples of the card band variety, but the Kalliston is the most worthy of mention. Probably the organette with the most elaborate specification, it had 24 notes with two reeds per note making 48 reeds, together with four bells, thus requiring 28 keys. The music band encircled the end of the case.

However, the most prolific German organette in England is the Ehrlich Ariston type. Those imported by Hermann Loog Ltd. of London Wall were endowed with lids complete with large colour transfers and were called "The Hermann". The 13in. diameter leather-paper discs play on 24 notes and there would appear to have been 5,000 titles from which to choose, although this must cover several nationalities. One or two later number metal discs were made for Ehrlich organettes, but these do not play as easily as the leather-paper variety. Ehrlichs also produced card discs 11<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>ins. in diameter — these were in 1500 number series — possibly for a smaller Ariston or for the later Orpheus. Several Ehrlich zinc discs have come to light 8<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>ins. diameter in the 8000 series.

Although the Ehrlichs are also well known for their Monopol disc musical box series, nothing is heard of the Pianette, known also as the Orpheus. The action incorporated several parts from the Ariston including the leather-paper-type discs. The Pianette which was shaped like a Grand Piano but only about 2ft. long, was wound from the side. The 24 string notes were hit by hammers and when the disc perforation passed away, a damper was pushed down on to the strings of a note to deaden the sound. Thus the sustained organ notes on the discs were also sustained to a certain extent when the same notes were played on the Pianette.

**2. American:** Of those organette manufacturers in the USA, two firms stand out from the rest as the leading lights of the industry, namely the Mechanical Organette Company and the Autophone Company. The former Company is the subject of a success story which is worth tracing from the beginning right through to the decline of the organette.

Needham's idea for the paper roll organette was put into practice by Mason J Mathews who prepared the organettes for production. William B Tremain, working for the piano firm of Tremaine Brothers, took the opportunity presented by Mathews and, at the age of 36, formed the Mechanical Organette Company in 1876. The organettes were made under contract for the firm by the Munroe Organ Reed Company of Worcester and the paper roll music by the Automatic Music Roll Company of Boston. The name Munroe never appeared on any of the organettes. One of the first models was the Royal "Organette" with 14 notes, patents for which were taken out in England on July 18, 1882. The 7<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>ins. wide rolls, not being wound on to a spool, are rather tedious to re-wind. The next models to work on Needham's principle were the Celestina, Clariona and Aurephone, all with 25 notes played by 13<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>in. rolls which were wound on to spools. These models were patented in 1879. Similar to the "Royal" was the "Melodia".

At this stage, literally thousands of organettes were produced in a year. In about 1880, the range was augmented by pneumatic organettes,

the most popular model probably being the Celestina. The 5<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>in. rolls played on 20 notes. Other models using the same action as the Celestina were the Mandolina, Seraphone, Mignon, Peerless and the Ariel. The Ariel was advertised as being made in England but this probably only applied to the case. The Peerless also came in a 14 note size with 3in. rolls. a pneumatic organette in good order has the advantage that the notes answer immediately and loudly so that they are suitable for dancing and singing. The swell flap on the front of these organettes is usually kept closed for "parlour" use. The Celestina was introduced only to play rolls but was later modified to play both rolls and endless bands. Hymn tune rolls designed for singing purposes have duplicated verses while only one verse is required on endless bands. The operator simply carries on winding the band through for the desired number of verses. The Celestina rolls were grouped under different headings and number batches; 300 series were all sacred music; 400 popular, 500 operatic, 600 dance, 700 French and German. The prices of rolls, which varied according to the length of paper, are illustrated in George Wight and Company's English "list of music arranged for the Celestina". Roll No. 608, the complete Lancers Quadrille, which plays for 14 minutes, was one of the most expensive at 11/- whilst the least expensive roll, "Nearer my God to Thee" — complete in four verses with interludes, cost just 2/6d.

In 1883, the Aeolian organs were introduced by the company and such was the success of the "organettes" and Aeolian organs that in 1888, the Automatic Paper Music Company was purchased. At the same time, the Mechanical Organette Company was re-organised as the Aeolian Organ and Music Company. In 1892, the patents owned by the Munroe Organ Reed Co. were purchased and 1895 saw the introduction of the Aerial self-acting piano. H B Tremaine, son of W B Tremaine, became President of the Aeolian Company at the age of 33 in 1895. The now world-famous Pianola was introduced in 1899, a trade name which became accepted into the dictionary, substituted by the masses for the term "player-piano". By 1903, there were 13 subsidiary companies in the Aeolian

Company, an organisation which had been formed 27 years previously for the sale of organettes. A product worthy of special mention to conclude this story was the Duo-Art reproducing piano mechanism which was introduced in 1913 — the first in the United States. This was fitted to their own and other famous makes of piano such as Steinway, Weber etc. These pianos reproduced not only the music but also the style of playing of the artists who “recorded” the roll and should therefore not be confused with Pianolas which simply reproduce the music and rely on the pianola operator to supply expression. Reproducing pianos, although embraced by the aims of the Musical Box Society of Great Britain, have not yet been introduced by any Members!

In the United States, the term “roller organ” applies to all organettes, disc-operated zithers (e.g. Chordephon) and table-model automatic pianos. In England, the word is more logically used and describes those organettes which are operated by small wooden barrels. They were all manufactured by the Autophone Company of Ithaca, New York, and were one of the best selling organettes in the States. For example, in 1882, 18,000 were sold. However, just as Ehrlich organettes are rare in the United States, so the roller organettes are scarce in this country, less of this type having been imported. The “Gem” roller organ had 20 notes and played 6½in. wooden barrels which rotated for three turns and simultaneously moved laterally by means of a spiral gear — this system being similar to the large barrel Orchestrons. The playing time was about half a minute and there were eventually 1500 selections from which to choose. The Concert or Cabinet roller organs utilised the same action in a more elaborate case. A later model, the Grand Roller, had 32 notes played by a 15in. barrel and sold in the States for about £5 with three barrels. The sales of roller organs were greatly increased when the large mail order firm of Sears, Roebuck and Company took over distribution and advertising of them.

In 1880, the Autophone Company introduced an organette known by the Company name and this played perforated strips. The two cheapest models had 22 notes and the larger, treadle-operated floor models had 32 notes. The operator had to

squeeze the sides of the 22-note Autophone and the strip passed through the top of the organette, the music being produced on Needham’s principle, except for the sustained notes which were regulated by the operator controlling the advancement of the strip with a hand-controlled ratchet.

A further example of American organette was the 16-note Musette but, along with other less popular makes, no information is in my possession.

**3. English:** Whilst not unnaturally German organettes were quite widely distributed throughout the British Isles and such makes as Diana and Intona were featured in the Polyphon catalogues, several English makers devised machines as well. These displayed then typical ingenuity by being “different”. In 1896, J M Draper Limited of the “English” Organette Works, Higher Audley Street, Blackburn, produced the “Orchestral Organette”. Selling for £2, this included 28 notes, three stops (Vox Humana, Expression and Flute) which were described as “furnishing the grandest orchestral effects”. The method of operation, unfortunately, appears not to have survived and it can only be conjectured that the “Vox Humana” and “Flute” stops were represented by uncovering different reeds of different tuning, resonance or dissonance. However, this sophisticated organette no doubt followed the smaller “English” organette from the same maker. This was a neat looking shallow cabinet with an open windchest. Reeds were mounted in a small rectangular box which, complete with friction roller, was clipped over the wide tune strip. The roller pressed the perforated paper tune to a rubber-covered shaft which was connected at one end to the winding handle and at the other to the bellows cranks. This model had one “stop” named “Expression”. Its function? To open a long flap behind the reeds to make more noise! An example of the “English” organette is in the Gilchrist collection at Cowes.

