

1962 — Silver Jubilee Year — 1987

Volume 13 Number 3

Autumn/Fall 1987

Edited by Graham Whitehead

The Music Box



Inside Getting Started
 Watermouth Castle
 Erlich's Lang Notenblatter Ariston

The Journal of the Musical Box Society of Great Britain

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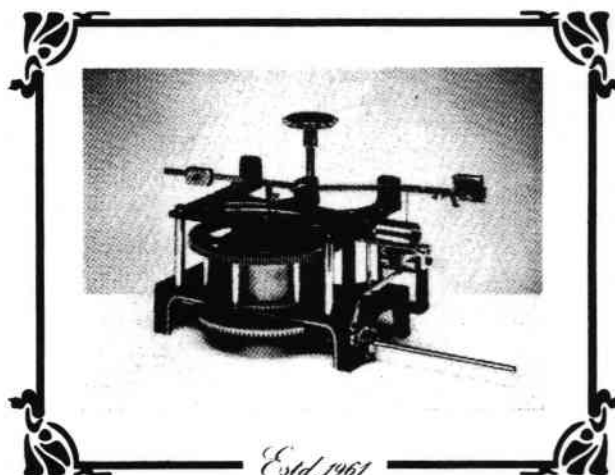
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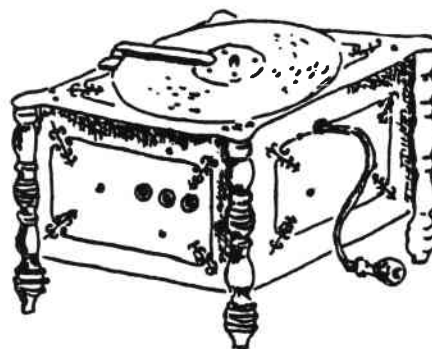
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The Music Box

An International Magazine
of Mechanical Music

The Journal of the
Musical Box Society
of Great Britain.

Volume 13
Number 3
Autumn/Fall 1987

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Front Cover: Roger Luterbacher, although not taking part in the Thun Organ Festival, did manage a little playing whilst posing for the "Music Box" alongside Thun railway station.

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Editors Notes

How bewildering the terminology of musical box jargon must be to anyone picking up the interest of mechanical music. Simple words which are common terms such as, "run", "endless screw", "geneva stop" often mean nothing to the uninitiated. In this edition we start an occasional series entitled "Getting Started". The first contribution is from John Powell and it is hoped that other experienced collectors will write similar articles intended to benefit the novice collector by informing in a non-technical way some of the basic facts of mechanical music.

In recent months many requests for permission to reproduce articles from the "Music Box" have been received. Requests have been made both by private individuals and societies. Whilst I have found these requests quite flattering, I must ensure that the "Music Box" retains its exclusivity. Permission to reproduce from the pages of our Society magazine cannot be given on a "carte blanche" basis. Each item must be considered on its merits and permission from the author must also be obtained. It must be remembered that without its contributors there would be no "Music Box". Authors' wishes must be taken into account. For instance, it may be the case that an author whose work has appeared in a prestige publication such as the "Music Box" may not wish his work to be reproduced elsewhere in a duplicated format which he may feel would distract from the quality of his article and photographs. At the other end of the scale I must make sure that no commercial benefit is achieved by the reproduction of articles produced by our contributors without cost to the society. On the other hand, in allowing other organisations to reprint items, we do benefit from the publicity, provided of course that the article is fully credited – I will be requesting publishers to include the address of our Membership Secretary in any future reprint.

However, the real benefit has not yet happened during my term as Editor. The most ideal situation would be for an exchange of material with foreign language publications. These could then be translated and reprinted to our mutual advantage, maybe we shall be hearing from our friends in the German society? ■

NEWSDESK

BIZARRE EFFECTS WITH AN AEOLIAN

Mechanical music is to be featured in a major TV film, "Poor Little Rich Girl" – the life story of Barbara Hutton, granddaughter and heiress of Frank W. Woolworth. The film, being made by ITC will be screened on American TV in 3 two-hour episodes this Autumn. British viewers will have to wait a little longer for a screening by ITV. The film which includes an extraordinary mechanical music sequence, is based closely on the book of the same name by C. David Heymann and is published in England in both hard and soft back by Hutchinson Publishing Group, London W1. The source of information on the report that follows is directly attributed to this publication and gratefully acknowledged. The paragraph in italics is a quotation from it's author.

Barbara Hutton lived a fairytale exis-

tence, a life beyond reality. With the wealth inherited from her father Frank Woolworth, she spent her fortune friviously. Despite her casual extravagance, her wealth, accumulated from the Woolworth empire grew faster than her spending ability.

Barbara was born in 1912. In her teens she was not only the most travelled young lady in New York society but also the most talked about. She was perpetually at the sharp end of the journalists' pencils. Society gossip columns bristled with rumour, speculation and sensation. For instance; the New York Times published an editorial condemning Barbara's lavish expenditure on the occasion of her 22nd birthday party at the Paris Ritz, claimed to have cost between \$10,000 and \$50,000, drawing a parallel between her life-style



For the filming of Barbara Hutton's life story, the fireplace in the library at Highclere Castle, Newbury, England was disguised with the help of a little scenery, as a case for an Aeolian pipe organ. The console sitting on a boarded-over hearth came from Napton Nickelodeon.



Amid lightning flashes a ghostly effigy of the composer R. Wagner appears through the organ casework.

and the low wages paid to employees of the Woolworth company. In fact, every little detail of her life made the press, her behaviour, her whereabouts, her lovers, her husbands, her divorces and her demise. Even after her death in 1979 her legend lives on. Barbara's life story is not a happy one, it is tragically sad. Even if she was the richest woman in the world, no amount of money could buy the happiness she was so constantly denied.

Fifty years of sensational newspaper innuendo have covered the glossy side of Barbara's life... but now author C. David Heymann has pieced together the unseen private life, by writing this biography. Before her death C. David Heymann made many lengthy tape recorded interviews. Later he went through a trunk load of Barbara Hutton memorabilia including Barbara's own notebooks. This gripping adventure of true fantasy "Poor Little Rich Girl" has now been published in England and film rights have been acquired by ITC of America. The film which bears the same title as the book is currently in production on both sides of the Atlantic. A lavish big budget epic designed with spectacular settings with no expense spared to capture an atmosphere as near to real life as possible.

Your Editor has been involved with the opening sequences as a technical advisor to the film and Napton Nickelodeon's Aeolian pipe organ was hired for the most bizarre demonstration of mechanical music imaginable.

According to David Heymann's book, one of Barbara's first memories was of Winfield Hall, a large mansion on the north shore of Long Island. After her mother's suicide, five year old Barbara was taken there and put in her grandfathers care. These were the twilight years for 64 year

old Frank Woolworth, the tycoon whose store had changed the merchandising face of America. *By now age and illness had taken its toll, weakening his broad frame and whitening his ruddy face. One of his few pleasures left in life was in his music room – a large Aeolian organ. Barbara could remember the bizarre sight of "Woolly" in his music room where he sat for hours at the console of his "favourite toy" a \$100,000 Aeolian Skinner manual player pipe organ. At the flick of a switch the room would be plunged into darkness. After a series of synthetic lightning flashes, the music would burst forth and a pinkish/amber glow would illuminate the high ceiling, gradually turning to green, to deep mauve, the colours varying and changing with the sweeping tones of the composition. With every new piece of music a phantasmagorical portrait of the composer would slowly rise up from the darkness and be reflected against a specially designed screen. As the inexhaustible supply of music rolls played on, Woolworth would slide his fingers across the silent keyboard.*



Surrounded by synthetic lightning flashes an ageing Frank Woolworth played by veteran actor Burle Ives, demonstrates the Aeolian organ, to his young granddaughter, played by Swedish actress Matilda Johanasson.

These early childhood memories are somewhat exaggerated, either that or we've all missed a mysterious delight from the Aeolian stable! Flashing lights, pop-up images! No wonder it cost \$100,000 (about £25,000 – the larger Welte organ installed in England at Sir David Solman's house at around this time cost £3,000).

The Aeolian-Skinner link-up came in 1936, after the collapse of the Aeolian Company. Skinners were not producers of mechanically played instruments. They produced pipe organs for large halls and churches. Skinners bought the insolvent Aeolian company in America for a nominal sum (in the same way Alfred Davies in Northampton, England bought the English interests). Heymann pre-empted the takeover by 20 years! A forgivable error as the story does not involve the Aeolian company. Whatever happened to this remarkable instrument? Perhaps our American friends know further details or specifications?

The location chosen for this Long Island setting was Highclere Castle, Nr. Newbury, Berkshire, England. 19 lorry loads of props and equipment were sent there with a production team of over 100. ■

MECHANICAL MUSIC MEDICINE!

Pedalling a pianola keeps you fit – indicates this extract of a recent report from St. Matthew's Hospital, Staffordshire.

The pianola for which we have a large number of rolls was donated to us by the relatives of a patient who died some months ago at this hospital, having originally come to this hospital in the late 50's. He seems to have served in the Army during the First World War and during that time suffered shrapnel wounds and bullet wounds to his legs. It appears that either as the result of the bullet wounds, or, as he told me, as a result of close proximity to a land mine explosion, his leg and knee joints were fairly badly injured.

Whilst recuperating, the Doctors at that time advised him that he needed to keep his joints and legs exercised, and that using a pianola was one of the methods recommended to him. At any rate he certainly acquired his Rusalo pianola some time after this period and it must have served him extremely well, since he was still walking up to 2 days before his death at the age of 97!

Certainly this is not, so far as I am aware, a common therapeutic device in view of the limited availability of pianolas at the very least. Since this is not an orthopaedic hospital, I do not know whether this has occurred in other cases but I must admit that our Senior Physiotherapist is quite interested in using the pianola if this should be possible – for both remedial exercise and entertainment of the patients. ■

THUN DREHORGAL FESTIVAL

Your Editor reporting from Switzerland

Not even perpetual rain falling over much of this three day event could dampen the organ grinders spirits, at the Fifth International Street Organ Festival held at Thun 17th to the 19th July. But the inclement weather did send the grinders scurrying for sheltered pitches resulting in many of the three hundred participants bunching together under the best covered areas. The seven man organising committee, including Christof Brechbuhl, son of the late Heinrich, had provided a full programme for both grinders and the public, which started on Friday with the participants playing music throughout the day, in the picturesque old town of Thun. The rain started falling in late afternoon and continued throughout most of Saturday. The open air entertainment provided by artists from Olympia Circus was severely curtailed by the rain, but did eventually take place in late evening. By this time



Thun Organ Festival, 1987

Top: Music in the rain – an umbrella says it all. A 33 key organ built in 1895 by Ruth und Sohn. The organ has 52 pipes and was brought to Thun from Holland by Pieter Kuindersma.

Centre Left: Felix Strub from Luzern dodges the rain with a makeshift plastic mac.

Middle: Freddi Kunzle, and Peter Alscher with a Frati/Mellotone reed organ made in 1895 with 26 reeds and 5 bells.

Centre Right: MBSGB member, Hank Waelti from Utzigen, Switzerland.

Left: Black Forest concert organ by Ruth und Sohn, 67 pipes, built in 1922.

most of the organ grinders who were not still playing had made their way to the Bier Keller reserved for participants. Earlier in the day a contingent of grinders had made a circular tour of lake Thun, some with organs, but all in veteran motor cars. The parade calling at towns around the lake was led by vintage fire engines. The leading engine being a Rolls-Royce, no less.

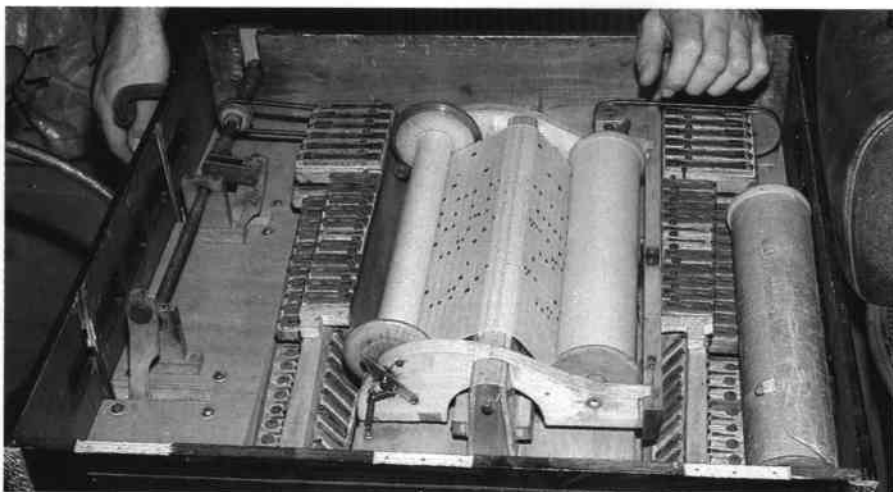
On Sunday, with the rain just about holding off, another group of grinders set off with their instruments for a trip around the lake, but this time by boat. Several of the organ grinders were well known members of our Society. Hank Waelti with his 44 key, seven tune barrel organ, made by Gavioli of Paris in 1860. Peter Schunhknecht, with a brand new 31 note organ just completed by him. Josef Raffin, with his new 31 key, eighty four pipe, multi register organ, including trumpet reeds, playing music from Rossini—very impressive! Also present were Elizabeth Woodtli, Kurt Matter and Ursula Reusser, all of whom attended the Musical Box Society of GB organ grind last September at Windsor. Only one registration appeared from England, Geoff and Peggy Alford, although during the three day event I failed to spot them.

One outstanding instrument (Registration number 279) was a Bacigalupo Sohne barrel organ with trumpet reeds, this instrument was heard playing "Blue Spanish Eyes" and "The Last Waltz (will be forever)" a splendid arrangement by Max Gewecke.

The organisers were overwhelmed with



A new organ in the traditional style, based on a Carl Frei design, built in 1984 by Frederik Keller of Waldkirch. The instrument has 47 keys (keyless) 8 bass, 10 accompaniment, 20 melody, 2 snare and 1 bass drum. The register includes 136 pipes, stoppered flutes and celeste flute, violin, clarion, double mouthed cello, with contra bass and Octave.



Language difficulties prevented my obtaining a description of this 46 note roll operated reed organ.

applications and many had to be turned away. There were some determined not to miss the occasion who played there unofficially.

Thun is a town where the organ grinders seem never to sleep. The melodious sounds of their music can always be heard well into the early hours. Three hours after

the closure of the Festival the organs were still playing, "we are just getting started said one," apparently prepared to stay there until winter.

The next Organ Festival to take place in Switzerland will be at Winterthur on 5th, 6th and 7th November and is being organised by Regula Wieser. ■

American Musical Box Meeting Escapes Tornado

Your Editor reporting from the USA

The convention of the Musical Box Society International, held jointly with the Automatic Musical Instruments Collectors' Association, which took place on 22nd/26th July, narrowly escaped disaster when a tornado swept through the twin towns of Minneapolis and Saint Paul, leaving houses wrecked and cars submerged by the flash floods that followed.

Convention members in the 25 story Radisson Hotel were evacuated as the storm came. The thunderstorm, claimed to be the worst this century in Saint Paul, struck at a time when 600 mechanical music lovers were taking a boat trip on two Mississippi stern-drive paddle-wheel boats. As the Mississippi grew angry each craft was anchored until the tornado had passed. Delegates arriving back at the Radisson, wet but still in good humour, soon realised from television pictures of the devastating floods, that riding on a Mississippi river-boat was probably the safest place to be during the storm. During the rest of the convention the subject of the storm was an equally as great a topic as the mechanical music itself. Barry Johnson, the Stella disc cutter, was seen in a T-shirt bearing the slogan "I survived the Mississippi river-boat trip."

The other and greater highlight of the meeting was billed as the nations first ever Street Organ Festival where 25 or so organ grinders gathered with their instruments in down-town Rice Park. One could not help noticing how the American instruments played music in a lively – beat the drum – bang the gong – happy style. All around there was an atmosphere as if the circus had arrived in town. In fact it almost

had, for here we learned the Angelo Rulli editor of the MBSI Technical Bulletin, a main organiser of this convention had recently quit his job as a probation officer to become a circus actor, taking his street organ into the ring where he is known as the Mechanical Maestro.

By now Saint Paul had dried out and by contrast was now enjoying its hottest heat-wave for many years. With temperatures in the 90's credit must be given to the hand-operated organ grinders who sweltered for 2 days and to Harvey Roehl, featured in Summer 1986 edition of Music Box, who played his calliope by hand virtually for the festivals whole duration.

During the convention, Q. David Bowers gave an envious talk on how during the earlier years of mechanical music collecting, he managed to track down and buy mainly large European orchestrions. The workshop presenters included at least 2 figureheads well known in Europe. Arthur Prinsen was leading a discussion of the procedures used for making book music and Ralph Heintz, our new Vice-President was honouring mechanical music in a wide variety of musical scores by renowned composers.

The meeting was arranged by the Snowbelt Chapter and provided great pleasure and a great experience in visiting a musical box convention in a town of great contrast – hot summers and long bitterly cold winters. During last years cold weather, the worlds largest Ice Palace was built, but I guess that it's melted by now.

Due to shortage of space photographs will appear in the next edition. ■

SOCIETY TOPICS

INFORMAL MEETING NOTTINGHAM

An informal meeting for members of the Society will be held on Saturday 24th October 1987 from 2.30pm to 6.00pm at 20 Hallams Lane, Chilwell, Beeston, Nottingham NG9 5FH. Tel: (0602) 254142.

My collection of Snuff-Boxes and Singing Bird Boxes will be on view and it would be nice if members would bring some small items of their own to show. Tea will be served.

Would members intending to come advise me by letter or telephone some little time in advance and I can then let them know how to get here. As space is limited, it is possible that some late applicants might have to be refused – Robert Burnett.

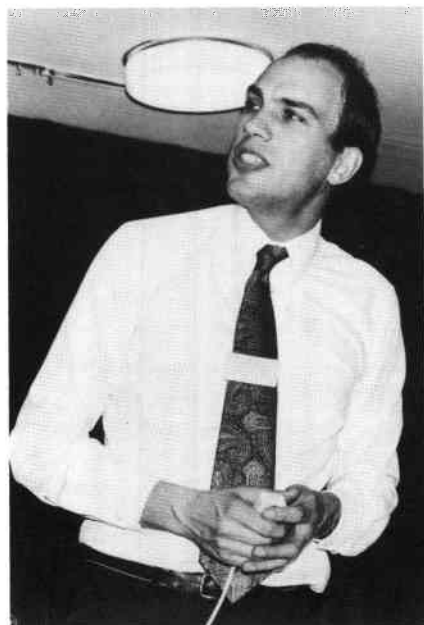
SUMMER MEETING Saturday 6th June 1987

by Reg Mayes

Our venue for this meeting was at the prestigious Banqueting Suite at the Oval Cricket Ground in London. This was achieved through the good offices of our Recording Secretary, Sue Holden. A hundred people attended.

The technical talks were opened by Richard Cole, a stalwart of Frank Holland's Musical Museum at Brentford. His title was 'Sounds interesting' all about organ pipes. It could have been subtitled 'Looks Interesting' because he provided his own closed circuit television, to ensure that all the audience could see all that was to be seen.

Richard told us that he got the 'bug' when he was sixteen, when he bought his first Pianola for £1 from a Scouts Jumble Sale. In



Richard Cole.

the 1970's he used to attend Mary Bolton's; the renowned piano dealer at Brighton. His interest later turned to organs.

Richard's demonstration included pipes of a size ranging from ½" to about nine feet long. We were shown the difference between the beating reed, as used generally in the larger organs and free reed which is generally used in accordian and mouth organs.

Instead of blowing his own trumpet, Richard did blow his own pipes, to demonstrate the various sound of pipes with the same fundamental note but having different tones due to the various constructions, which can also affect the power of the note. To illustrate his point further he showed some slides of the pipes from the Wurlitzer at Brentford.

We were told that there is still no scientific understanding why it is that air crossing the 'mouth' of the pipe, causes the note that it does, although the application of 'cheeks' to either side of the mouth would be acknowledged to increase the 'purity' of the note. Overblowing was demonstrated to hear how it considerably distorted the note or produced a note an octave higher. Two physically similar pipes, one with its end stoppered, were blown, the stoppered one giving a note about half the frequency of the open pipe.

So once more we all learnt a lot. Those who wanted to learn more pursued Richard in the ensuing break for coffee.

The next man into bat was our old friend and professional Jim Colley who comes in from the West and who howled us all over by taking an unfamiliar, unnamed 12 inch cylinder box to pieces, including the spring from the barrel, in fifteen minutes. This timing was achieved although he had to stop every now and again to put items on close-up under the video camera operated by Richard Cole. After removing the 'works' from the case, he placed the screws in holes in a piece of flat cardboard to ensure that they could go back into their original positions. Jim next released the energy from the spring by using a dentist's old pick to lift the 'click' and gradually let down the spring. He then removed the barrel and placed in a spring removing device which did not distort the spring. He then went on to the comb, again making sure that he had a record of what screw came from where by the use of a piece of card. As one of his asides he said that it was well worth while having a complete set of screwdrivers to suit the width and contours of the slots for each type of screw head so that they are less likely to become damaged. To lift the comb, with its locating pins off the base, he said that the manufacturer usually



Jim Colley dismantles a cylinder musical box, aided by Richard Cole with a t.v. relay.

made gaps in the comb base into which a screwdriver could fit so enabling one to force up the comb. At this point a cursory assessment of the dampers would be made. The cylinder itself was then taken out wrapped in newspaper. A tip for removing the pinion from the arbor was to use a ball joint puller, which could be bought from Halfords for a few pounds. The cleaning of the cylinder would be best achieved by spinning it in a lathe and applying a proprietary cleaner, such as Goddards Long Term with a narrow bristle brush. When the polish had dried it was removed by further brushing and will maintain the shine for a considerable length of time. Before returning the cylinder to the box it would be necessary to straighten any pins that were out of alignment, because just a few thousandth of an inch would make the difference between the pin engaging the tooth in the middle, the edge or even missing it altogether. Care must also be taken to ensure that all the pins have the same angle of approach to the teeth, i.e., radial (straight) or bent. The last items to be removed in this 'over' were the governor and the stop/go mechanisms. Jim said here that if one found that the vanes of the governor were loose, tapping them near the spindle would tighten them sufficiently.

Our President Jon Gresham expressed our thanks and appreciation to each speaker after their performance for they were certainly both entertaining and very instructive. We had Richard with his cheerful London

Dates for your diary

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| 11th - 13th September, 1987:- | Autumn Meeting and Annual Organ Grind, Cirencester.
(See Volume 13, Number 2 for details). |
| 24th October, 1987:- | Informal Meeting at Dr. Robert Burnett's home in Nottingham.
(Details in Society Topics, in this issue). |
| 5th December, 1987:- | Christmas Meeting, The Banqueting Suite, Oval Cricket Ground, Kennington, London.
(Details in the next issue). |

This programme may be subject to alteration.

accent and high tech support followed by Jim with his West Country brogue, dry humour and dazzling dexterity. As Jon said, it always amazes him how at our meetings members are prepared to display their professional expertise and knowhow without reserve.

After a buffet and liquid refreshment we reassembled to take part in the auction, with the hammer in the safe hands of Christopher Proudfoot, of Christie's fame, backed by a team of 'fielders and scorers' to the good effect of £4,126 of which the Society receives 10% for its funds.

This meeting was definitely the last meeting organised by Alan and Daphne Wyatt and what a good 'knock' it was. Our thanks and appreciation are due to these stalwarts who have spent long hours behind the scenes, all to our benefit in making all the arrangements for our meetings and visits over the last six years. Alison Biden takes up the baton, I am sure that we all wish her the very best for the future. ■

Report of the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING Saturday 6th June, 1987 at 'The Oval' Kennington, London

by John Phillips

The Minutes of the A.G.M. held on 6th June 1986 were adopted and there were no matters arising.

The President said he had nothing to report save of course to thank the com-

mittee and Society members who had helped to run the Society over the last year.

The Treasurer submitted his report and concluded that the year had not been a bad one for the Society and that he expected next year to be even better.

The Editor in his report said that he would welcome more contributions from the membership especially in this the Society's Jubilee Year. The Christmas Edition of "The Music Box" would be a special enlarged "Jubilee Issue".

The Membership Secretary reported a steady increase in new member enrolments, up from 71 last year to 109 this year.

The Subscription Secretary was pleased to report that in contrast with the last four years membership was now increasing and currently stood at 817 paid up members.

The Meetings Secretary said he was retiring at this A.G.M. and thanked all those who had made this and all previous meetings so interesting and successful. He particularly thanked his wife Daphne for her help and support and wished his successor every success in the future.

Reports were also given by the **Correspondence Secretary**, the **Auction Organiser** and the **Archivist**, the latter reporting an increase of 39 new items received into the archives.

All the Officers reports were adopted.

The election of officers took place in accordance with the Constitution, as follows:

President: John Gresham.

Vice-President: Ralph Heintz.

(Steve Ryder expressed his wish to retire).

Treasurer: Bob Holden.

Editor: Graham Whitehead.

Archivist: Peter Howard.

Meetings Secretary: Alison Biden.

(Alan Wyatt expressed his wish for a change of duties).

Membership Secretary: Alan Wyatt.

(Reg Waylett expressed his wish to retire).

Correspondence Secretary: Roger Kempson.

Recording Secretary: John Phillips.

(Sue Holden Retiring).

Auction organiser: Roger Kempson.

Committee Members: Reg Waylett

Reg Mayes

Chris Proudfoot.

The President concluded by thanking the retiring officers and committee members for their hard work in the past and made special mention of Steve Ryder and also Sue Holden for arranging the splendid venue at 'The Oval'. ■

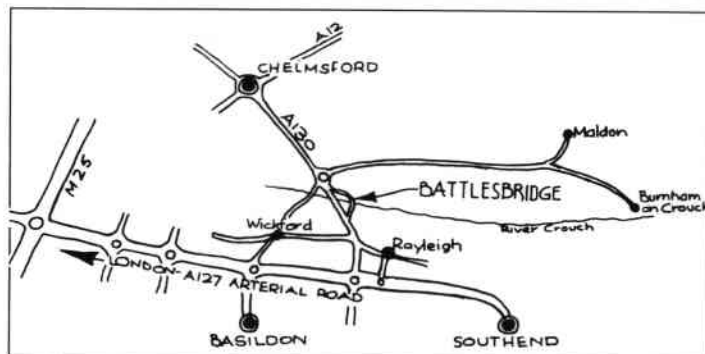


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GETTING STARTED

Collecting Musical Boxes

An article for the novice collector by John Powell
with an introduction by your Editor.

It was in 1971 when I made my first visit to that enchanting and dramatically mountainous country, Switzerland – until then I had no interest in mechanical music. My only encounters with musical boxes were as child's toys and a low cost jewellery box that I had once bought for my wife as a girl friend in the fifties. Like every other tourist I could not resist bringing back a modern souvenir musical box.

Travelling through London on our way home at the end of our Swiss holiday, I stopped to peep into a shop window. There to my amazement was a musical box. But it was different from the one I had just bought. This one was a giant by comparison, a cylinder of at least 12" but not only that, there were bells and butterflies and the case was almost as big as a sewing machine. With a price tag of around £50 I simply had to buy it, even though it was not working. I got it home and looked at it carefully. What was I going to do with it? What needed to be done to it? Who was going to do it? One thing was pretty obvious – the spring needed repairing.

On my next visit to London I called at a musical box dealer. I don't remember how I found him, but I think it may have been through an advertisement in a Sunday paper, or in *Exchange & Mart*. He blinded me with science, frightened me with figures and I departed with the box under my arm, still at a loss to know what to do. I did however make one sensible decision, I bought from the dealer a copy of Arthur Ord-Hume's book "Collecting Musical Boxes and how to Repair them".

Now isn't this how all collections start – in a mysterious haze which never quite clears until a few expensive mistakes have been made.

A benefit of membership of the Musical Box Society of Great Britain is the opportunity for the novice collector to learn from the more experienced members, many of the facets of musical box and mechanical music collecting.

With this in mind I am asking established collectors to write about their experiences and to outline basic information in a none too technical form, so that the newer would-be collectors that are just getting started, can benefit from the experience of others.

In this first article, John Powell our Advertising Manager, sets out some of the hints to help avoid the pitfalls of "Getting Started".

Graham Whitehead

Getting Started

I was asked recently if I would write something on music boxes which would be a sort of "do's and don'ts" or "hints and tips" for the more recently joined members of the Society who might not yet have become familiar with the various aspects of acquiring, keeping and building up a collection of musical boxes. Having given this some thought, made several false starts and had a good look at what I have acquired over the years, I am of the opinion that I should be the last person to give advice on this subject. If our more experienced and knowledgeable members will bear with me through those aspects which may appear very basic and perhaps stating the obvious, you may also ruefully smile with me at memories most of us

have of mistakes made whilst putting the collection together.

If one intends to become a serious collector, I would suggest that a valuable principle should be, never be afraid of making a mistake in buying something that, to you, may be a desirable addition to the collection. One can work on a calculator juggling with the previous catalogue results to reach a "correct" maximum price that one should pay but it is difficult to put a value on the desirability factor of a particular item. I have bought things I shouldn't and have paid too much for pieces in the excitement of the saleroom. An early lesson was don't bid for anything you haven't previously seen at the view. At one of our local sales I had already bought the desk I wanted when a small box I hadn't seen was held up which appeared to play exceptionally well. Thoughts of sectional comb and early Nicole came to mind (I had recently read about these in a book)! so I got it for £4. My anticipation turned to dismay when I found it was a very modern one and when I put it into another saleroom some months later together with other mistakes and unwanted bric-a-brac, it sold for £8. On another occasion, I bought a small symphonion disc box for approximately twice its current value which made me doubt my sanity at the time, yet something like six months later, these were selling in excess of that figure. The point I try to make is that mistakes like these need not always be expensive and it is generally pride that is hurt more than the pocket.

The Early Years

When I first started collecting musical boxes in 1974, the choice both in quantity and quality was wider than it is now although it was significantly less than it appeared twelve years previously when this society was formed. Even allowing for this change, I don't think the general attitude of new collectors now will have changed very much from new collectors then, although higher cost now may have a considerable effect on quantity acquired. Most serious collectors who look back to their earlier days, I think, will recognise a change in emphasis in what is acquired. The tendency is generally to start by buying up anything that comes along and after experiencing the pleasure of owning these, perhaps particular types or formats appeal more than others and the pattern or shape of the collection begins to appear. One will gradually become more discerning and selective about what is required to complete the collection although to many, a collection can never be complete. However, it is at that stage that someone will possibly ask you to write or talk about your own experiences of collecting musical boxes!!

During the formative years of the Society, several books on collecting and restoring were published and the articles that were written on the care and restoration of musical boxes were many and varied. The emphasis on these aspects has changed over the years as people's specific interests and skills have also changed and the basic principles now tend to get overlooked amongst the discussions on such things as the geometry of combs, pins and cylinders, the theory of tuning scales and the music played.