Probably of similar mechanism was the Ariel Organette comprising two rows of double reeds (“double voiced”) and four stops including Vox Humana. This played rolls or endless bands and was a costly contrivance at £3.12.0 complete with six endless bands and one roll of music.

It seems likely that, somewhere, examples of these “refined” organettes survive to this day and it would indeed be interesting to have the opportunity of filling in the intriguing information which is missing.

#### Later History

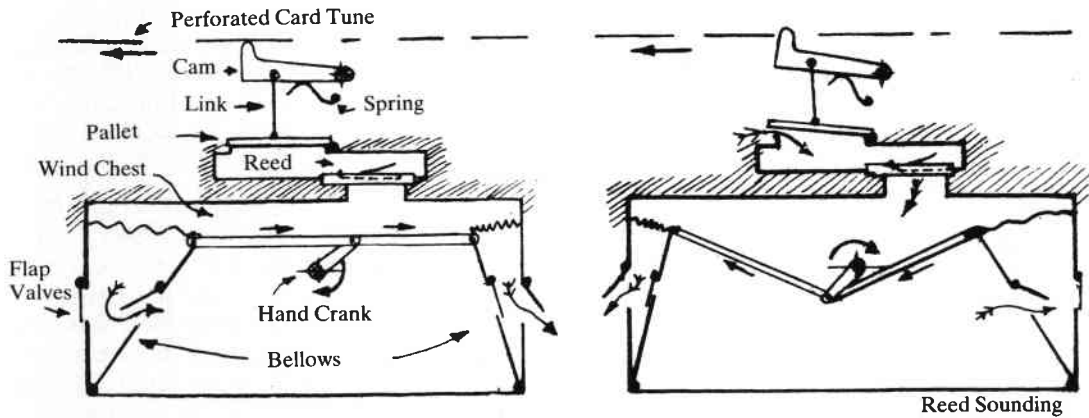
In the 1920’s, an automatic accordian actuated by a paper roll was produced in Leipzig. The control of the instrument was comparable to an Autophone, the accordian being held in the hands. The bellows were operated in the normal manner for an accordian and the right hand operated levers on the outside of the case which caused the roll to move.

Perhaps the last organette to be produced was the Rolmonica, introduced in the United States in 1929 for 7/6d. with four rolls. It was similar to a cheap mouth organ with a bakelite case, the operator blowing in the usual manner for a mouth organ. In addition, the roll was wound on with a handle operated by the right hand.

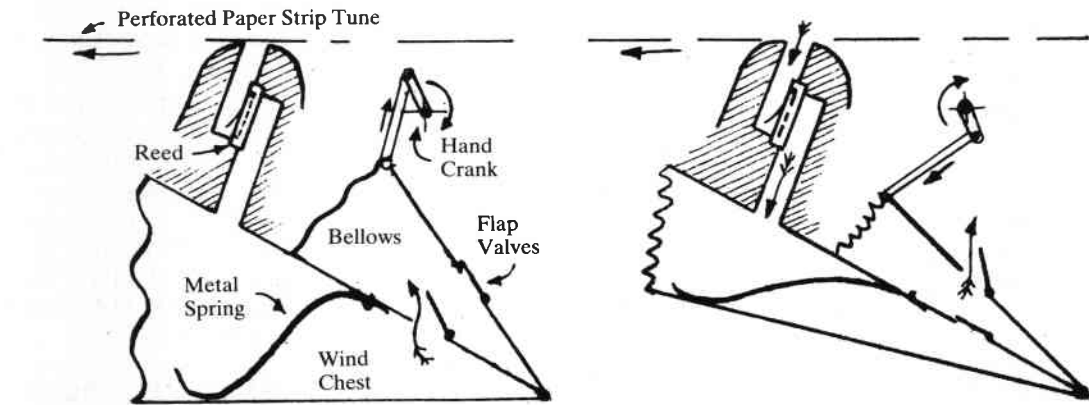
#### The Appeal of an Organette

As shown by the prices commanded by organettes in good order, there is an increasing demand among collectors for these instruments. The appeal is made up of several different factors — one of which is the act of turning the handle. The operator actually produces music and, however small is the part which he plays in the performance, the organette is nevertheless dependent upon an operator. The living example of this factor is the popularity of hand-wound barrel pianos compared with clockwork-driven barrel pianos.

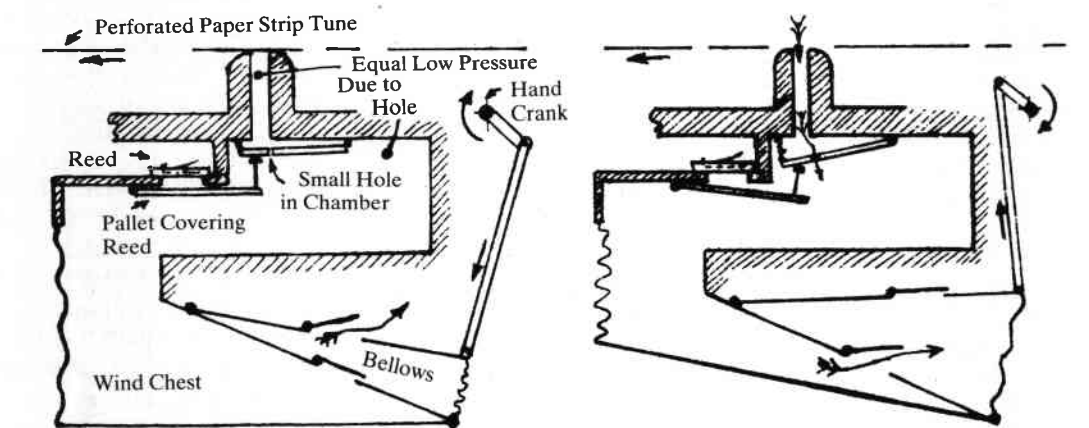
The musical quality, however, often appears to be in some doubt. An antique dealer, on being asked recently about mechanical musical instruments, replied “no, nothing musical — only a thing like an old organ!”. The removal of large quantities of dust from the reeds made the Celestina sound like a new machine! Although there are usually only about 20 notes in an organette, the inexperienced ear would probably not detect this because it is a characteristic of free metal reeds that, when sounded, they tend to produce a chord-effect and not just a pure note. The relatively small number of notes is therefore not such a disadvantage as at first believed. Again, considered mechanically, the organette has a distinct advantage concerning the length of music



**TESTE**



**NEWMAN**



**PNEUMATIC**

A.S.L.A. Org. Home

which may be played. Listen to the 120-second "Hallelujah Chorus" from "The Messiah" on a 19<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub>in. Polyphon and then wind a Celestina for the same piece of music. In the latter case, the roll plays for the same length of time as the original musical score.