Whilst not intending to discuss methods of repair, it is necessary to understand the cost or consequence of buying a box with various defects in it. This is admirably done in what possibly was the earliest guide for repairers C. H. Jacots "How to repair musical boxes" being a practical instruction to watchmakers. This was published in New York and is dated 1890 (Third Edition). C. H. Jacot is possibly best remembered for his invention of a patented safety check in association with Louis Jaccard. This booklet details all possible faults although some are not immediately obvious until the movement is dismantled. The book includes a classical picture of a "run" in progress, the astonished repairer holding a screwdriver in one hand and surrounded by a cloud of flying teeth from a movement he is attending to. It appears to be a two comb sublime harmony movement and looks remarkably like some of the "disasters" that I have ended up with.

Modern Publications

Another source of information regarding the care of the music box is of course, our own journal. I have been fortunate enough to get all but one or two copies of back numbers and

have found it an "Alladins cave" of informative articles over the years and have made a start in cataloguing these articles for easy reference. It will probably be expensive to acquire these now but I recommend it as a major source of information.

Two books published very close to each other in 1967/68 were Arthur W. J. G. Ord-Hume's "Collecting Musical Boxes and How to Repair them" and Graham Webbs "The Cylinder Musical Box Handbook". These are also valuable sources of information regarding care and repair aspects. In passing, Graham Webbs cylinder box book was the first I acquired after buying my first musical box and there are two aspects of it that I would like to record. Firstly he made repairing sound so easy that I bought up in my earlier years, a large number of badly broken but interesting movements which I was quickly going to put right before I realised the full implication of this policy. Secondly, having made it sound easy, one is encouraged into starting work and possibly developing repair techniques which one wouldn't have done if all pitfalls and problems had been known about beforehand. Other authors of musical box works are J. E. T. Clarke, David Tallis, Mosoriak and of course David Q. Bowers Encyclopedia of Mechanical Musical Instruments, all of which should be acquired by the serious collector. My sincere apologies to those authors whom I have forgotten and have missed out.

What to look out for

The question, What should one look out for? when setting out to buy a box is perhaps independent of how much you want it. A decision about value is easier to make if one knows both the shortcomings and advantages of it. Most boxes are relatively simple and can be subdivided into the case, motor, comb, cylinder and governor.

Cases are possibly one of the component parts that can be tackled by most people and with a little patience, produce a satisfactory result. Missing veneer can be replaced quite easily if one has a stock of bits and pieces sufficient to get a reasonable match. Bad woodworm can be restored by hardening spongy patches of the case but I have found myself that I cannot completely get rid of the evidence of holes in the veneer. However well matched repairs are, in time, the new and the old change differently in colour and I think one has to live with the shortcomings of this. Broken hinges, missing locks, lid stays, inner glass lids, missing partitions and split bottoms could also be minor drawbacks but all will require time, and perhaps money, to replace.

The condition of the spring motor can be a little difficult to verify sometimes if it is not working. The spring will most likely be broken but does on occasions, get unhooked from the barrel or arbor anchor. Most springs can be replaced by material close to original size but compromises sometimes have to be made. The geneva stop (what a lovely name for a component) is frequently missing and it is an essential to ensure even playing of the music. This should always be replaced if missing. Damaged gear teeth will probably need replacing by inserts in the damaged area and recutting the teeth. If badly worn, some bearings in spring case and arbor brackets may require rebushing but are quite tolerant of wear.

The only obvious fault with the cylinder will be loss of pins or one tunes pins badly bent indicating a possible run. As a rough guide, loss of pins will not be significantly noticeable in most popular tunes if less than 10% are missing although in some tunes, one missing pin can cause a sharp intake of breath. The cost of repinning cylinders is advertised and has to be considered if a significant amount of damage is evident. If a box has been left in the hot sun at any time, the "wax" can be softened and fall away from the cylinder and can solidify on the spindle and prevent the tune changer from operating. Again not immediately obvious but worth checking. Light taps along the cylinder with a pencil point will indicate any hollow areas. If a box has suffered a run and one tune is lost, the snail cam has sometimes been altered to play the preceding tune twice thus avoiding the "silent" tune which has been damaged. A good look at the snail will confirm it's integrity.

The comb is possibly the most expensive part to repair. There are many restorers who will do this but at a cost which if

more than say seven or eight teeth are required will not make the box a commercial proposition to do at this time. Dampers are another aspect of comb repair although the condition can usually be seen by use of a torch when examining them. Many restorers only undertake comb work as part of a total overhaul but there are some who will deal with combs separately. The tuning of new teeth can sometimes be difficult to determine although some comb bases are marked showing the format of tuning. Some are not marked and it can be costly if the cylinder has to be analysed to determine which notes the missing teeth were tuned to. Normally, one can only discover whether a base is marked or not by removing the comb from the bedplate.

The endless screw or fly and its wheel are usually fairly well worn and worn pivots will cause slow starting, will require assistance to start and cause excessive noise while running through poor meshing of the gearing. There are several repairers who will do governor overhauls including replacement parts where necessary and the difference that a new endless will make to the performance is very satisfactory. In passing, there is a commonly held belief that the instant stop fitted to some of the earlier machines was provided for the person who did the final adjustment to the movement. I take no credit for the following hypothesis but agree wholeheartedly with it. Adjustments would probably have been made with the movement outside the box so that the instant stop lever would not have been necessary as a finger in the fly will allow better control. As the earlier boxes tended to be long playing, the Victorian father, on entering the room when the box was being played, would demand instant attention. He would not be prepared to wait until it reached the end of the tune hence the provision of the silencer (other theories considered with interest).

Transporting Boxes

Damage can be caused to pins, dampers and teeth if the box plays while being transported so care should be taken to avoid this happening. Ideally, the spring should be let down to the limit of the geneva stop. You will then be able to feel the slackness in the gear train through the whole movement. If this cannot be done, most people will put a twist of paper through the wings of the fly to prevent it turning. Even so, the movement should be run down as far as possible before being transported. If any adjustments are necessary to the governor then the spring must always be let down by means of its ratchets onto the stop before anything is done. If you have respect for the box, you will even do this before adjusting the wings to regulate the speed. Failure to take these precautions can be much more costly than paying a high price for ones box.

Tailpiece

When listening to a tune being played, many will listen for its faults such as squeaking dampers rather than the tune itself. With practice and imagination, even though the movement may be badly worn, one can appreciate the inherent quality behind the buzzing, clanking and clicking that sometimes accompanies the performance although the ability to do this may be the difference between being an optimist or pessimist.

Whether you are building up your collection, rationalising it or disposing of parts of it, I can recommend advertising in the Journal. Many advertisers have had good results recently and by using a box number, you remain anonymous for security or any other personal reasons. ■

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Venues with Mechanical Music – 3

WATERMOUTH CASTLE

by Graham Whitehead



Watermouth Castle offers fun and entertainment for all the family. It is situated midway between Ilfracombe and Combe Martin in the parish of Berrynarbor, overlooking the picturesque harbour and rugged coastline of North Devon. The castle as seen today was built by a David Basset and completed in 1825.

For the discerning visitor who relishes in historical fact, it is worth noting that the Bassets are recorded in the Domesday Book as having come to Britain with William the Conqueror. The Bassets owned extensive lands and property, much of it bestowed upon them by grateful Monarchs for services to the Crown.

In 1946 the last of the Basset family left Watermouth, the castle was purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Nathaniel Black. In spite of their efforts to restore the estate to its former glory, crippling rates and taxation defeated them. It subsequently passed into the hands of Mr. and Mrs. Brain, who for a while opened the castle to the public.

The castle then lay idle until 1977 when it was purchased by the present owners Richard and Antje Haines and family, who after extensive renovations to the near derelict buildings have again opened it to the public and transformed the upper floors into luxurious self-catering holiday apartments. At first the basement and cellarge areas were converted into small antique craft and souvenir shops and let off during the busy tourist season, but after the first years trading Richard Haines realised that the basement could be put to a better use. It has now been transformed into a miniature "Disneyland". Simply dozens of automated figures dance, sing and enchant the many thousands of visitors who pass through this premier tourist attraction of North Devon. Both young and old watch in awe as the moving fairytale scenes of Gulliver, Hansel and Gretel, Snow White and a dozen other facets of fantasy perform.

Richard Haines has introduced to the castle a bit of everything, with quite a big bit of mechanical music. On paying

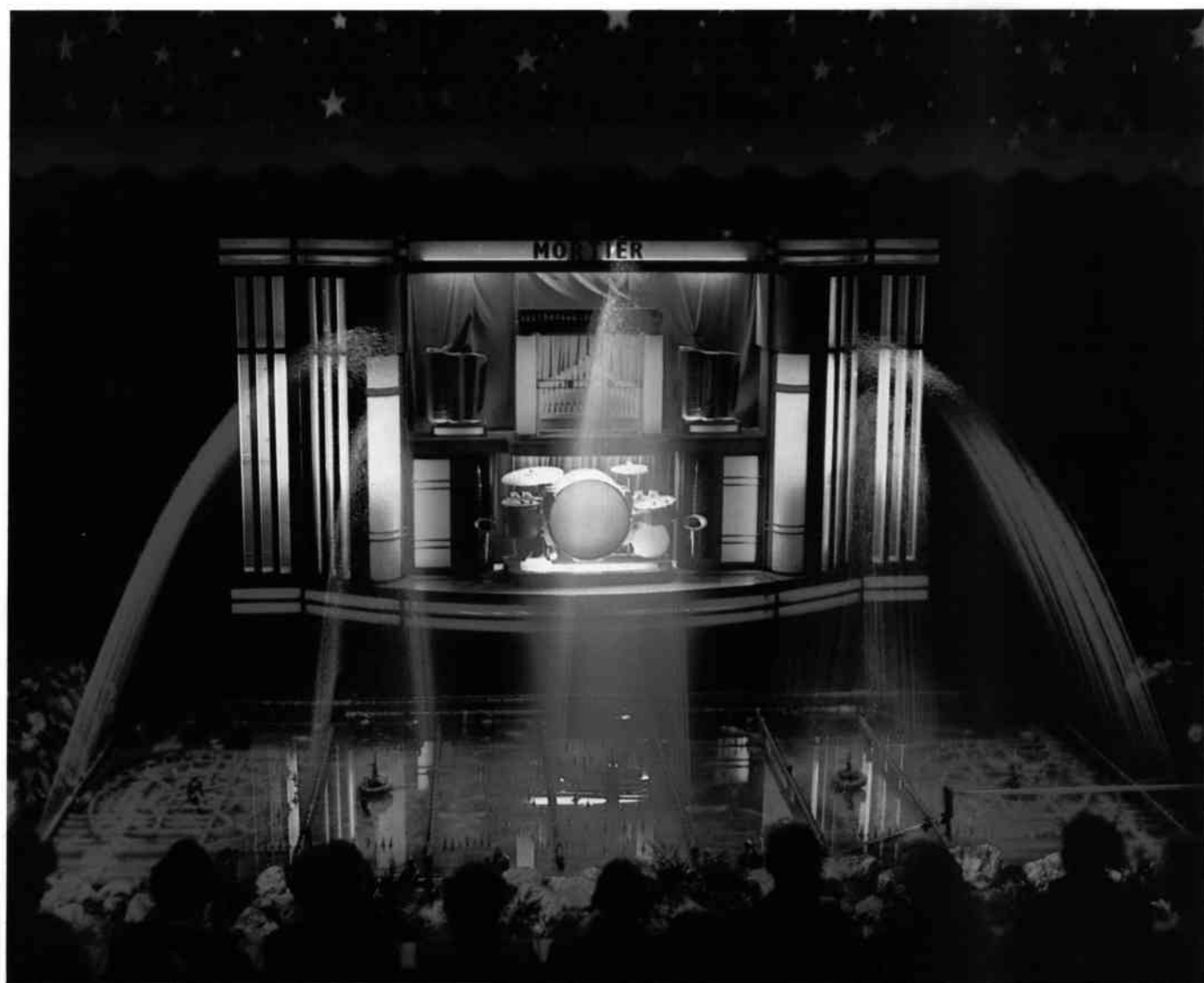
ones admission at the reception desk, an original Devon cider barrel large enough to accommodate, ticket machine, telephone table and cashier. one enters the Great Hall with its fine Devon marble fireplace. However, ones attention is quickly distracted as to the left is the Music Room with fine plasterwork ceiling and tapestry rail. Here there are continuous demonstrations of mechanical musical instruments and automata, proving to be of great fascination to the general public and interesting too for the mechanical music enthusiast as the collection includes a Mills Violano Virtuoso, an Encore Banjo, a wall mounted 19½" Polyphon and a grand piano which appears to have a Triphonola action.

Sixty people can be accommodated in this room for a slick, brash, "sock it to em" presentation from castle owner Richard Haines. Not quite the style to impress collectors, but the sixty or so visitors who enter every twenty minutes, during peak season absolutely love it. The analytical onlooker could easily be convinced that Richard Haines is really a Music Hall actor brought in to keep the crowds happy, not so – Richard Haines is simply a first class showman bounding with energy and enthusiasm. When he is not playing the role of an entertaining presenter you will find him outside the castle entrance dressed in full Beefeater gear giving the passing tourists the big "come on".

This is not the only mechanical music in the castle, the Haines family have recently had constructed an underground theatre in which stands "Oscar" the 101 key Mortier organ formerly at St. Albans Organ Museum. This is no ordinary Mortier for its pneumatics have been adapted to control water fountains and lighting effects and provides a fifteen minute display that can only be described as magnificent. Watermouth Castle has a lot of entertainment and interest to offer the West Country visitor but in my mind if Watermouth Castle had nothing apart from the Mortier and water fountains, then that alone would make it worthy of a special trip – a most enjoyable experience. ■



Above: The music room at Watermouth Castle. Richard Haines demonstrates in the style of a Music Hall actor.
Below: "Oscar" the 101 key Mortier organ with a water fountain display.



The Story of a Musical Engineer

by Mike Perrins

About a quarter of a century ago an engineer at Vauxhall's works in Luton approached one of his colleagues who was known from his performances as a baritone soloist to be interested in music and suggested that he might like to buy a musical box. This suggestion was taken up and the instrument changed hands. Neither vendor nor purchaser could have had any idea of the effect this simple transaction was to have on the latter's life for this was Bob Minney's introduction to mechanical music. The search for additional discs for this box, for historical and technical information and, inevitably, for further instruments, soon brought Bob into contact with a number of dealers and collectors. He also started attending steam rallies and, while admiring the fair organs, felt that they were too big for him to own and manage and that it would be best for him to stick to smaller instruments.

Bob applied his engineering skills and expanded into new fields, particularly woodwork, in restoring and maintaining instruments both for his own collection and for others. Numerically, the majority of instruments he has worked on have been disc boxes. As a sideline in this field he and a friend built a machine for stamping out the dampers which lie under the combs. For a while these were the only reliable new dampers available and were even exported, though others have appeared since. Only rarely has he handled a cylinder box, usually when it included an organ section.

Among the rarer instruments he has restored were a disc-playing piano orchestrion, a twin-disc 26in Fortuna (with combs, organ and percussion) about the size of an upright piano and a Chordephon which Bob assembled from a heap of parts and installed in a suitably cut-about period table. This was subsequently described as an original instrument in one of the leading textbooks.

Bob's own collection eventually came to include all the 'standard' disc instruments which collectors aim for: 19in and 24½in Polyphons, 25in Symphonion, 17¼in Stella and 15½in and 27in Reginas – the latter in both table and upright models. He also has a barrel piano orchestrion with unusual metal cylinders instead of conventional barrels and a few cylinder boxes, including a Nicole Frères Aramis Interchangeable.

The first organ Bob acquired was the 45-key barrel Gebrüder Brüder and this



Bob playing the Tanzbar.

Photographs by Mike Perrins.

was also the first item he exhibited on the rally fields, mounted in a home-made trailer and towed by his Morris Oxford estate car. The organ came with only one barrel of 9 tunes and Bob seriously considered converting it to a cardboard book operation. However, Eric Cockayne persuaded him that if he were to do anything he should make another barrel. After many trials and tribulations and with assistance from Mel Colebrook in arranging the music and from the late Dennis Smith on pinning, this was done. This must have been the first fair organ barrel pinned in England for many years and the first one pinned by an amateur. At the same time, Bob added percussion to the organ, working it from an extra key and modifying the original barrel to play it. Now that the display contains more instruments we only hear the original barrel.