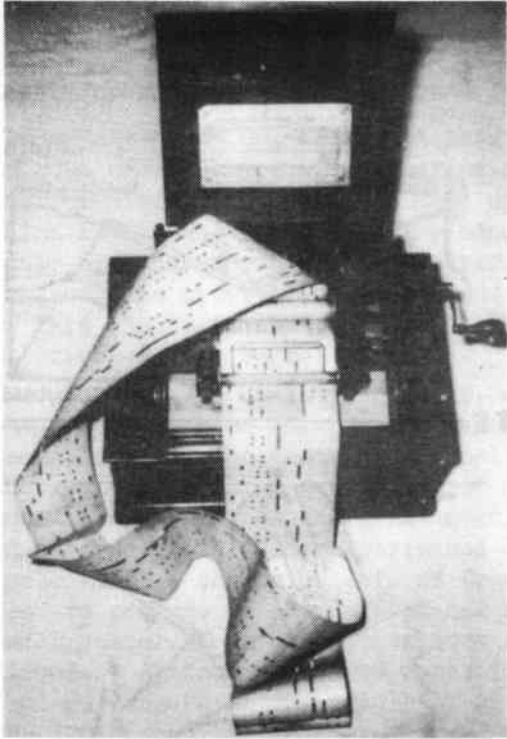
The cases are not the product of High Wycombe craftsmen but are often attractive in design and a convenient size for the modern home.

Add the factors together and one is presented with an automatic musical instrument which makes a refreshing change from the musical boxes as has already been found by many collectors.

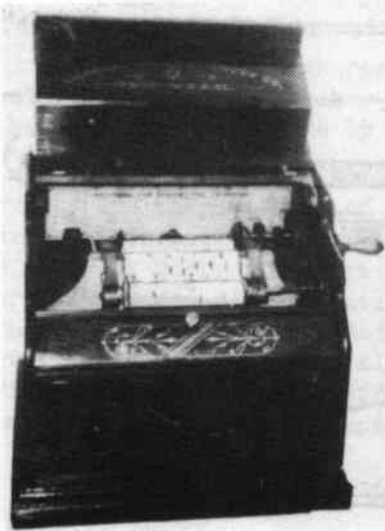
**Author's Footnote**

Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and completeness of this article, there are inevitably omissions where no information has been found available.

Members who can provide any notes or corrections are invited to send them to The Editor. The Author furthermore adds an invitation to interested Members to see and hear a small collection of organettes at his home — 109 London Road, Luton, Bedfordshire. The Author also wishes to make special reference to the assistance he has received from Mr D Smith of Takeley, Essex, who has provided much information and also the Editor of *The Music Box*.



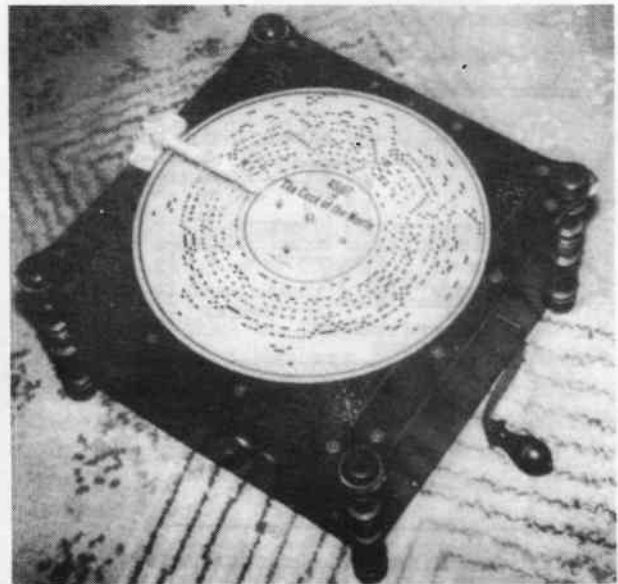
The "Seraphone" (above) and "Celestina" (beneath) both play rolls or endless bands.



The "Cabinetto" (right) plays a much wider paper roll.



Below is the Ehrlich "Ariston" which plays card discs.



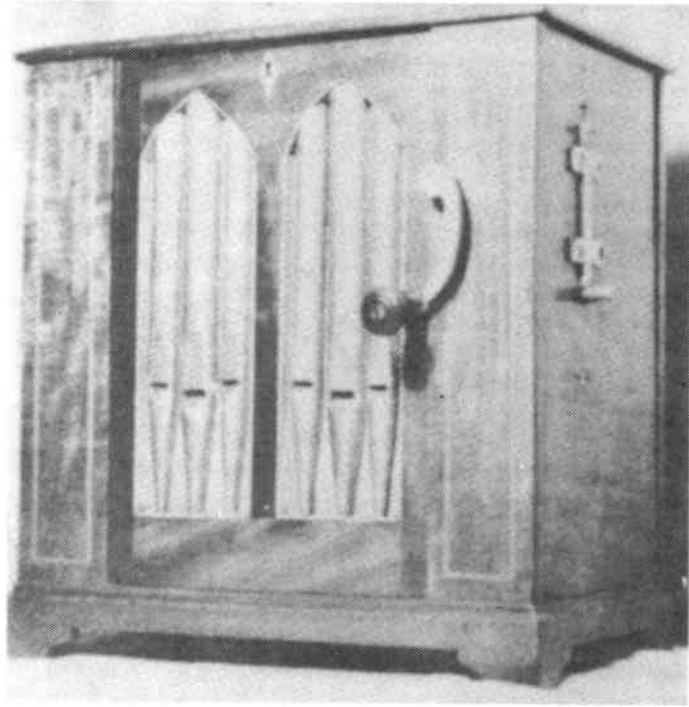


# REPINNING WOODEN BARRELS

By J. P. Hall

THE serinette illustrated was in a poor state when sent to me for repair. The bellows and feeders needed recovering, the soundboard needed overhauling, pallets and new springs, new sticker rods required, and the instrument had no pipework. Many pins and bridges on the wooden barrel were either missing or broken, racks were apparent on the corners of some of the existing bridges, so it was decided to repin the whole barrel.

Serinettes, Church and Chamber barrel pipe organs, have pins and bridges of brass. Fair organs with barrels, and barrel pianos tend to have pins and bridges made of steel. Flat section brass wire was required for the serinette, this can be purchased from some wire merchants, or one can roll round wire through rollers, alternatively one can use staples similar to which are used to bind large cardboard boxes together. These staples are of steel and can be got either bright or bronze coated, (in different sizes for stapling machines) — please do not use nails or panel pins, which are not flat section.



The Serinette



The last pin goes in

If the pins protrude from the barrel, say 1/4in., a depth gauge can be made from a piece of wood 1/4in. x 1/4in. x 6ins. long. Place the pin in position, hammer in part of the way, place gauge alongside it and drive the pin in level with the top of the gauge. Where there is a cluster of pins together, one can level off from adjacent pins quite easily. When one starts repinning, it is a matter of preference whether you start at one end, and work along the barrel or round it, — I prefer to go round it. Large barrels should be taken off their carriage support, but smaller barrels can be left on whilst being repinned. Care should be taken, not to pin the barrel where there is a mark which has been crossed out because of a mistake in the original setting out. Where the bridge of a staple is missing, and the legs which go into the wood are left standing, one can examine carefully with a magnifying glass, the top of the leg from where the top piece has broken, to determine which direction the bridge went. Extra care should be

taken where there are long staples, for the bridge can be supported by single pins underneath. Any doubtful places are best left until the barrel can be played and a decision made on whether to insert pins or bridges, and if bridges, what length. Some barrels are marked with a line drawn in ink where a bridge should be.

The work is very easy but monotonous. I tend to work at a barrel at home in the evening, having a tray with the necessary tools on my knee, and as I tire, watch the television for a while.

The repinning is a tedious process, the tools required are:— Fine pointed pliers for probing into the wooden barrel to withdraw broken pins, also for bending the wire at right angles when making bridges, and also for holding the wire whilst tapping into place. Cutting pliers, for cutting the wire to length. Light weight hammer for tapping in the pins, and bridges. Pointed knife for probing pins, and for lining up and separating bridges.

The barrel was originally pinned with two thicknesses of wire, so where a thick pin was needed, I simply doubled the wire over on itself and squeezed it up tight like a cotter pin, before hammering into place. Many pins were slack because of sideways play along the grain of the wood, due to moving the barrel without the backfall beam holding the key triggers, being in the “up” position. It is a good idea to make the legs on the replacement pins and bridges an eighth of an inch longer, so they are quite firm when driven into the wood. The method I use, is to first withdraw a good pin from the barrel as a pattern, and then for a start, proceed to cut say a hundred — slightly longer. I like to cut the wire at an angle, so one has a point in which to start the pin into the wood. When cutting the legs of a staple or bridge, I find it is better to cut the angle of both legs the same way, if one cuts the angle opposite, the staple tends to twist whilst being driven in.



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# MAKING THE BEST OF YOUR MUSIC BOX CASE

by Arthur Cunliffe

*Arthur Cunliffe takes a look at the casework of the musical box and concludes that while it is impossible to restore the case exactly as it was when new, there is much you can do to "make the best" of what you have.*

TWO or three years ago, during a meeting of the Musical Box Society, I chanced to hear a fellow member say that in his opinion the first task in any overhaul of a musical box should be case restoration. What sound advice! Surely, what can be better than having a good, sound and well-finished case ready to house the restored movement!

Having said all this, one has to decide what constitutes a case restoration. It is quite impossible to have a case *exactly* as sold originally. The very passage of time prevents this, but I feel one should aim to make a case as near as possible to original, not worse, and certainly not better. Hence my title, "Making the Best of . . ." rather than "How to Improve . . .".

First ask yourself the question: What work is necessary to make the case better? Now ask the question: Have I the ability to do this work? If the answer to the second question is yes, then I hope the following hints and tips will be useful. Please note that my remarks will be concerned more with the structural side rather than the refinishing side of the job.

Spend some time examining the case to be restored and note carefully any faults and possible snags. Then, before even removing the musical movement, examine your tools, especially your screwdriver sets. Note how badly ground and generally run down they are! How many screws have been damaged and how many scratch marks have been made by faulty screwdrivers! Screwdrivers must be ground with straight ends and then cross ground to fit screw slots exactly. Drivers with rounded corners and merely ground to a pointed V-shaped blade will tend to rise out of the screw slot when pressure is applied. Always use the largest driver possible to fit the screw slot. The width of the screwdriver blade must always equal (or nearly equal) the width of the screw slot.

Using your correctly-prepared screwdrivers, remove the movement from the case being careful to (a) replace all fixing screws back in their correct locations, and (b) have a safe home for the movement whilst the case is being worked on. When working on any musical box case please remember the following points:

1. Keep as much of the original case as possible. Every piece cut off or sanded off cannot be put back again.
2. Use glues, timbers and materials that are in keeping with the period of manufacture. Most modern quick-dry "Polly put the kettle on" adhesives are *not to be used*.
3. Stop woodworm attack by all means but do not replace case-work unless absolutely necessary.
4. Work carefully on a clean and uncluttered workbench.
5. Replace every screw, catch lock or any other bit of case furniture, in the same place as originally fitted, and fitted the same way round as original.
6. Your work and any replacement made must be of the highest workmanship possible with no attempt being made to deceive.

## Initial preparation

After removing the movement, remove the lid, keeping a careful note of the screw and hinge positions. I find it useful to lightly scratch on the back of each hinge the letters L/H and R/H to denote position. Scratch on the side facing the lid so that accidental reversal of the hinges can be avoided. Next remove the tunecard and pins, keeping them in a safe place for re-fitting later. To prevent scratching of any part of the box or lid, I find covering the bench with a thick pad of cloth can be useful.

Screws. Should a woodscrew break off during removal the remains must be removed. Attempting to re-drill

and force another screw down by the side of the broken screw nearly always leads to the second screw interlocking the first, and then that breaks, too. Then you have got trouble! Why not do it properly in the first place and drill out the broken portion? Where screw holes have become enlarged, the old dodge of glueing in a piece of soft wood as a plug is useful. Allow the glue to set before re-drilling the hole.

A general note here about screws and their fixing may not be out of place. A screw forced into wood without drilling has much less grip on the wood than a correctly fitted screw. Again fitting screws in this forced way can split the wood and result in the screw breaking in half. Ideally, two sizes of drill should be used. One to give clearance for the shank, and the primary drill to give relief for the threaded portion of the screw. If the hole is correctly prepared, the screw will go in without wandering off centre or becoming too tight. It helps to dip the screw thread into wax before the final fitting.

## Lids

If the lid is undamaged and all the inlay and stringing are there, why attack it with glasspaper? Please try cleaning the dirt out of the wood first, and polish the lid trying to keep the original patina. Remember, if you sand away half the thickness of the veneer it is done once and forever. The person trying to re-restore the case in 80 to 100 years time is not going to thank you your efforts!

Having said this, however, there is no justification for leaving a lid in a tatty, broken or previously badly restored state. Missing inlay and stringing should be replaced. Splits and cracks should be re-glued.

During the passage of time some lids have sustained damage to the lid edge. In the case of later boxes having

the black ebonised bevelled edge, severe damage can be repaired by carefully cutting away the damaged part. Only the damaged length should be cut away, and only the bevel up to the flat part of the lid. Now cut a matching piece from a close-grained wood such as red mahogany or ramin. Prepare this carefully so that it makes a good butt joint and then glue and clamp it carefully into place. Leave a day to harden off (see Fig. 1). The job is completed by carving to shape, sanding down and finally ebonising with black spirit-based polish, sometimes called black French polish. This procedure is better than trying to build up a damaged portion using plastic wood or stopper which is seldom successful.

### Beading and stringing

Some cases have a simple half-round beading on the edge of the lid, often with a central line of boxwood stringing. The trouble is that this beading is often of rosewood and even small sections of rosewood are quite unobtainable today. Here are two possible ways to tackle the job of replacing missing beading.

*One.* Select a length of hardwood timber of a colour near to rosewood. Some timbers of the mahogany family can be near. Use a tenon saw to cut a groove lengthwise down the centre of one of the sides. This must be deep enough to glue a piece of  $\frac{1}{16}$ in. flat boxwood stringing on its edge (see Figs. 2a, 2b and 2c). Glue to the edge of the lid, and clamp in place. After the glue has set, shape and glasspaper to a half-round shape (see Fig. 2d).