The next item to be displayed was the 48-key barrel Imhof. This was built in the early 1850s as a street organ with a trumpet rank with short resonators in the usual place at the front. In the early 1860s the trumpets were removed and replaced by a rank of narrow-scale flutes, of full length, which stood up out of the top of the case, almost doubling the height of the organ. The whole instrument was built into a larger, false case and installed in a Scottish mansion. At this stage eight new barrels were provided, two of operatic arias and the remainder mainly dance music. One, a Scottish sequence dance, was pinned helically and played continuously for eight revolutions whereas the others have eight individual tunes. The organ appeared in an auction at Sotheby's and

the dealer who purchased it asked Bob to fit the long pipes into the case and then build a replica organ. The dealer had never sold one with eight barrels and intended to sell two with four each. He soon added that he had a possible purchaser for the Imhof. However, Bob and his wife Daphne felt that they simply could not let this one go and persuaded him to change his mind, so the organ and all eight barrels stayed together. The Imhof travelled on its back in the Morris Oxford (many of the pipes were not glued in and tended to shake out) with the large box, containing four barrels, alongside. The smaller boxes, containing one barrel each, went on the roof rack.

Inevitably, the long journeys, for example, to Stourpaine and Bishops Castle, started to take their toll on the poor old Morris, so the next step was the purchase of the Volkswagen (VW) van, which enabled Bob to display some of his musical boxes as well as the two organs. The Brüder stayed in its trailer, gradually becoming more woebegone and eventually no longer waterproof. The arrangements inside the VW varied over the years. At first, with only the Imhof and three disc boxes, there was room to carry antique tables to display them on. However, with the addition of more instruments – two reed organettes and the Tanzbar roll-playing accordion – and their music, Bob had to make his own demountable tables to save space. The standard arrangement eventually became to display the 24½in Polyphon (top half only) inside the van with the Regina and Stella outside on tables. The organettes were on another table which incorporated storage space for the Cabinetto rolls. The Imhof on its large box brought up the rear. The three disc boxes, because they were basically indoor instruments, needed amplification to play outside. Bob used pick-ups (not microphones) fitted to the woodwork and linked to an amplifier which sat on top of the Polyphon, standing up through the sliding roof of the van.

Packing all this lot for a journey, together with waterproof covers, generator, toolkit, dog and often a second passenger, was a work of art. For the annual visit to the Beaulieu Fireworks Fair the base for the Polyphon had to go in as well as the collection appeared inside the museum. This looked impressive but made packing difficult. The impossible seemed to have occurred when Bob restored Norman Woodford's 54-key barrel Molzer and took it out, most memorably to Knowl Hill, where the spectators watching the packing up at the end of the rally seemed to outnumber the audience during the day. There were also the special occasions at the St Albans museum when the cylinder boxes or perhaps the organ clock came along, but this involved leaving some of the other items behind.

For ten years Bob carried on humping

this lot in and out of the van, sometimes several times in one day if it rained, and setting up in some very awkward locations, such as one of the engine halls at the Kew Bridge waterworks museum, up a flight of steps with right-angled turns top and bottom. He also had an awkward job at home, with a long walk down the garden to take things into the house. Obviously this could not go on for ever and Bob spent some time considering the idea of a display van in which the whole collection could stay all through the summer.

He purchased a suitable vehicle, a Luton-bodied Dodge van, in June 1984 and spent a year converting it for this very special purpose. The main structural work was to cut open the offside to make hinged top and bottom doors 10ft 6in long with a flat elliptical arch behind the opening and hinged top flat at the back of the vehicle to provide some shelter when the back doors were open. Bob then had to decide on the positions of all the instruments, pick-ups, amplifier and lights so he could put the wiring in before anything else. Then he was able to line the walls and ceiling with polystyrene for insulation, panel them in plywood, paper them and apply imitation moulded plaster coving and ceiling centres. These are actually expanded polypropylene (of a similar texture to balsa wood). All this was done through the long, cold winter and spring of 1984-5.

The first instruments were installed in May in two rows, down the offside and nearside of the vehicle. Starting from the back, the nearside row consists of the 24½in Polyphon, now fully built up and with the amplifier in its base; the Stella, on a wooden stand which covers the wheel arch; and the Brüder, which has to stand with its back to the audience to give access to the handle. The offside row starts with the Imhof, followed by the Tanzbar, the Cabinetto and the 27in Regina, with disc racks tucked into the front and back corners.

The bulkhead between the display area and the cab needed special treatment. The upper section, part of a harmonium case made to look like a sideboard, is hinged to give access to the 'Luton' part of the body, over the cab. This becomes a storage area during the day and sleeping quarters at night. The lower part is panelled and mainly covered in false book backs to give the impression of full-depth shelves. One shelf, however, actually has to be full-depth to provide space to display the 31 note organette. As this shelf projects into the cab it has to be collapsible and the organette has to go elsewhere while travelling.

The first outing for the new outfit was to a small event at Hemel Hempstead in June. It rained intermittently all afternoon, just the conditions which would have been worst for the VW-based display, but this did not affect the new

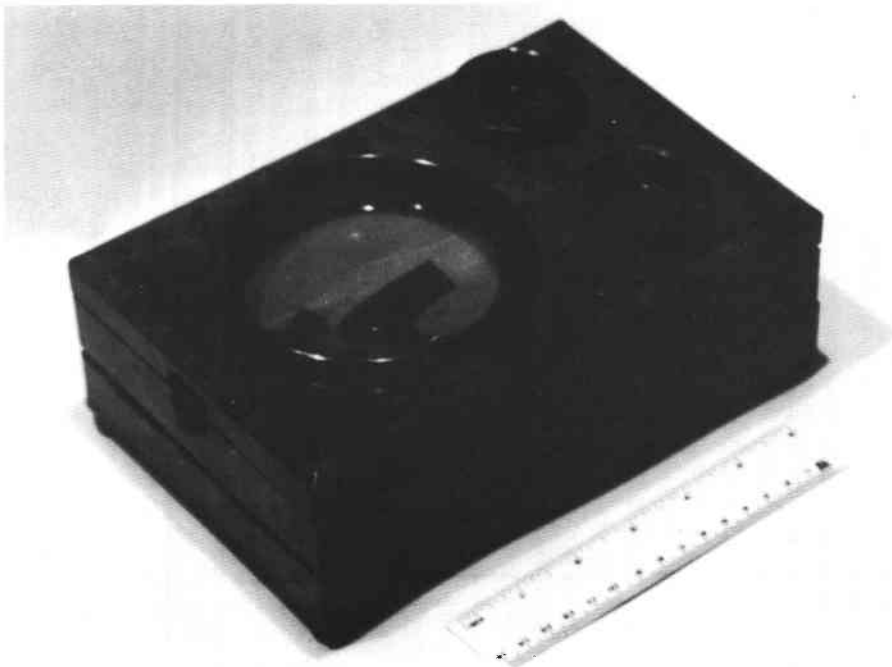
vehicle at all and Bob was able to play without interruption – immediate justification for all that hard work. The wet summer of 1985 made Bob more than thankful that he had made this change when he did. One thing I must make clear: the unpacking and repacking before and after playing became little, if any, quicker than with the VW as instruments still needed to be covered and fastened down for the journey. However, the heavy lifting was eliminated, both at the event and upon returning home.

Apart from taking out this display Bob has been involved in other activities using the Imhof. He has had numerous bookings to attend receptions and theatrical productions where a Victorian atmosphere was required and has also built up a regular series of charitable street collections, mainly for the NSPCC, which raise around £8,000 each year. In addition, there have been special events at a number of places Bob would otherwise never had the opportunity of visiting, such as the ballroom of the Dorchester Hotel, the summer 'Fêtes Champêtres' at Mottisfont Abbey near Southampton and, most recently, an evening in the magnificent baroque receptions rooms of West Park, near Bedford. ■

This article originally appeared in the 'Key Frame'.



**The World's only mobile Victorian music room ?
Bob Minney's collection displayed in the Dodge van in 1985.**



Closed stereoscope, general view.

A Musical What ?

by Ted Brown



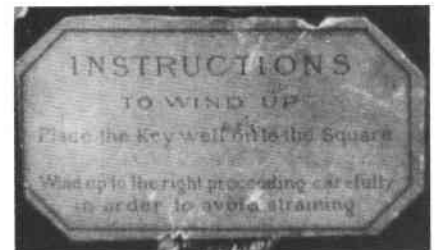
View of opened stereoscope showing a slide in place.

It was one of those times when you are never quite sure why you do something. The telephone rang as it frequently does in our house and as usual it was for me. A friend in the Society had picked up a box that he was interested in selling. Did I know anyone who might be interested? We talked for a while and then he casually mentioned that he had seen a musical Stereoscope in a local Antique Shop but felt the price was a bit high.

Well I had heard of Stereoscopes and think I had seen one or two in vintage camera shops, but a musical stereoscope? My mind was working overtime. Its acquisition must be worth a bit of thought. My wife would hardly notice it on the shelf. It would not look big enough to have cost very much. My friend said he would get more details for me and ring me back the next evening. Sure enough, the following night the telephone rang and the details were carefully relayed. It had the original tune sheet, a manufacturers trade sticker, played a two tune album type movement and was finished in a walnut veneer.

It was decision time. Yes I would have it and my friend said he could bring it to the next Society Meeting. A few weeks later I was the proud owner of another form of the many late Victorian Musical Novelties.

The tune sheet has the J. Cuendet monogram and there is a black and red star shaped sticker with a lyre in the top point and F. Conchon printed across the middle. There is also a



Close-up of instruction sheet.

small instruction sticker referring to the movement. These are all on the base. The movement which only has a serial number and no other identifying marks is fitted in a small wooden compartment with glass fixed in its top. It appears to have been fitted after the box was made but before it was sold. Did both movement makers buy up a job lot of Stereoscopes, convert them to play musical movements and then sell them on? Perhaps we will never know. Although both men had factories in Switzerland, Cuendet was in Auberson and Conchon was in Geneva.

Its funny how this particular breed, the collector, has these sudden rushes of blood to the head, or is it intuition. Whatever it is, having spent a couple of evenings with some library books and my camera, I am now able to give you some idea of what a musical stereoscope looks like, and for those



Close-up of Conchon 'Star'.

Base of stereoscope showing J. Cuendet tune sheet and Conchon 'Star' trademark.



of you like me who had a very sheltered youth, how it works.

This one is a box in three layers. The top layer is hinged at the front and carries a large centre lens and two smaller lenses each of which is made up of a pair of nested lenses, one convex and one concave that magnify and have a focal length of about 5 inches. Inside the middle layer is a receiving frame for a pair of stereoscopic pictures which are fitted on a runner so that the focus can be adjusted. The bottom layer hinges at the back and houses an adjustable foot to set the viewer at the right angle, and the musical movement and key. The musical movement plays when the bottom section is opened and continues to play until the section is closed or the spring runs down. When the pictures are viewed at the same time, one eye looking at each picture, the pictures merge into one and appear three dimensional. I was quite impressed.

The fact that our two eyes each see a different image is attributed to Euclid in 300 B.C. This was examined in depth by Leonardo de Vinci in the sixteenth century who showed that we needed two eyes to inform us of distance unless we moved our head from side to side.

Later it was found that two photographs taken on the same plane, but the same distance apart as the distance between the eyes, and then viewed by looking at the left hand picture with the left eye and the other picture with

the right eye simultaneously gave a three dimensional effect.

Sir Charles Wheatstone 1802-1875 an English Scientist invented the stereoscope in 1832 and developed it for geometric design from then to 1838. In 1845 he had developed it for photography. Stereoscopic photographs became very popular after the Great Exhibition of 1851.

In 1858 the Stereoscope magazine published by Lovell, Reeve appeared. It cost 2s 6d (12½p) which was very expensive in its day. It contained three pairs of stereo pictures in each edition and survived for about 5 years. After this, many other books containing stereo pictures appeared, then, by the late 1860's pictures could be obtained on many subjects from travel to portraits, and from warfare to zoology. The pairs of pictures were expensive at 2s (10p) each, but it was quite a novelty, and just think how much more of a novelty it was if you could listen to Faust at the same time. ■



Inside view of bottom layer showing height adjustment musical movement in glass covered compartment, and original Jacot type key.

REVIEWS by Ian Alderman

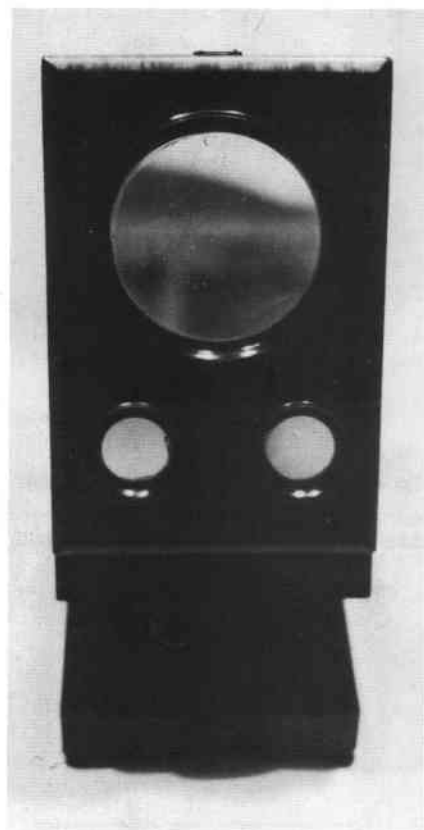
"Robinsons' Melody and Mirth" 89 key Gavioli Fair Organ. Stereo cassette tape available from Don and Dorothy Robinson, 39 Gaister Road, Market Rasen, Lincolnshire LN8 3HY. Price: £3.50 inc. post & packing (or £3 from the organ).

One of the recent innovations in the "Music Box" has been an evident decision to widen the horizons concerning mechanical music, to look occasionally beyond instruments for the home and search out their more assertive brothers who live outside in the open air. For those members of the Society who have not yet sampled the delights of the Fair Organ, this recording will make an admirable start. "Gavioli" must be the one maker's name known to everyone, and this instrument is a happy example of its kind. It is the custom among fair organ folk to require intimate knowledge of the history of any instrument, and this is lovingly detailed on the insert provided with recording. In 1895 the instrument started life as a barrel organ working amid Alf Peters' steam driven Gallopers (all this is essential stuff and you must learn to come to grips with fairs and showmen). Conversion to book music was very nearly followed in 1952 by conversion to firewood, so much had the organ deteriorated. Eventually the organ came into the ownership of the Robinsons in Lincolnshire and they entrusted it, fortunately for all of us, to the one man remaining from the old school of professional organ builders, Mr. Chiappa of Clerkenwell, who in 1973 began the lengthy restoration. Now gilded and painted by James Tiller, the organ presents a fine figure to the world.

What of the music? This has always appeared to me to be of little consequence to mechanical music enthusiasts. Other

features (like volume!) being regarded as of greater importance. Dorothy Robinson and I argue lengthily about music as I require that the public should be given Mozart because it is good for them, while she insists that they be given tunes they know, because they will enjoy that. She is probably right, for no one ever walks by this Gavioli, tinkling xylophone and all. On the other hand I do wonder how many people can actually, if asked, whistle the "Krasno-Selo March" or which of the younger generation would immediately identify "Sister Susie's Sewing Shirts for Soldiers"?