*Two.* This second method is not all that easy to do and may be tried if all else has failed. First cut eight lengths of rosewood veneer slightly longer than the length required and half the thickness of the lid. Glue together two sets of four leaves keeping the edges as close together as possible. Allow to set under pressure (Fig. 3a). After these two pieces have fully set, glue the  $\frac{1}{16}$ in. boxwood stringing on edge between them, hold in place with veneer tape and once more allow to set under pressure (Fig. 3b). Finally complete the job by gluing to the edge of the lid, holding in place with clamps during setting. Shape to half round

and sand down. This done carefully does work, and produces some interesting graining effects of the glue lines, but it is a difficult and long-winded way of doing the job. Please remember that at the corners of the lid the half-round edging must be finished with a 45 degree mitred joint.

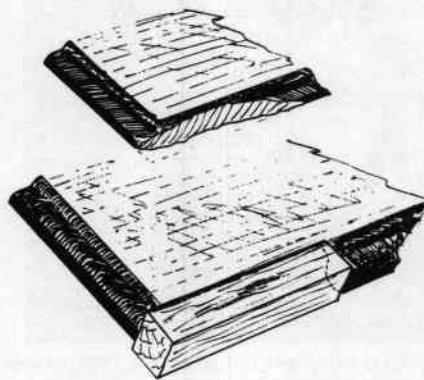


Fig. 1.

Missing stringing can be replaced without too much trouble, but it is essential to clean old glue and dirt out of the groove before fitting the new length of stringing. If most of the line of stringing is missing it is better to take out the small remaining piece and replace the whole length. Concentrate on making good corner joints. If replacing only a short length of stringing make the joint at an angle and not a square butt joint.

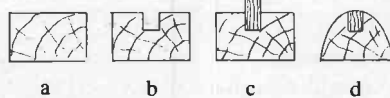


Fig. 2.

If you are thinking of tackling a few boxes, it is essential to build up a bank of many different veneers. Sometimes borders need missing pieces replacing one at a time with careful colour and texture matching.

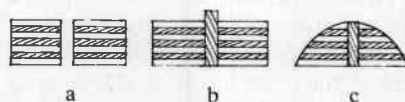


Fig. 3.

In the case of missing parts of an inlay the stock of various veneers is essential. Not only does the colour of the wood matter, but also the graining and texture of the veneer is most important. Matching as near as possible to the original is also important.

An example of the type of repair that can be undertaken without too much panic is the flower and leaf type of inlay. Supposing a leaf or a petal of a flower is missing, proceed as follows: Clean away all the dirt and remaining glue from the ground-work. Scratch lightly to help the glue to get a good hold, and please remember to use a good brown glue. Using good-quality tracing paper trace out a pattern of the missing shape and transfer this shape using carbon paper to your piece of replacement veneer. Make sure you trace it so that the grain is running in the right direction. There are on the market many good craft knives, so select a type you feel happy using, and cut out the shape cutting on the *outside* of the carbon line. If it breaks or the knife slips, start again. The words "it's near enough" really means "it is not very good, and I can't be bothered to do better".

Carefully sand off the edge of the cut-out piece, and try it in position. Most likely the piece will be just too large to fit into place. Next, hold the new piece in place and score round the shape lightly with your craft knife. Put the veneer to one side for a moment whilst you cut through the markings on the lid and remove the tiny waste bits of veneer. Go carefully, and when you try the new shape in position it should fit perfectly. Use a "brown" glue to glue into place and hold the work in place with the special double gummed veneer tape. It also can be useful to place a flat weight on the part whilst the glue is setting. Do not attempt to replace too many parts all at one go. It is far better to build up a missing veneer piece by piece rather like a jig-saw puzzle.

Flattening down should be done only when all the missing pieces have been replaced and all damage repaired. Small gaps should be filled up with Brummer stopper. Various shades of stopper can be mixed together to obtain exactly the correct tone. Flat down only as far as strictly necessary using a cork sanding block and good quality glasspaper. I have found Lubrisil glasspaper in grades 320, 240 and 180 to be really excellent. The paper is well made and any clogging can be cleared easily by lightly rubbing a brass wire brush over it. The type of wire brush used for cleaning suede shoes is ideal.





From the collection of Dr Smyly of Co Leix, Ireland, comes this illustration of a fine 1880 period musical box lid inlay. So often this is the part of a musical box case which has suffered most damage through objects, usually flower vases, being stood on the box. This type of detail taxes the restorer to the full.

### Inner glass lids

Broken glass should if possible be replaced with *old* glass. This sometimes can be obtained from old Victorian picture frames, usually obtainable quite cheaply from local auction rooms. There seem to be two methods of holding the glass in place. The first and by far the most common is by use of fine glazing pins and a putty. The second method is to hold up the glass with a quarter round wood beading pinned into place. The second type presents few difficulties, but the snag in the first type seems to be the replacing of the putty. Common putty does not seem to be correct and takes far too long to dry out anyway. Here is one way of effecting a repair.

Break the rule of not using very modern materials and use Exterior Polyfiller. Next obtain some water soluble powder paints in black, red and brown. Mix the colour with the Polyfiller powder to a shade to match the original "putty" and mix to a fairly thick paste. Using a putty or an old table knife putty up the lid and allow a day or two for the filler to dry out. If necessary final shaping can be done using a sharp knife, finishing off with glasspaper. To complete the job the "putty" should be given two brush coats of French polish. Done with care it is possible to produce a result that is very little if any different from the original. I have found that there seems to be no shrinking and no parting even after a year or so.

Sometimes the inner glass lid has been removed from the box. Tell-tale screw holes in the back give the game away. It must be a matter of personal choice whether or not to put a replacement lid back into the box, but I would always advise to do so. Why there should have been a time when people took lids out of boxes seems difficult to understand. Maybe the glass got broken and it was easier to take the lid out and throw it away rather than replace the glass.

### Woodworm

Should woodworm have attacked the case, it is vital that all the remaining grubs are killed off. It may be necessary to give two doses of treatment, the second a month or so after the first. The life cycle of the woodworm beetle can take as long as three years, so this gives an indication of the period of time the case will have to be checked for the appearance of new flight holes. There are on the market many excellent fluids for treating woodworm attack, and if they are used in the proper manner there need be no real fears. Severe attack can be controlled, and spongy wood can be firmed up, so there is no real need to make a new case for your musical movement, unless the case is so far gone that it is only the woodworms holding hands that are keeping the box together! Only once have I seen this condition.

Some movements are held in place by screwing into the base of the box. If the base and/or soundboard is so

badly wormed that there is a danger of the movement falling out, or the sound is being badly affected, then replace the base. Use seasoned pine or deal and not new unseasoned timber. Again old Victorian dressing tables and sideboards can prove to be a useful source of well-seasoned timber. All joints and construction methods should be in keeping with the original, and made to the same standard of workmanship.

Often when the bottom of a case is very badly wormed one of the ends of the case is wormed also. Access to the bottom can be made by carefully cutting away the bottom inch or so of one end. A new bottom panel can be made and slid up into its case groove via the end. A new bottom section then has to be made for the end panel, glued into position and finally painted with scumble to match the existing part of the panel. No doubt there are other ways of tackling the problem of too badly wormed portions of box, but I have found this method works and to be worthy of consideration.

Finally, a word or two about case furniture. Under this heading come things like locks, hinges, lid supports and key and control escutcheons. In the case of hinges, these should be pressed back into shape if distorted. If a hinge is so cracked or worn as to have very little useful working life left, replace with a good quality brass hinge of a similar pattern and type. If necessary cut or file the new hinge to the correct shape.