It is a feature of mechanical instruments that not only do they come with an aura of the past, they also trail tangible evidence of that in the records they offer, and this organ plays what you want to hear in the expected manner. It is an endearing habit of fair organ music lists to credit the music not to the composers but to arrangers (you might argue that it is all re-composed anyway) and this Gavioli plays music from Chiappa's lists, some continental arrangers, and from the new English noteurs, which is welcome. I particularly enjoyed Andrew Pilmer's "Chinatown", and Chiappa's "Post Horn Gallop". The Gavioli doesn't have a Hooghuys abilities in the repetition stakes (the actions being different) in this last piece. But I am reliably informed through my county connections that it is a very fair rendering of the atmosphere in the early hours of the morning when the Hunt Ball (which knows nothing of Gallopers) is winding up, champagne running out and scrambled eggs served for those who remain for breakfast. Fantasy? Of course. That is what nostalgia is about, looking back at a world that didn't quite exist, at times that never were quite like that. The recording "Robinsons 'Melody & Mirth'" fulfills its job very well indeed. It is also good value for money. ■



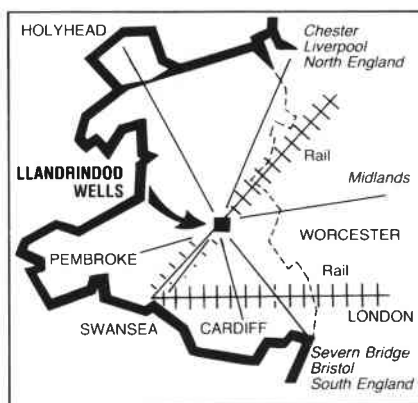
Front view showing main magnifying lens and stereoscope lenses.

Organ Grinders chat

by Geoff Alford



Completely out of the blue at the end of February an opportunity arose for a street organ festival in Britain. It was a time for a quick decision and, despite the shortness of time, it was decided to go ahead. So the 1st Llandrindod Wells Street-organ Festival will take place on the last weekend of the annual nine-day Victorian Festival from Friday 11th September to Sunday 13th September 1987. My one worry was that it would clash with another event – and of course, so it has proved, with the MBS Cirencester meeting on the same weekend! Of course the choice of date was not within my province so both events will have to live with the situation this year. But if Llandrindod can be made even half successful the Victorian Festival Committee could make it an annual date for the calendar. With two nights bed and breakfast provided and meal vouchers it compares with German Organ Festivals and should prevent anyone from not attending on cost grounds. Although quite a small town, the little spa nevertheless retains much of its Victorian appearance, so it is



specially suited for a street-organ festival. A maximum limit of 30 organs has been fixed, which one would think gives plenty of scope. Unfortunately the German party visiting Britain around this time have already made their arrangements, but Dr. Wiemann from Berlin would have brought his marvellous 45 keyless Bruns but for the shortage of lead free petrol stations in this country. I still have hopes that it will be an international meeting, however, for several organ owners from Holland have indicated their interest, including a full-blown Dutch street organ. The programme will be based on the successful German formula, with evening get-togethers and certificates for participating grinders. Anyone interested in participating can obtain the necessary forms from the Festival Office, Town Hall, Temple Street, Llandrindod Wells, Powys LD1 5DL or myself.

Arthur Prinsen has been around organs for more years than I like to remember, certainly before my interest was awakened. It therefore came as a shock to learn that he is selling up. A frequent visitor to Stourpaine, I hope that he is not wholly leaving the organ scene which will be poorer for this loss. Regrettably, although invited, I never had the time and opportunity to visit his works and organ collection. Presumably he will not be making any more hand-turned organs so their number is finite, increasing their value.

Paper Roll Organs are at last attracting the attention of British organ builders and I was pleased to hear from Alan Pell that his future plans include building 20 and 31 note paper roll organs. He is the only British builder whose organs I have seen and played and I think that his 27 keyless organ compares favourably with continental organs, which augers well for future developments. Of equal interest is Alan's entry into the micro-box field with a 5 register 94 pipe street organ in a German-style inlaid cabinet, playing music which has been memorised on a micro-chip. Whilst I have several personal reservations about this particular model, one must applaud Alan for his imagination and initiative, and I for one will be watching developments with considerable interest. Leslie Brown was waiting to take delivery of this new organ with ill-concealed impatience at Northampton. Other U.K. builders are also contemplating paper roll organs, but I think that the micro-chip will

provide the music memory of the future. The micro has its opponents, particularly among traditionalists, and these organs are banned at some German festivals. Whilst I would defend any organiser's right to restrict entrants to 'traditional' organs, clearly this can cause problems when a major builder is devoting virtually all his production to micro-box organs so that it could appear that an organiser is favouring one builder before another.

Paper Roll Whilst I was chatting about aspects of this in the Spring Issue, Peter Watts was advertising 20 note rolls on another page. It must be five years since Peter approached me at my rally tent where I was playing my Raffin and Hofbauer organs and expressed interest in making music for them. That was the last I heard. At that time Raffin and Hofbauer were virtually the only music suppliers, choice was fairly limited and there was a real need for other sources. Since then Raffin has started making his own rolls and has extended the range considerably with arrangements from Holland, France and Switzerland as well as Germany, many of them greatly superior in quality to the original choice which dated from the time Carl Frei Junior started to make these little organs. In addition Edgar Werner started production of his own range of paper roll automatically produced by computer with complete accuracy. Then there were a number of smaller music cutters and increasingly owners tried their hand, frequently with considerable success. For my money, best arrangers are the Dutch who brought a new dimension to 20 note arrangements. After Holland come Germany and France – the latter having the advantage that their tunes tend to be better known in Britain. Here at home I have to put our arrangers bottom of the league. Why this should be I don't know, we have had good arrangers in the past. An event I witnessed several years ago stuck in my mind. Jan van Dinteren took delivery of some music for his Bruder from well-known noteur van Bortel, now retired, outside Helmond Music Hall. The organ owner played the large book through the key frame several times pointing out the faults to this renowned arranger. It was an eye opener and then I thought why not? Why should organ grinders have to buy their music 'off-the-peg' blind? I'm sure that others, like me, have bought rolls because the tunes sounded OK but upon playing them after have been intensely disappointed. So what do you do? Well one answer is to listen to music on the organs of others. Whilst direct contact is not always possible it is not too difficult to tape off a book or roll and send it through the post. The other alternative is to go on the advice of someone whose opinion you trust. Another interesting thing is the way prices vary. Raffins, top of the range come on plastic paper with one piece spool and boxed for about £40. Computer cut rolls are about £28 unboxed, but last year I bought an excellent Dutch arranged roll without spool for just £15. So the bargains are around and I hope to get more in Hannover. I am a great believer in the legal expression 'caveat emptor' – let the buyer beware!



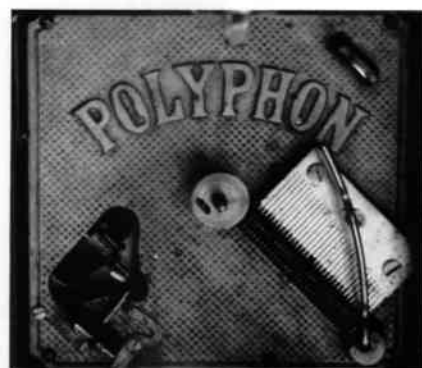
Last years Victorian Festival at Llandrindod Wells.

Collectors Showcase

Submitted by John Powell

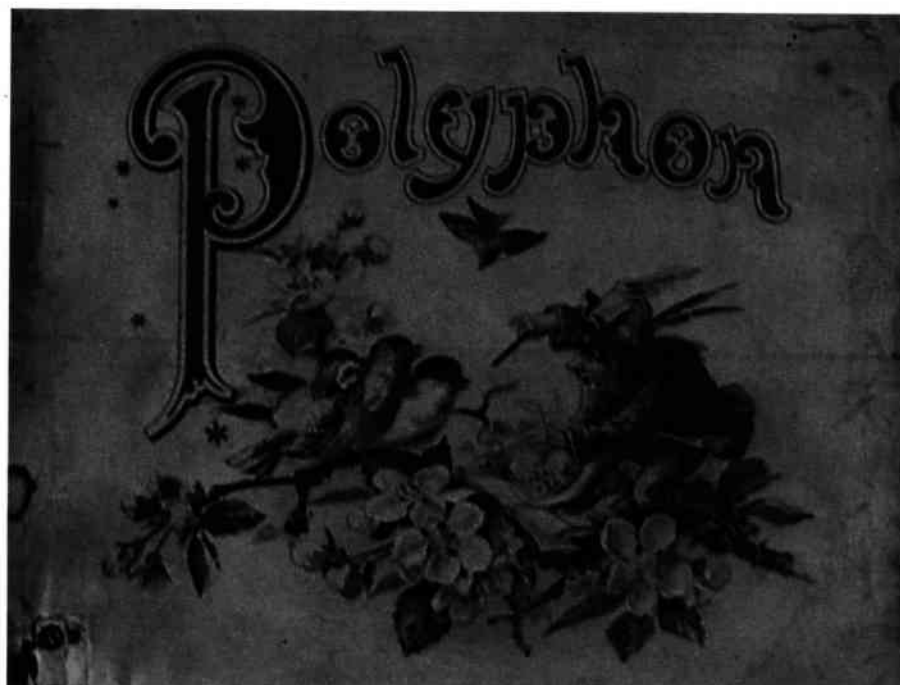
our Society's Advertising Manager.

I have had this little 6½" Polyphon for some while now and even though I have asked around, haven't yet been able to locate any similar ones. Bowers Encyclopedia has a sketch taken from an 1895 catalogue which has several different features to this one. It is referred to as a style 35, with 30 teeth in a black painted case with celluloid cover.



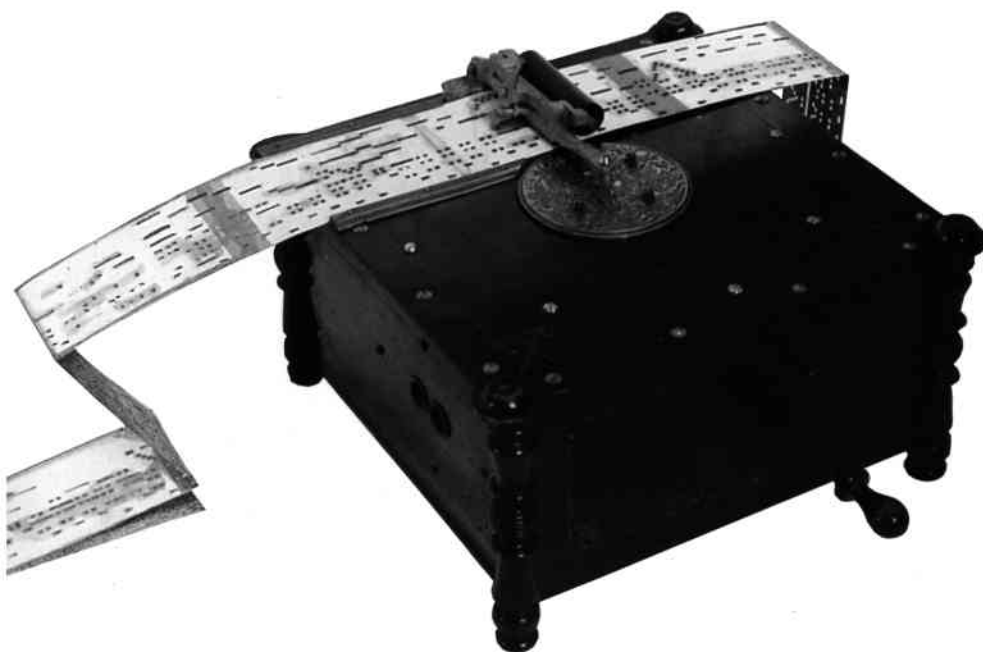
I have not seen many small early polyphons and am not sure whether the driving arrangement is common or not. The spring is wound from the centre spindle and the disc driven by a spring loaded finger in the centre flange. When the disc is put in place the finger is depressed and only rises when it passes under one of the four driving holes in the disc. When the movement is started, there can be up to a quarter of a turn delay before the drive picks up and the disc starts to turn. The stop/start arrangement is by a cutout in the edge of the disc which allows a spring loaded finger to move into it when passing and operating the stop on the governor. The advantage is, I suppose, that the driving finger in the centre flange does not have to be aligned to the start of the music on the disc which is, I believe, more common.

Other features of the box are the single wire arrangement for keeping the disc in contact with the comb by means of two kinks in the wire and a fairly crude example of carpentry for the case. The comb dampers appear to be the normal one piece polyphon pattern and the inside picture is also well known. There are several zinc discs that came with it with titles including "Oh That Gorgonzola Cheese", "Salute My Bicycle" and "The Merry Coppersmith". ■



The Erlich's Lang Notenblatter Ariston

by Ted Brown



The Lang Notenblatter (Long Music) 24 note Ariston Organette does not seem a very common instrument. I have only ever heard of two others. It plays the ordinary 24 note Ariston discs and also strip music. No music appears to have survived and a friend in the Society has arranged some music for it. Also, because I have a machine that will cut Ariston discs, it is possible for me to convert music from a disc onto straight strips. This one is in one of the typically plain cases with a wood grain finish. The case decoration is in the art deco style of lettering which was used up to Ser. No. 250,000. See Fig. 1. The serial number is on the underside of the lid and can be seen by looking up underneath the organette past the pallets. Its number 190900 shows that Erlich used a running number for all his organettes regardless of model and as you will see in the table quoted by Heintz Spinnler, this one dates from about 1889. On all the other Aristons I



Figure 1.



Figure 2.

have seen, the serial number is on the bottom of the organ usually on the reed block cover. As a point of interest the actual date of manufacture can sometimes be seen written in pencil on the piece of wood that supports the reservoir spring or on the reed block just below the lowest set of pallets. Unfortunately this bit obviously gets dirty or scuffed and the date may not be readable. This one contains brass reeds as do most of the surviving Aristons. I have only seen two out of about twenty with steel reeds.

The Ariston works on pressure and the reeds sound when the keys, depressed by the card disc or strip, are allowed to pop up through the slots in the music, opening the pallets. Unlike the ordinary Ariston, the Langnoten has teeth around the underside of the disc drive wheel that

drives a rubber covered roller – See Fig. 3 & 4, and the card strip is pulled over the keys between two guides when another roller is pinched down on the top of the card.

On the lid near the strip playing mechanism is impressed C & S 10158 – Fig. 5, I don't know anything about this mark. Was it a distributor ?

The metal fixing bracket for the pressure arm has the word 'Patent' on it, unlike any other type of Ariston I have seen, See Fig. 6. I assume this is referring to the strip playing mechanism and not the system of holding the disc flat. When I stripped the organette down, it did not appear to have been previously touched inside. I found two pieces of card packing, the same type as that from which the discs were made. One piece was stuck on the inside of the case where the feeder crank end normally rubs against the case, and the other was used to pack the bridge support for the main drive, to lift the drive cog to the right height – Fig. 7. Pieces of brown paper have been used to glue over imperfections in the wood to ensure that the inside remains airtight. This system was used extensively in Aristons on the reservoir and feeders.

On the winding shaft there is a ratchet wheel and pawl, to prevent the handle being wound backwards or to enable the handle to be unscrewed. On all Aristons I have seen, this pawl is kept in place by a bent nail. This Ariston has a strip of leather fixed over the top to keep it in place. The bellows were original and still in good condition. They only needed the internal and external feeder flaps replacing.

The main drive cog which works from a brass endless on the winding shaft is made of fruit wood and has 59 teeth. As the endless does one complete revolution for each tooth, there is no reason why it couldn't have an even number. I have had to replace two cogs, because of damage beyond repair on opposite sides of the cog wheel where the grain is softer. Because 60 is a much easier number to cut out on a small lathe than 59, a friend of mine who is good at engineering made two cogs both of 60 teeth.

To the purist I have probably got Erlich turning in his grave but the new cogs have teeth only 1½ thou. thinner and one of them, fitted to my own Ariston which has had four years of extensive play, shows no signs of wear.