Locks can usually be made to work again, and as they are of the simple two-lever type, it is not too difficult to re-file an old key so that the lock is operative again. Pack the working parts with grease to prevent vibration before refitting the lock to the case. Vaseline is quite good for this job. In all instances screws and fixing pins should be polished and slots filed square and tidy. After final fitting all these items can be lacquered.

I hope these few hints and tips will have helped in some small way. There will be other methods of working, of course, and I have no doubt some of these other methods are superior, but at least I hope I have given food for thought. If you are in any doubt about any process mentioned in this article please practice on a scrap of wood first. Only work on the actual case when you are confident all will be well. Good luck and many happy hours of work!



# FROM PIANO SCORE TO DISC OR CYLINDER

By Robin Timms

AN IMPORTANT respect in which a musical box differs from some other forms of mechanical music is that it exists as an instrument in its own right. A mechanical organ or player piano for example attempts to reproduce what a human performer might play on a non-mechanical instrument. At best it does this very well; indeed its success is judged by the extent to which it creates an illusion, to its own self-effacement. The musical box however in its

purest form does not pretend to imitate other instruments; it exists in its own right as a highly individual form of art, and needs no apology for that.

The purpose of this article is to show by means of a little detailed analysis of a few bars of music something of how the musical box comes to possess its highly individual character.

Taking the first three phrases of *God Save the Queen* (this tune will

be familiar to most musical box collectors!) we will put ourselves in the place of one of the original music arrangers and set the music up for a medium sized box with 54 notes. The form of the music which we shall be working towards is the actual arrangement used for the 11in. Polyphon.

First we take a hymn book from the shelf and turn up the *National Anthem*, where we find something like this:



The double bar lines indicate the ends of the phrases.

The music as it stands can be played on piano or organ, though it is primarily intended for singing in four part harmony. It was usual for musical box arrangers to work from the piano score — but this is only the beginning of the exercise, because the piano and the musical box are poles apart and an arrangement which suits the one is useless for the other.

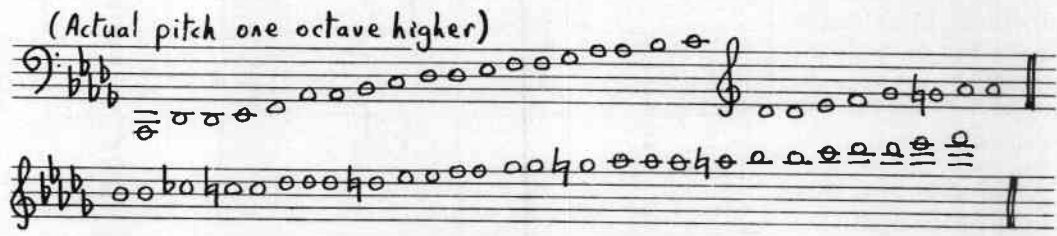
Consider some of the differences between the two instruments. The piano has 88 notes; our musical box only 36 *different* notes. The piano uses all the notes of the chromatic scale throughout its 7¼ octaves; our

musical box which spans 4¾ octaves uses in general only the notes of the diatonic scale, with an occasional accidental inserted in certain octaves. One note of the chromatic scale, the sharpened supertonic, does not appear at all; while in the bass octave only four notes are used — dominant, tonic, supertonic and mediant. The piano can be played with equal facility in any key: our musical box can use only one basic key, with occasional excursions into the relative minor and the key of the dominant. With the piano it is possible to control the duration of a single note or chord and, very important, to accentuate a single note, chord or melodic line thereby giving shape and meaning to the

music as a whole. With the musical box each tooth is plucked in the same way on each occasion, and therefore the note always has the same volume and duration. With the piano it is possible to repeat a single note rapidly: to achieve this on a musical box, it is necessary to have two, three or four teeth tuned to the same note.

But the music arranger is not daunted by the apparent limitations of his instrument; on the contrary, he is going to make virtues of necessities.

Having before us the score of *God Save the Queen*, we now need to work out the tuning scale of the musical comb. It proves to be as follows:



We compare the score with the tuning scale only to find that hardly any of the notes in the score are available. We must transpose the music into the key in which our comb is tuned.



Still we have barely started; for to transcribe this on to disc or cylinder, even though many of the notes are now available, would be to fail to recognize the character and spirit of the instrument with which we are dealing: it would sound very thin and dull.

We will consider the melody first. It is usual to place the melody in the highest available octave, so that it is prominent, and sings out above the rest of the music. In the first phrase this works out very conveniently, but in the second phrase the highest note, G flat, takes us beyond the

highest note on the comb, so that it is necessary to jump down an octave. To do this just for one note would sound strange, so we bring the whole phrase down an octave. The third phrase can go back into the higher octave.



We shall now consider in more detail the treatment of the melody in a bar-by-bar analysis, but first, to avoid superfluous musical examples, here for reference is what our musical box will finally play. Square note heads indicate that two teeth tuned to the same note are plucked simultaneously. It should also be noted that the music sounds an octave higher than written.



#### Bar 1

The melody can often be made more prominent by being duplicated in the octave below, and even in the octave below that. The melody in the top octave reads D flat, D flat, E flat. It so happens that there are two D flats on the comb in this octave so that one can be used for the first melodic note and the other for the second, without fear of using the same tooth in too rapid succession—that is to say, in the case of a disc box, before the star wheel is again in the correct position. In the octave below there are three D flats and two E flats. We therefore use two of the D flats in the first chord, being on the strong beat of the bar, and the other on the second. On the third beat of the bar we make use of both the E flats. To strengthen the melodic line further we have D flat, D flat, E flat two octaves below the top note also. Thus, corresponding to three notes in the piano score, we have eleven projections on the disc.



Because the melody is fairly slow moving, the notes of the top octave of each chord are spread to give an *arpeggiando* effect, so that the sound is kept alive and we do not just have a series of chunky chords which quickly die away.

#### Bar 2

The first melodic note has to last a beat and a half. As the sound of a single plucking of the tooth will not last that long, we repeat the note, again in the highest octave, on the second beat of the bar. It is not also repeated in the lower octaves, because we do not want to make it too prominent here, merely to give a sustaining effect. The harmonies will move with the following note of the tune, as in the piano score. Returning to the long first note of the bar, we fill up the first beat, having struck the melodic C, with a run of demisemiquavers which led naturally to the repetition of the C at the beginning of the second beat. The melodic D flat, lasting but half a beat, needs no ornamentation. The E flat on the third beat however does call for some simple elaboration. In the highest octave there is only one E flat, so that no trill is possible here. In the octave below however there are two E flats and two Fs so that a rapid trill is possible to keep the sound alive using the melodic note, E flat, and the note above. However, having played each of these four teeth, F, E flat, F, E flat, in rapid succession, we cannot use them again till the next beat. Hence the rest at the end of the bar in this part of the music.