The crank on the end of the winding handle that operates the feeders is in cast iron as is the one on a standard Ariston 85,594. Whether or not all the earlier Aristons had these, I don't know. All the later ones I have seen have a pressed steel crank, which was certainly a cheaper and easier way to produce one than to cast it.

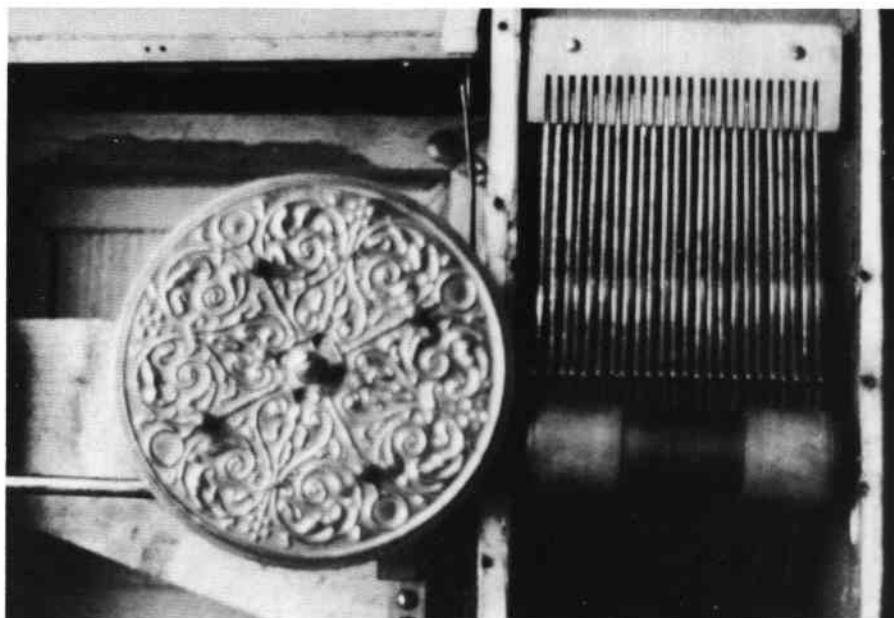


Figure 3.

Here are two lists of Ariston numbers with their actual or estimated date of manufacture. Heintz Spinnler has worked out that approximately 25,000 were manufactured each year and the lists show how accurate that is.

List compiled by Spinnler

1885	100,000	
1890	200,000	
1892	251,622	Dated 28/1/92
1894	300,000	
1894	310,979	Dated 10/5/94

List of those seen by me

1884	85,594	(approx.) Half wood shaft winding handle.
1889	190,900	21/2/89 Langnoten
1894	310,236	8/2/94 Standard with steel reeds.
1895	327,023	(approx.) Standard with brass reeds.
1896	350,761	(approx.) Standard with brass reeds.
1899	418,299	1899 on reed, block brass reeds.
1902	475,294	(approx.)



Figure 4.

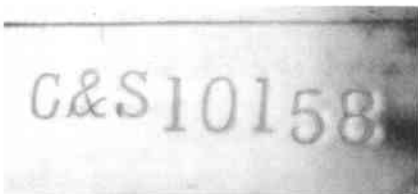


Figure 5.

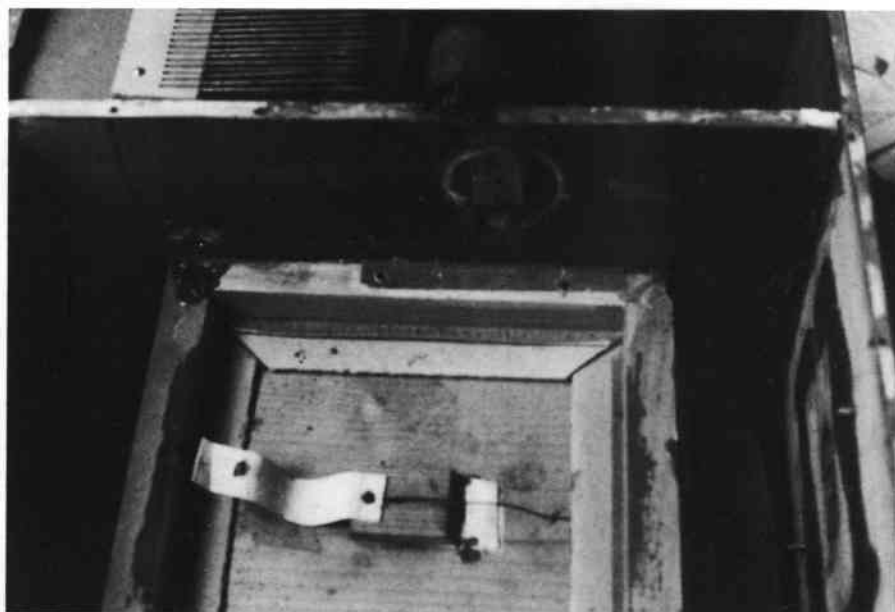


Figure 7.



Figure 6.

Figs. 8 and 9 show the inside of the organette with and without the feeders in place. The leather strip covering the pawl can be seen at the bottom of both pictures. The cast iron crank can be seen on the winding handle. The drive cog is made in two parts. The double stepped centre is one piece and the collar with the teeth in is a force fit over the top with a nail driven in through the two at an angle to hold them together.

My thanks to Roger Booty and Ken Dickens for the assistance they have given, and special thanks to Heintz and Rene Spinnler for the use of their article in *Das Mechanische Musikinstrument*, No. 29 September 1986.

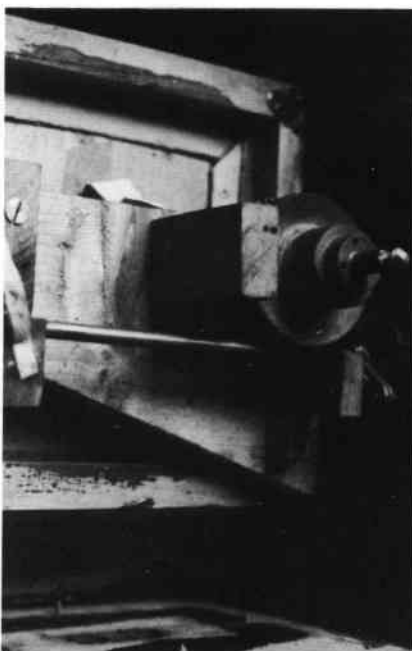


Figure 8.

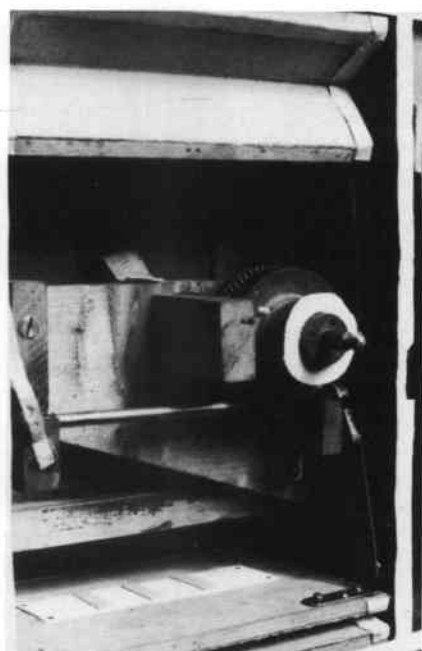


Figure 9.

The Simplex Piano Player

by R. Booty

'The Simplex Piano Player Co., of 61 Hatton Garden, report a very good advance during the month of July, and quite a number of dealers have taken up sole agencies in the various districts. Those traders who have not seen the instrument will have a convenient opportunity of doing so by inspecting it at the Music Trades Exhibition, Manchester, where it will be shown from the 25th to the 29th of the present month. Mr. H. Metcalf (representative of Mr. Theodore P. Brown, the maker of the piano player) is coming to England, and will be pleased to give at the exhibition all information to the trade.'

Thus wrote the Musical Opinion in August 1902, on the recently introduced Simplex. According to McTammany, ("The Technical History of the Player", John McTammany. Vestal Press.) Theodore P. Brown was the first man to produce a saleable player piano, as opposed to a piano player. Called the "Aeriol", it was covered by United States patents dated 1897, although it appears the instrument could have been introduced earlier, in 1895. Dolge ("Pianos and their Makers", Alfred Dolge. Dover Publications.) states that it was a commercial success. McTammany however, disagrees, giving the reason as, 'Prejudice, pure and simple', by the piano manufacturers who refused to allow player actions to be fitted within their pianos.

In 1898 Brown sold his patents to Aeolian, and then proceeded to build a piano player which he called the "Simplex". The spooling of the music in the Aeriol had been achieved by a clockwork motor similar to that found in the Melville Clark "Appollo" player. Brown retained this idea for his new machine, and as can be seen from the topical August advertisement shown here, - 1902 was Coronation year - it was considered one of the main assets of the Simplex.

Although there were obviously great hopes for the new player, it seems to have obtained little popularity compared to the Aeolian "Pianola" and the Wilcox & White "Angelus".

The following is a report which appeared in the September 1902 edition of Musical Opinion.

'The Manchester Exhibition opened Monday, August 25th, the third annual music trades exhibition opened in St. James's Hall, Manchester. Simplex Piano Company exhibited Simplex "players" in rosewood and walnut cases. These instruments attracted very much attention and many explanations of their principle of construction were asked for. Briefly, the Simplex feature

MUSICAL OPINION & MUSIC TRADE REVIEW. 811

THE **1902.**

Simplex

PIANO PLAYER

HAS BEEN

CROWNED

WITH THE FAVOURABLE OPINIONS OF ALL WHO HAVE

SEEN and HEARD BOUGHT and TRIED IT.

Madame CALVE:

Madame GADSKI:

Madame SEMBRICH:

EDOUARD de RESZKE:

Your **SIMPLEX** is so near perfection that I **MARVEL MORE EACH TIME I HEAR IT.**

There is **NO COMPARISON** between the possibilities of the **SIMPLEX** and any other instrument for interpreting either Instrumental or Vocal Music.

I am astounded at the possibilities of your **SIMPLEX** Piano Player. Its possibilities are **GREATER THAN ANY OTHER.**

One point appeals to me most strongly in the capacity of your **SIMPLEX** Piano Player over all others. I mean the strong accents as coupled with the immediate pianissimos, producing a dramatic effect for the study of roles which I have found in no other player.

The Simplex Piano Player

*represents the last word said in this particular and increasingly popular branch of the Music Trade. By the ingenious introduction of a **CLOCK-WORK MOTOR**, which winds and re-rolls the music, all labour is saved to the operator; and the tempo, being under the control of a lever, cannot possibly be affected by the movements of the pedals. It follows as a matter of course that the light and shade effects, through being left entirely to the foot pedals, are more easily and promptly produced than is possible by any other method.*



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is unsurpassed in size, and is kept up to date by means of monthly additions. A **NEW SYSTEM OF MUSIC EXCHANGE** has been introduced, which undoubtedly presents many greater advantages to the Trade and Public than the usual library system.

FULL PARTICULARS CAN BE OBTAINED FROM THE

SIMPLEX PIANO PLAYER CO.

59, 60 & 61, Hatton Garden, London, E.C.

AUGUST 1902, VOL. XXV, No. 299.
MUSICAL OPINION & MUSIC TRADE REVIEW

consists of a provision in the form of a clockwork motor, which performs the work of winding and un-winding the perforated sheet of music on and off the rollers, so saving the operator the trouble of doing this by an expenditure of force applied to the foot pedals. The arrangement for controlling the time at which the piece is played is entirely distinct from the pedals and is worked by a small hand lever. By entirely relieving the operator's feet of the duty imposed by working the music rollers

and confining the labour of the feet to the work of supplying air to the pneumatic chambers, valves and pistons by which the key levers are operated, very delicate expression can be attained. The general construction of the Simplex is also of such a character that the internal parts can be easily inspected or reached for any necessary purpose. Herein is found again the Simplex element.'

A good photograph of a Simplex piano player can be found in Arthur Ord-Humes book, "Pianola", plate 62.

Musical Box Oddments

by H. A. V. Bulleid

Number 34

Some people take an extremely dim view of "hymn boxes," but this is an oversimplified reaction because such boxes range from the rather mediocre right up to the excellent; and this applies to the quality of both the movement and the music. The range covered is formidable, from popular and once-popular hymns and carols and Gospel songs to the real classics of Church music by eminent composers. Plenty are to be found on disc, and it is significant that those late interchangeable Paillard boxes with six cylinders generally include one cylinder playing all or mainly hymns.

Gospel songs were established in the U.S.A. from about 1860, a notable composer being Robert Lowry, 1826-99, a Baptist Pastor from Philadelphia. He is best remembered for the still popular **Shall we gather at the river?** (1864) which is on Polyphon 50192 and Regina 1895 and is often heard on cylinder boxes, sometimes camouflaged as **Beautiful River**.

Other powerful figures in the arena were the evangelist D. L. Moody, 1837-99, and his musical associate Ira D. Sankey, 1840-1908. Their success stemmed from meetings in the U.S.A. and England in 1873. Sankey's best known tune is said to be **The Ninety and Nine** (1874) (Polyphon 50171). He was a prolific composer, though given a very low rating in the **Oxford Companion to Music**, and his first collection was published in 1873. He would never have expected anyone to play eight of his tunes one after the other! And this should certainly be avoided by anybody who gets hold of an eight-air (let alone a 12-air) box of Sankey tunes. Some were used in small chapels, and a tune on repeat would cover the several verses of a hymn; but of course most were for home use.

What distinguishes song music from hymn music? Only the words, so the music can be equally distinguished for both. Also, the better arrangers could improve banal tunes. But the trouble with some simple hymn boxes is that they just play a 30-second verse twice over giving scant if any musical variety. The same thing happens in some boxes devoted to Scottish songs.

Incidentally, it also rather deplorably happens on many large discs which merely play their tune, unaltered, twice over.

So the preferred hymn boxes are usually those with tunes from a variety of sources. Classics like **Old Hundred** are to be found on early boxes, e.g. Nicole 21819, but the rather pervasive Sankey tunes only appeared around 1874, e.g. Nicole 2-per-turn serial 45553. This has twelve Sankey tunes including **The Ninety and Nine** and **The Great Physician**.

Hymn box specials

The untidy but interesting tune sheet in Fig. 1 is from an 8-air hymn box of unknown make but with unusual features, serial 8006, about 1880. The hymn numbers have been added later and probably piecemeal.

These hymn numbers were altered in succeeding editions of various books. For instance, in **Hymns and Songs for Mission Services**, 1887 edition, all the hymns on this tune sheet appear but only tune 3 has the same number, 310.

Then in **Sacred Songs and Solos - 1200 pieces** edited by Sankey about 1890, they all appear again but again with different numbers. By 1904 two of them first appeared in the Methodist Hymnal - **Man of Sorrows** with words and music by P. P. Bliss, 1838-76, and **Work for the Night is coming**, music by Lowell Mason. These books give most of



Fig 1: Black on brown and white 9 by 6½ in. tune sheet of unknown maker's 8-hymn Contralto Piccolo serial 8006. Three repair patches only too visible. Smudging due to water damage on the original dark blue ink.

the composers and writers.

I got most of this information, which may help to date some boxes and dispel boredom about them, thanks to the Wesley Historical Society Library. Probably earlier editions of the above books, which sold many millions of copies, would show the hymns numbered exactly as on this tune sheet.

Contralto Piccolo

Serial 8006 with 11 in. cylinder and 77 comb teeth also has the unusual claim **Contralto Piccolo** on its tune sheet. This is borne out, perhaps helped with a bit of imagination, in the music; as one expects for hymns, much of the musical decoration is an octave below the normal piccolo and is effective against the heavy chords of the hymn music. It certainly permits good variety between the two verses played for most of the hymns - there is no straight repetition at all.