#### Bar 3

Because of the absence of a very high G flat, the melody had to be brought down an octave. To count up the change and make use of the higher notes on the comb where possible we shall make use of upward runs in demisemiquavers. In the case of the two melodic Fs we can conveniently run up the scale to the higher F, the top note of the comb, using the eight notes of the scale in sequence to give us the needed eight demisemiquavers. As the first note of the run is also F, this will further serve to bring out the melody. On the third beat we cannot run upwards to a higher G flat, but we can go up as far as E flat and then fall back using the notes of the E flat minor chord indicated by the harmony to the

G flat on which we started. All three melodic notes in this bar are emphasised by making use of both adjacent teeth which are tuned to them. Corresponding to the three melodic notes in this bar of the music, there are no fewer than 27 projections on the disc — a real field day for the arranger! It is in ways like this that he not only overcomes apparent limitations, but goes beyond this to create a new and subtle form of art.

#### Bar 4

We start on F again, but this time the note is to last a beat and a half. As with the C in bar 1 we repeat the F on the second beat of the bar but this time we can run up to it with eight demisemiquavers and then remain in the highest octave. Whereas the upward runs from F in the previous bar finished on F, in this case we want F to come at the beginning of the second beat, and at the end of the first. This can be achieved by inserting an extra note, G natural, in the run of eight so that the last of the demisemiquaver is E flat, not F. On the last beat of this bar the melodic D flat is kept alive by being played in rapid succession with the D flats an octave below. (There are two D flats available in the highest octave).

#### Bars 5 & 6

As in bar 1, the melody appears in three octaves, the top octave being played *arpeggiando* and two teeth being plucked simultaneously is the second octave.

Scarcely less important than a carefully considered melodic line is a sound bass. In the case of a disc, bass teeth can be plucked a second time less rapidly than teeth near the top of the comb. However, the bass is slower moving, and presumably this is why the bass notes are nearest the centre of a disc. It needs to be remembered too that the duration of sound of the bass notes is greater than that of the treble.

#### Bar 1

Just as we placed the melody in the highest available octave, so we place the bass as low as possible. Thus we get off to a good start with a low D flat on the first beat of the bar. Next we use the lowest available B flat; but on the third beat we used

a low E flat in place of the G flat in the transposed piano score. This is because there is no really low G flat available. This produces a supertonic chord in the root position instead of in the first inversion, which is preferable to a first inversion chord lacking a really low bass note.

#### Bars 2 & 3

The bass line is kept alive matching the busy treble by moving in quavers instead of crotchets. The low A flat is repeated at the octave on the second beat of bar 2, and the quaver movement is maintained in bar 3 with a descending figure which starts in the middle register and is taken over by the bass.

#### Bar 4

The quaver movement is continued in the tenor register during the one and a half beats of the low A flat. This should be followed by an A natural, but no such note is available in the bass, and even if it were, it might not sound effective, but rather smudgy, as the A flat would need to be dampened when the A natural sounded, and the A natural would need to be dampened when the B flat followed it at the distance of half a beat. Since this could not easily be achieved it is perhaps just as well that there are not too many bass notes available which might conflict with one another if sounded in too quick succession. Perhaps this is why a low G flat is omitted from the comb: it would create a dissonant semitonal clash if sounded close to the F. Instead of A natural, then, A flat is used again giving a simple dominant chord instead of a diminished seventh — which some might regard in dubious taste anyway!\*

#### Bars 5 & 6

At the beginning of bar 5, E flat replaces G flat as at the end of bar 1; and in bar 6 the single chord is kept alive by quaver movement on the tonic chord which will lead back to a low D flat at the beginning of the next bar. Notice that the final octave lacks a low F. This is because there is only one tooth for this note, and that has been plucked only a moment ago.

Having established good melodic and bass lines, the rest falls into place without too much difficulty. We need well spaced chords using the notes indicated in the transposed

piano score, but modified sometimes where the bass line has been changed. The top octave of certain chords has been marked *arpeggiando*, but there is a slight tendency for all chords to be played in this way, the *arpeggiando* however being so rapid that the ear is scarcely aware of it, except that sometimes a tendency for the lowest note of a chord to anticipate the rest by the slightest fraction is noticeable.

Whereas the piano score contains 64 notes — 16 notes of melody supported by four part harmony — the corresponding bars on the musical box use 203 notes. Trills, runs, arpeggios, oramental figures, spread chords, repeated notes — a determination to use the full range of the musical comb — these are the ways in which the music arranger not only triumphs over the limitations of his instrument, but creates a distinctive form of musical expression of great subtlety and charm.

*\* The diminished seventh came into its own with those pianists whose job it was to accompany silent films. In this instance it formed a musical rouse not entirely unsuited to its medium — Editor.*

# Brian Clegg

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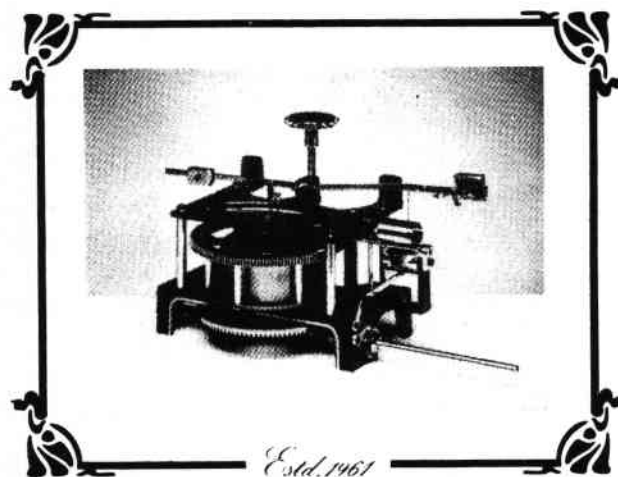
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# TONI PINS A BARREL

by George Eves

STREET music has always played an important part in town-life and perhaps nowhere was this mongrel music more plentiful than in the bye-ways of old London. Even as recently as a mere twenty years ago, a "pe-annah ona barrer" could still be found occasionally in Soho on a Saturday night. Legion are the stories of the old grinders! George Eves, an old traction-engine driver, often had to steam along the London Road to the old Covent Garden vegetable market with a load of produce. This used to take him close by Seven Dials at the top end of St Martin's Lane. Seven Dials, named after the seven streets which radiate from the centre, has at various times been notorious for all manner of things — thieving, pick-pockets, vice and murder. But in the twenties it was renowned for its itinerant craftsmen, its little workshops and its Italian "piano-organ" men. Reprinted with grateful acknowledgement to *The World's Fair*, and to George Eves, here is his tale of past time. Roger Booty discovered it.

Engine driving in rural Kent, which took me into many places, towns, villages, great estates and even to London in due season, was a better education than any university could provide. I met people of all sorts and denominations, the rich, the poor and afflicted. I saw industries at close quarters, gained an insight into church and chapel music and country crafts ranging from bee keeping to pillow lace; the list is endless.

Much has been lost in this super-market era, but every now and then a word here or a letter there rekindles the simple things of living in the steam era; like recently when somebody or other mentioned pinning street pianos and organ barrels. In a flash I was up in a tender again, pulling into the yard of a big warehouse with a truckload of new spuds, cauliflowers and chips of strawberries; into the depot for London's most famous hotel. But none of it was in plastic bags. Everything was in woven baskets of diverse sizes made in a small factory not far from home at a place called Hextable.

This huge hotel larder, as you might call it, was situated at a then downtown area known as Seven Dials. No doubt it's all very different now from when I knew it before old Adolph had knocked it about a bit and before the developers moved in. Then it was a maze of narrow streets and alleys, the home of many backyard industries such as silver work, lockmaking and brass instrument making. But more than all else, costers came here to hire their "barrers" and buy their donkey carts. And closely allied to this were the street piano organs. They repaired and maintained many in one dingy workshop which was once the ground floor of a tenement dwelling, with all the room partitions torn out.

In a world of many smells covering paint, varnish, timber and burnt wood from the smithy at the far end where the wooden wheels were re-tyred, three old jossers plied their street music. It was presided over by a rotund character from the sunnier climes of Italy, and it goes without saying his name was Antonio. There were always snatches of music here, but never a complete tune. Boss and employees sang away all day as they worked, happy as birds.

A chip of strawberries gained me the freedom of the dimly-lit place where I learned much about the world of street organs. The boss's daughter also worked in an odd corner painting the pictures which added a touch of class to the three front panels of the instrument and Rosina always looked as though she had just come off the stage in the nearby opera house after the curtain had fallen on Act 2 of "The Barber of Seville".

Thus the making up of the pinned barrels, a thought-provoking job for the uninitiated as I was then, was made to look so very simple in the hands of these craftsmen to whom repairing "barrers", lining out the coster donkey carts and pinning barrels were much the same thing.

## How a barrel is made

Now a piano barrel starts off as a slab of well-seasoned beech or birch. This first of all gets a steel spindle in its centre, and it is on the centres the ends are provided with that the drum is turned to the length and diameter the particular instrument demanded. On to it then was glued a sheet of brown paper, which just met end to end, which carried the seven, nine or 11 tunes in the form of hundreds of little black dots.

Toni bought the sheet music of the tunes he wanted in the Charing Cross Road and posted it back to

his native country, where the musical maestros translated crochets, quavers, semi-quavers, etc., into myriads of black dots on the master copy. These were then printed off on a hand press and sent back in the form of copy. To look at these sheets and the faceless dots was to marvel at the ability of the man who could convert music to dots. The sheet glued on, it was rubbed down hard with a "boner" and then a calico bandage 4ins. wide was wound tight over it all like a sleeve. This was then set aside for a week after which time the cocoon was removed.

The next job was to key on one side of the steel spindle the bronze gear wheel, which would, in due course, mate with the worm wheel on the turning handle spindle. Next the paper-covered drum was set up in a stand, which was nothing more than the innards of a discarded street instrument, and up to this the "pinner" drew a high stool after providing himself with a box of pins, a special 2oz. hammer, a depth punch and a sharp bradawl. And there he was, all set for a week or maybe two weeks work driving in hundreds of cast steel pins.

On every dot the bradawl made a starting hole for the pin, which was then hammered in gently until it was in roughly far enough. Then the depth punch was set to get the pin down to its precise homing. This punch had a hole drilled in one end which accommodated the pin snugly and in depth it gauged the correct amount the pin should stand out from the drum.

This job would go on for days on end. Some "pinner" worked in bands round the drum the gearing answered to a couple of turns on the handle. Others worked in lines across the drum but whichever the method, by the time all those hundreds of pins had been inserted, it reflected



music. The whole art of this job was that the pins had to be dead upright, as a pin leaning either forward or backwards meant the note sounded either early or late; excruciating to the ears of these professionals.

### First performance

Finished barrels were not everyday events, but sometimes I would wander in that dingy workshop where Toni all smiles, told me my arrival was just right, for these occasions called for a little celebration. There was wine and Garibaldi biscuits, after which Rosina was called upon to churn out the first tune. The four maestros, one grubby engine driver and Rosina hardly formed a distinguished group, but the joyous sound which filled the workshop was the march "El Abanico".

The lass turned the handle effortlessly with one finger. Next there was the Soldiers' Chorus from the opera "Aieda". But the tune after that came straight from the music halls which were very popular at that time, the equivalent then of "top of the pops", which had old Toni throwing back his head to provide a vocal for this rollicking number . . .

"Lottie Collins has no drawers,  
Will you kindly lend her yours,  
For she's going far away  
To sing tah-rah-rah-rah  
bom-de-ay."

The chorus was taken up by the others as only the Italians can sing, with the fair Rosina trilling away an octave above. I won't bore you with details of the other tunes where British musical hall songs vied with arias from Italian operas. The final tune was the signal for more wine and watercress sandwiches. These little ceremonies always intrigued me, especially the fact that the biscuits came first and the watercress sandwiches after.

These pianos made the trip to London tolerable, for getting an engine and three trucks up the Old Kent Road, surrounded by trams with bells clanging impatiently, horses and carts of all descriptions, donkey carts and costers' barrows is no fun. But suddenly, out of the blue would come the tinkling music of a street piano. It was a part of that teeming thoroughfare, the instrument in the gutter with some poor scrap of humanity turning the handle and holding out his cap hopefully, glad of a copper once in a while.

### A sense of ceremony

Women, with arms akimbo, leant against the street doors or railings, while there were always little urchins standing wide-eyed before the music-maker fascinated with the moving belt of pictures which progressed often unevenly across the front window. Repeated ad lib, it never failed to hold the attention of these children to whom it must have been something pretty wonderful.

I often recall old Toni, his narrow street of industry, the workshop where even a sense of ceremony survived when a new barrel had its launching and the arguments that were part of every morning, when the would-be hirers of pianos were always getting into fierce harangues with their owner, and just when I was expecting mutiny to rear its ugly head, it would suddenly dissolve into loud peals of laughter with much back-slapping and hand-shaking. "Foreigners", old Tom Hodges, the steersman would mutter darkly "they puzzles I, they does".

Come to think of it, we are all a bit of a puzzle ourselves to Europe if not elsewhere. There's no wine and currant biscuits today when a 200-ton diesel loco, is rolled out of Doncaster or when you purchase a £300 hi-fi. There was a time when "wetting the new baby's head" was a great occasion at the local hostelry, but now it's nothing short of a hotel do with scampi and Chateau Maltravers. Street piano men would be hard put to raise the price of a rally sandwich in Hogs Norton today.

Where has all the sanity of the steam era gone?

*Technically-minded readers will find this article of particular interest, especially as it mentions a system of barrel-noting which is different from the usual "clock-face" method. This version of rigid notation is thought to have been used by some barrel organ builders as well. — Ed.*

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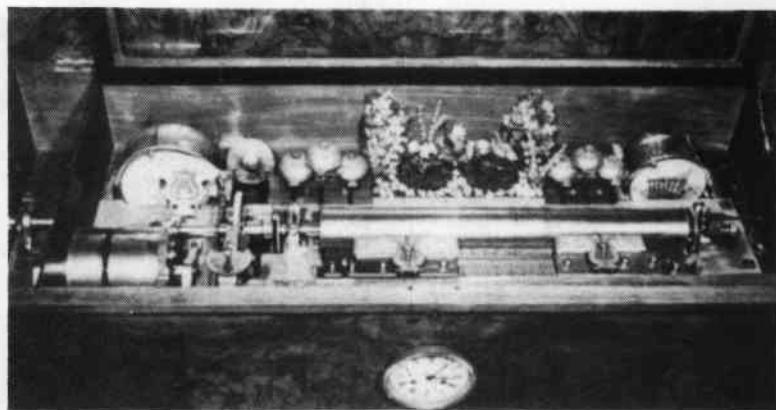
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LONDON

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.



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

**John E.T.Clark.(England)**

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

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

And so the chain continues.

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.

**Dario Valenzuela**

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