But what about the eight tunes? Well, they are pleasantly varied and none is too solemn. Tune 5 is quite rollicking. In crediting it to Sankey I am relying on Nicole's tune sheet mentioned above.

Another Contralto Piccolo musical box of the same dimensions and undoubtedly by the same maker was sold by Christies in June 1980; it also had the same type of safety check.

Safety checks

Serial 8006 also boasts an unusual type of safety check, as shown in Figs. 2 and 3. It consists of a lever pivoted inside the treble end cylinder bearing bracket with its shaped end riding in turn over each of twelve pegs screwed into the great wheel. Normally it drops after clearing each peg, but if they move faster so that it has no time to drop clear an extension jams against the peg and stops the cylinder from running away.

This effective device is slightly simpler and decidedly quieter than the Baker-Troll arrangement shown in Figs. 4 and 5. It has a crescent-shaped lever also pivoted inside the cylinder bearing bracket and engaging ten pegs screwed into the great wheel. One end is lifted in turn by the pegs and drops away again just in time to prevent the other end jamming against another peg. This jamming happens at once if the cylinder gains speed.

The Baker-Troll system is a bit noisy as the lever drops from peg to peg, and Fig. 5 shows a harmless home-made silencer. By harmless I mean that if a subsequent restorer does not like it, he can remove it very easily and practically without trace.

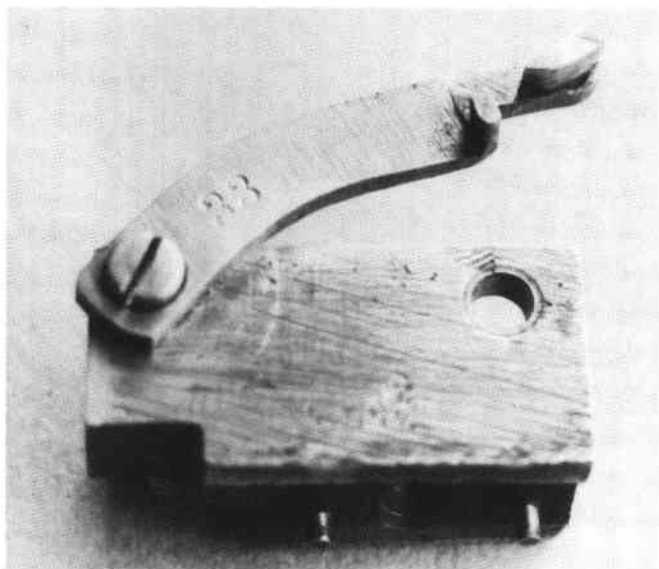


Fig 2: Serial 8006 safety check seen from bass end. The cam at the end of the lever rides over pegs in the great wheel and the adjacent block just falls clear of the pegs if they pass slowly.

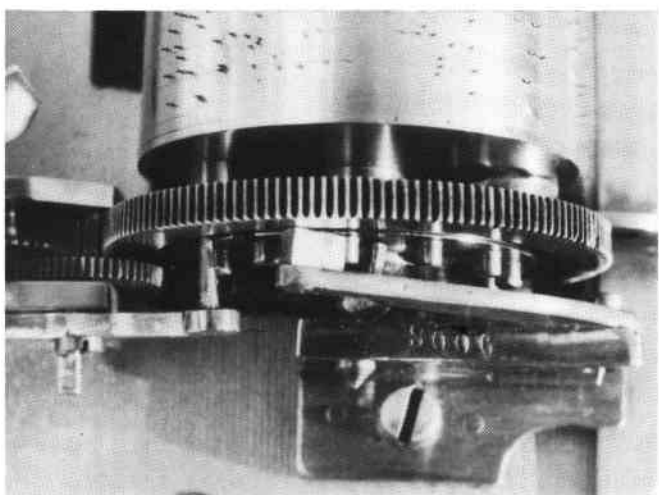


Fig 3: Safety check in operating position, with cam just about to drop off a peg which will then pass over the block.

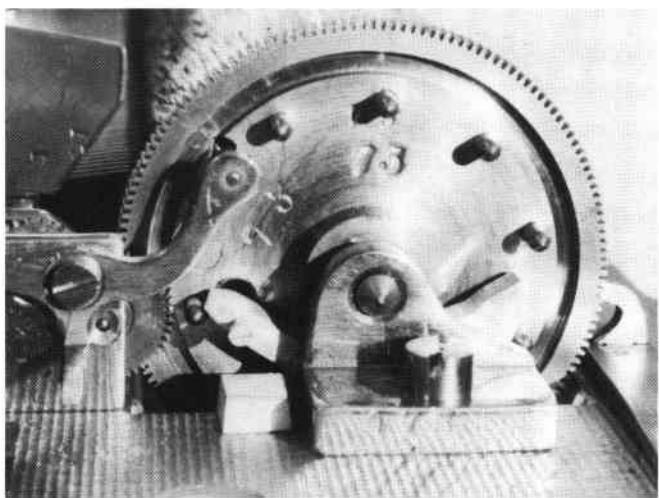


Fig 4: George Baker ("late Baker-Troll") serial 15473 safety check. The left end of the pivoted lever being lifted by a great wheel peg and so putting the right end in the path of another peg from which it will pull clear as the left end drops off the peg. The sound of the lever hitting the next peg can be silenced as shown by fitting a small screw to land on a rubber pad stuck to the bedplate.

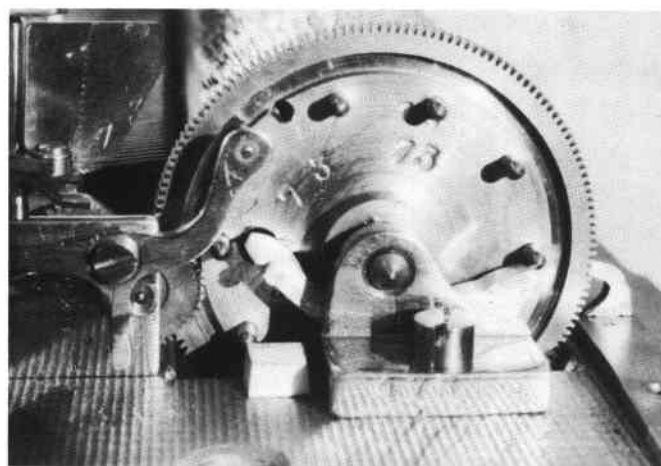


Fig 5: If the great wheel speeds up, the right end of the lever jams against a peg as here shown. Most Geo. Baker movements have the last two digits of their serial numbers stamped, sometimes exuberantly, on many components including here the fan blades and great wheel and, as 473, on the cylinder bearing brackets. The safety check lever shown is not exactly to Baker-Troll dimensions because the original was missing and I had to make a replacement.

Nicole dating

It is generally accepted that C.E. Brun transferred the Nicole Frères headquarters to London and disposed of almost all the Geneva operations about 1880, and that subsequently the Company sold musical boxes with serial numbers above 50,000 supplied by other makers. But the more interesting aspect is how to date the last of the genuine Nicole production of musical boxes in Geneva.

Here are the established relevant facts, – well worth noting before advancing any theories . . .

1. The highest serial number of a Nicole-made box so far reported is 47,495.
2. As reported in *The Music Box* Vol. 12 No. 8, serial 44235 was sold new in London on June 3rd 1876.
3. As previously reported, serial 45888 was sold new in London early September 1876.
4. Stocks with London Agents and dealers were said to be "hundreds" – see Times advertisements around 1875.
5. Nicole's production rate in 1870 was about 850 per annum, see John Clark estimates and chart in *The Music Box* Vol. 10 No. 6.
6. Mechanisation of musical box manufacture proceeded rapidly in Ste Croix when Paillard opened the first factory there in 1875; but Chapuis recorded that in Geneva "makers generally kept to the old procedures . . . and it found itself in an economically inferior position."

I think it is reasonable to assume that the Geneva makers realised that Ste Croix was gaining the competitive edge. This would particularly affect Nicole Frères, because their product range was almost certainly less varied than most of their competitors. For example, no Sublime Harmony box of genuine Nicole make has yet been reported. And serial 47495, the last reported box, which was one of a batch of at least three, was a simple 8-air, 13 in. cylinder "standard" type except that it was supplied with a second cylinder; but the interchangeable feature was based on first locking the double-spring drive, a method which by 1877 seemed old-fashioned. Furthermore, Nicole were operating with excessive stocks; boxes awaiting despatch plus those in transit plus "hundreds" at Agents and dealers must have added up to over a thousand boxes made but not sold, – more than a year's production. Therefore there would be a serious cash-flow problem, ultimately forcing manufacture to close down.

The fact that serial numbers 44235 and 45888 were sold in London within three months of each other certainly supports the assumption that stocks were too high – these boxes must have been made almost two years apart; there has never been any reason to doubt that Nicole boxes were manufactured approximately in serial number order.

If 45888 followed the current stock pattern it was made in June 1875. If the 850 per annum rate persisted to the end, which is all too likely when a crisis hits a manufacturer, then the last box, serial 47495, was made in April 1877.

The same reasoning if applied to 44235 would involve its manufacture in March 1875 and thereby the manufacture of 45888 in February 1877; but this one was sold in September 1876 so serial 44235 must have been overlong in stock.

However cautiously one treats these figures, I think it has to be accepted that no musical boxes were made by Nicole Frères of Geneva after the year 1877.

David Cadet's early forte-piano

David Cadet made musical boxes in Geneva in the 1820-1840 period, and produced accurate and elegant comb teeth in groups of five, making up the early type of sectional combs. He may have been the first to exploit the two-comb Forte-Piano system which soon superseded the long-and-short-pin method. His serial number 950 is shown in Figs. 6 to 8, with sixteen groups of teeth making up the forte comb at the right and nine groups making the piano comb at the left, and with treble teeth adjacent, as always seen on Nicole movements. The serial number is in the usual left back position on the brass bedplate, but is inverted. The mechanism is in a plain case with external controls and is a very tight fit, with some wood gouged out of the case end to clear the fan blades; but the bedplate encroaches beyond the key partition slots so this may not be the original case.

The cylinder is 9½ in. by 1½ in. diameter, playing four



Fig 6: Teeth in groups of five. The hole above DAVID CADET is for the instant stop lever screw below, usually blind.

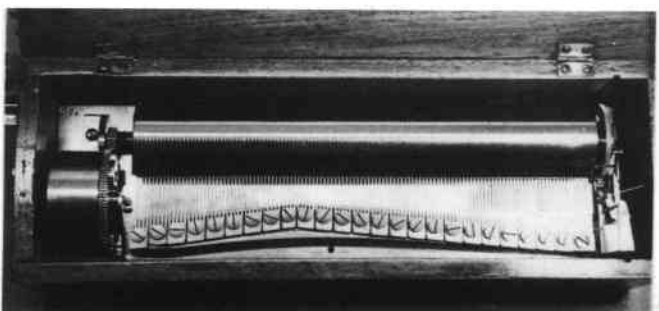


Fig 7: Serial 960 David Cadet Forte-Piano, with Forte sectional comb at the governor end. The extreme bass and treble groups of the Piano comb have four teeth, all others five.

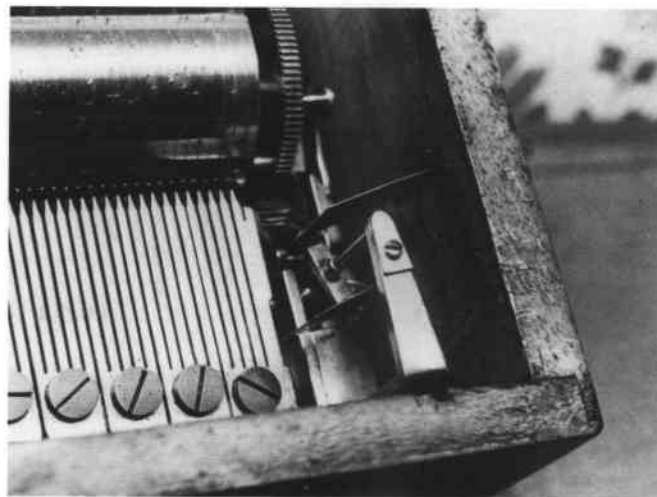


Fig 8: The extreme bass tooth of the forte section is of the usual extra width for heavier lead weight.

tunes on 80 forte plus 43 narrower piano teeth. The tunes are attractively arranged and run for a shade under 45 seconds. One in particular has that elusive familiarity that is so tantalizing with missing tune sheets – this one may well have been lost more than a hundred and fifty years ago.

Member Ralph Heintz kindly supplied this data and pictures, and I can do no better than quote his description of the general forte-piano arrangement and details of one of the tunes . . . "The timbre of the piano comb is rather ethereal and definitely different from the forte. In none of the four airs does the piano comb play entirely by itself; there is always at least a series of accompaniment arpeggios played on the forte section.

"Air no. 2 starts with two bars of very lightly used piano (only the top few notes used); two bars of forte; another two bars like the first two; two bars of forte; two bars of 'full' piano; and a conclusion of four bars of forte. A scattering of piano notes bolster the melody in some forte passages."

Footnote: Adjacent treble teeth but with the piano comb at the governor end were also featured in L'Epée key-wind serial 13206. It plays eight airs on a 16½ in. cylinder with 64 forte and 44 piano teeth. ■

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Letters to the Editor



Letters sent to the Editor may be reproduced in part or whole, unless marked, "Not for Publication." Due to the amount of work involved in producing the "Music Box" the Editor regrets he cannot answer all letters personally.

Large attendance

Jon Gresham, President MBSGB writes:-

In your Report on the 1987 Society Spring Meeting held in Northampton you are not accurate in claiming that the 98 members present was the largest ever weekend attendance.

You were probably misled by Alan Wyatt's comment that it was the largest provincial attendance during his five year term as Meetings Organiser. However, the December 1979 meeting in Bristol, organised by Jim Colley, attracted 117 members (if I remember correctly) and on Page 296 of Volume 9 of our Journal is recorded that on March 15th, 1980 a record 135 members attended the meeting held at the Madeira Hotel, Brighton.

However, the number attending is no criteria of the success of a meeting, numbers have fluctuated for a variety of reasons and personally I have found all our meetings richly rewarding, thanks to the efforts of our speakers, hosts, regional organisers and meetings organisers. ■

How to sell your orchestrion without even trying

A recent report brings an unexpected result.

On page 45 of your magazine, "The Music Box", an article reflected a new orchestrion being manufactured by a Nicholas Simons of Derbyshire. Would you forward this request to him for details on the availability and purchase of his new orchestrion?

Name withheld at Editors discretion. ■

My experiences with dead teeth in music box combs.

G. Planus writes from South Salem, U.S.A.:-

I too, in past years was bothered by the occasional "PLOP" of a dead tooth, but not being a scientific kinda bloke, I attacked the problem from a mechanical point of view.

I took a scrap comb that had some "Ploppy" teeth in it and figured it might be because the soldering between comb and comb bed was defective. It wasn't. At least not in the section where the "Plops" were. However, the soldering was patchy in places where the teeth "rang". So much for that theory.

I checked through the thousands of tuning charts I'd made over many years on which I'd made notes of these things and found that "Ploppy" teeth were found in combs made in the latter half of the nineteen-hundreds. I asked myself "Why then?"

So I poured meself a tot of whiskey. (Johnny Clark, May his God bless him) had told me that whiskey, an armchair and cogitation always goes best together. So I done like what he told me, didn't I? I sat, I drunk and I thunked, and I thunk like this:

Early music box combs were made individually or in small batches and each maker specified to the comb maker the exact characteristics he wanted, tonally for his combs. The comb maker then experimented during the hardening and tempering until he acquired the tone desired. Listen to various early makers and note the difference in tone. (Personally I love Duccommon Girod the best).

Early music box combs have a much longer vibration period than later ones. They rely more on the properties of "Sympathetic vibration" in addition to the initial "PLUCK NOTE" whereas later music boxes rely on the initial "PLUCK" of the tooth to produce their main sound.

Later manufacturers were interested in mass marketing, and therefore sought ways to produce cheaper and more *Efficient?* products.

The Bane of all manufacturers was "Damper noise". How can you cut down Damper noise?

Answer: By lessening the time the tooth vibrated.

How do you achieve this result?

Answer: Make the tooth stiffer.

How can you achieve a standard stiffness of teeth?

Answer: By having your comb steel mass produced to a constant. And by hardening and tempering, using scientific instruments, (not the eyes of an individual specialist) to achieve consistent results.

So now, you've cut down the vibration period of a tooth. You've cut down your damper noise risk, but **"You gets nuffing fer nuffing"**.

Now, you've also cut down the amount of time in which teeth can re-act with each other. The time during which "sympathetic vibration" can take place is diminished.

Now lets get back to the work bench, (in my case the tuning bench).

I hook up the comb to the tuning machine, it tells me to within a hundredth of a note, (one cent) what each tooth is producing. It also tells me how long the vibration period is for each tooth.

I make a chart of the comb containing the "Ploppy" teeth.

I grind the "Plop" tooth (it's a scrap comb, I hasten to add.) The "Plop" tooth is a treble one without any lead, I grind it in the front, I grind another at the root and find something very interesting.

"Only when I grind enough metal away, (be it at the tip or at the root), so that an adjacent tooth comes within the range of "sympathetic vibration" does the "Ploppy" tooth begin to ring/sing/come to life.

The only snag is, because of my grinding and filing, it only rings/sings/comes to life, when it's playing the wrong note by anything from a quarter to a half a note, in the bass sometimes more. And that ain't good not nohow it ain't, is it?

I then experiment, adding lead (solder) at the rate of one cent at a time to bring the

tooth back to it's original tuning. The closer I get to the original tuning the more "Ploppy" the tooth gets.

I go back to all my Tuning charts and check whether any adjacent teeth supposedly playing the same note, which should react to each other "sympathetically" are "Ploppy", (You know, perhaps I really am a scientific bloke after all). I find that in one box which I own, (You must never muck around with the tuning on customers boxes without their express permission and with full knowledge of your capabilities, or lack of in some cases I've met with) but I deviate, which is my wont.

The only times that a pair of teeth, supposedly playing the same note are "Ploppy" is when they have either been so badly tuned during manufacture (tuners were paid by the "piece work" method) or there is corrosion of the lead or rust, or later retuning by a "Restorer!" has thrown either tooth out of the range of sympathetic vibration with it's mate.

With regard to John Powell's comments about Polyhons.

His comments are true about all Disc machines which have opposing combs, be the teeth plucked simultaneously or consecutively.

With disc machines having opposing combs, it is rare, very rare, that there are not at least two teeth intended to play the same note, so that even if only one is plucked, it's mate will vibrate sympathetically, no matter which comb it's on. Disc machine manufacturers developed the sympathetic vibration of teeth to an art. But as with all music boxes, the final result was solely the product of the comb tuner. If you pay a man by the speed in which he can produce a satisfactory product, you ain't gonna get the finest quality.

I know, cos I've worked under the "piecework" system.

Look under your combs at the leads, **Don't take your comb off if it don't need fixing.** The old boys knew what they was doing. Look at the leads, look at the number of snips on each lead.

A lot of combs have as many as the first four leads **"Untuned"!!!**

One snip mark tells you that the tuner said to himself "That'll do", two snips says "Near, but I can't let it go", three snips tells you that the tuner was taking a bit more care, four snips and then perhaps a file mark as well tells you that your comb was tuned by a man that cared.

Through my charting system I can follow the path of the individual tuners working for one company then moving to another and can tell you when he was in a good mood or a bad one by the way he tuned the leads. I can promise you, there ain't many combs about with four snips and a file mark.

Because I don't have the pressure of time as the old boys had, and also cos I got the benefit of a tuning machine, I do my tuning on leaded teeth with a razor blade, taking microscopic slivers off. It's fascinating watching adjacent teeth gradually starting to vibrate sympathetically until the oscilloscope dial grows a triumphant passionate red as the two teeth vibrate

together to produce what I call "The Soul" of a music box.

Getting back to opposing combs. They have to be mounted together and tuned together, if you want to gain the best results of sympathetic vibration, and if you have opposing combs that are "Ploppy" it's simply because they ain't been tuned together finely (or the leads are corroded). As little as one cent in treble teeth can make the difference between a tooth that just plays, and one that rings/sings, cos it's reacting sympathetically with a mate. The bass notes require a much greater difference before they set each other going.

Now that Dario Valenzuela has taken over my business, I can blow my trumpet a bit, and can say that customers have been most gratified when I've brought dead combs back to life, especially on four occasions when the opposing combs on disc machines brought to me were found to have no relationship with each other. They'd come from scrapped disc machines and had been re-assembled for auction.

And before any of you start retuning your combs from a disc machine I must point out, even though your combs are a mass produced product, they are all tuned individually.

"There is as much as a five note difference for the starting note of a fifteen and a half inch Regina comb". The same variation applies to all disc machines.

If you are working from somebody else's comb or a chart, you will have to transpose.

My conclusions, are that:

Later manufacturers, in the interest of their pockets said "what the hell, one "Ploppy" tooth out of thirty seven ain't that bad and to put another tooth in the comb to react sympathetically with it will cost too much. Get them out the door and sell 'em".

And then, I remember restoring two monster music boxes manufactured very late, in the Art Nouveau period. In both of these boxes **all teeth were ploppy!!!** I spent two days inching the combs forward, gradually increasing the lift/Pluck. The only time the teeth would ring was when the combs were hard up to the cylinder, so that when the teeth were plucked they bowed at a forty degree angle. Well . . . thirty degrees?

I gave that box back to the customer without making a charge for all the restoration work we'd done, explaining: "As a mechanic, I can't believe that teeth can bend like that without snapping, and I ain't about to take the risk". He took it to a braver restorer than I and perhaps he lives "Happy ever after", I'm glad I don't have to watch his box playing though.

One last point. There weren't no damper noises on that comb, even when there weren't no dampers. The teeth didn't vibrate to any extent, they just plucked. The damper problem at least, had been solved.

I hope readers will excuse Gerry's peculiar grammar, fortunately not all English-American immigrants become afflicted in the same way. Maybe he's trying to prove he's still English? Ed. ■

International Vintage Phonograph Society

C. G. Nijsen, Honorary Secretary of the International Vintage Phonograph Society writes from Mackaylaan 19, 5631 NM Eindhoven:-

The above Society, which was founded here several years ago to further the exchange of historic knowledge in the field of sound recording and promote contacts between roughly 100 selected collectors and historians.

After my retirement from Philips International this year the IVPS will no longer be able to make use of the Philips network of communication facilities, but several members have suggested to keep the Society in existence nevertheless, and use the above address as a clearing house of information. Also I hope to remain active as a sound historian and consultant for another couple of years and have accepted to be a member of the Historical Committee of the Audio Engineering Society.

To commemorate the Centenary of the first Berliner record patent I now have pleasure in offering a booklet, covering in a nutshell the whole history of mechanical sound and music through the ages. A large chapter in the centre pages reflects my present favourite field of study and I really believe this deserves more attention of museums and private collectors than hitherto. During the upcoming of radio and gramophone in the roaring twenties and the world crisis that followed, it has more or less escaped the activities of historians but now reproducing player pianos and music roll collections seem to have triggered a reviving interest, as was already shown during the AES Convention in 1983.

May I ask for photocopied advertisements and any relevant facts or documentations that may help in compiling the more elaborate book we have been working on for many years and which hopefully will be published before long. Copies of the booklet are available at Hf 1.8, - - each or equivalent. ■

A word of warning!

Judith Howard writes from 2 Bramfield Road, London SW11:-

May I make a brief word of warning to anyone attending the Waldkirch Organ Festival this summer!

I went to the original Festival at Waldkirch (Carl Frei centenary) in 1984, which I much enjoyed, including a fascinating window display of old archive material by a local photographic studio, including organ builders' factory photos and some photos of Carl Frei senior. They were offering to supply duplicated prints, and despite the considerable expense, I ordered copies of the Carl Frei pictures, and made the mistake of paying in advance (including postage to England).

Now, in 1987, I am **still** awaiting the prints. I have heard nothing whatsoever from the photographers, despite writing several times (in German). I even in desperation contacted Carl Frei junior

(who had loaned the original photographs); he kindly telephoned the shop on my behalf and was informed that my prints were ready and would soon be despatched, but even then, nothing happened . . .

I don't know if the display will be repeated in 1987; but if so, please be warned: if you order prints, **do not pay in advance**. You are welcome to cite my experience as your reason.

Incidentally, if anyone who is attending this year, feels they could take up the cudgels on my behalf and retrieve the 75 Marks (plus 6 Marks postage) which I paid, I shall be very glad to hear from them, and can supply photocopies of my correspondence together with a note of authority to collect the cash. ■

46 Note Player Organs

Roger Booty writes from Essex:-

A small addition to my article on "46 note Player Organs", p. 56-58, Vol. 13 of "The Music Box".

In the second paragraph on p. 57, I mention a keyboardless Tonsyreno Player Organ. I have since found that the full name for this style is "Tonsyreno Cabinet".

A little more detail about this seemingly rare instrument. ■

The age of serenity

T. Langhurst writes from Surrey:-

Rather than discourage I thought it very kind of Gerry Planus to **encourage** new members (Vol. 13 No. 2) with his before and after pictures.

How dramatic has been the change from the wide-eyed hungry look of the younger man, feverishly searching for new acquisitions, to the serenity of later years.

Clearly we now see a man at peace with his collection. Long may it continue! ■



G. Planus in 1967.



G. Planus, now.

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Soon**

and Going, Going,

GONE!



SOTHEBY'S

The next sale of mechanical musical instruments will take place in London on Tuesday 29th September 1987, three items included are illustrated. **Top:** A 27½ inch Symphonion 'Orchestrion', bell disc musical box, c.1900. Est. £4/600. **Middle:** A gilt brass musical mantle clock, c.1830 – with base containing F. Lecoultrre Forte-piano movement playing one overture and six popular airs, 51cm (20 in.) high. Est. £2,500/3,500. **Bottom:** A rare Andersson Pianoharpa. Swedish, late 19th century. Est. £2/3000.

At the two recent Sotheby's sales the following prices were reached. **Amsterdam** – Piano Melodico, Dfl 9500. Mermod Frere Interchangeable Dfl 14,500. The two automaton were unsold. **London** – Acrobat automaton £10,500. Ducommun interchangeable musical box £3,800. Electric organa £4,500. Symphonion Eroica £16,500.

CHRISTIE'S

The next mechanical music sale at Christie's South Kensington is planned for October 1st 1987. Details are as yet unknown, but among early entries are two key-wind two-tunes-per-turn musical boxes and a Lecoultrre musical clock base.

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(**bold type** 26p per word).
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FOR SALE

Nice selection of **Player Pianos** plus New S/hand Rolls Duo-Art etc. Export service. Laguna Rolls, Lagoon Road, Pagham, Sussex PO21 4TH, England.

17 1/4" double comb "Stella" table model, £4,500. Miles Rock Cottage, Mountfield, Sussex. (Robertsbridge 880614).

Discs for sale. Symphonion 9-15 1/4" (side damage) 10-14 1/4", 31-8 1/2"; Adler 49-14 1/2"; Imperator 20-16 1/2", 7-5 1/2"; Britannia 2-11 1/4"; Edelweiss 22-5 1/4" (notch); Picolo 2-6 1/2"; Organ discs 23-7 7/8" (zinc/notch), 6-7 7/8" (notch), 2-10", 24-8", 1-10 1/2" (part disc), 5-8 5/8" (cardboard). A. C. Herweyer, Joh. Huslaan 50, 1216 RC Hilversum, Nederland.

Cranford, New Jersey, U.S.A. 1987 show date: Sunday, Sept. 20th. Largest show and sale of vintage phonographs, music boxes and automated instruments in the Eastern United States. One day only, 8am - 4pm at the Best Western Coachman Inn, adjacent exit 136, Garden State Parkway. Early buyers welcome at the regular \$3 admission. The motel offers free pick-up service to Newark Airport approx. 20 minutes away. For newsletter and further information contact: Lynn Bilton, Box 25007, Chicago IL 60625. (216) 758-5001.

Barrel Piano (cafe type), Pianista Thibouville, 72 key Decap organ and a 105 key Decap organ. Details from A. Prinsen, Oostjachtpark 15, 2700 Sint-Niklaas, Belgium.
Tel 03/776 94 71.

Weber Duo-Art Upright Reproducing Piano, 1922, Triple Exhauster, Pneumatics and Piano professionally overhauled. Roll Library included: Recut **Phillips P.M.** and **POPPER** Orchestrion rolls, Parts, tracker bars and original catalogues. **Details 0736-756129 evenings.**

Most desirable **Aeolian Orchestrelle 116-note Model XY** will need restoration in its new home. Mahogany case 6'9" x 6'5" x 3'6", with carved ornate columns. Blower fitted. **249 116-note organ rolls in 3 cabinets**, one of which is mahogany with inlay decoration, very pretty. **Also 249 58-note rolls.** £4,900 the lot. Gordon Hawley, 27 Hermitage Road, London N4 1DF. Tel: 01 802 2421/5984.

Gallery for Eroica. Close copy of original. One only, bargain at £140. John Powell, Ad. Manager.

Deadline Dates for Advertisements:

1st February; 1st April;
1st July; 1st October

Posting of magazine:

27th February; 27th April;
7th August; 7th November.

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WANTED

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Disc-Sets For 3-Disc Symphonion. Origin literature for Duo-Art, Welte-Mignon, Ampico pianos, organs etc. Richard Howe 9318 Wickford, Houston, Texas 77024 USA. 713/680-9945.

WANTED

Cylinder Boxes, Heller-Bern and Falconnet, any condition, restored/unrestored - badly damaged too, pay your price.

Write to:-

C. Nitschke, Steinbreite 55,
3 Hannover-91 - West Germany.

Tuning Scales for 48 note Barrel Pianos for article in Music Box journal. Also **Symphonion** 25 1/4 inch Sublime Harmonie Discs (numbers around 6,500). Please contact: David Snelling, P.O. Box 23, Douglas, Isle of Man - 0624 23911 or 0624 823483.

Reward offered for information leading to the reuniting of interchangeable cylinders No. 2, 3 and 4 with their sister and movement. These are 2 3/16" OD and 13 1/2" over encaps with a five pointed star stamp near movement serial number 15512 - John Powell, Ad. Manager.

Can anyone tell me where I can find a **Regina Orchestral Corona**? Please contact Geoffrey Smith (0206) 760760 during office hours.

WANTED

Barrel Pianos/Organs,
working or not, parts and carts.

Please telephone:

Alan Wyatt on (0223) 860332.

WANTED Case for Nicole keywinder. Bedplate size 14 1/2" x 4 1/4", or lid only, 18" x 6 1/2". Case for keywinder. Bedplate size 11" x 4 1/2". Thompson, 8 St. Catherine's Grove, Lincoln. Tel: (0522) 27322.

Musette Organette rolls (16 note, 3 3/16 inches wide) required to buy or copy. Please phone Nicholas Simons 0332 368225.

Empty Symphonion case wanted. Table model (18" inside measurement). Miles, Rock Cottage, Mountfield, Sussex. (Robertsbridge 880614).

Wanted Encyclopaedia of Automatic Musical Instruments by David Bowers also Musical Boxes by John Clark third edition. Please contact Geoffrey Smith (0206) 760760.

Wanted

Articles for publication in the "Music Box"

Let the membership as a whole benefit from the experience of individual members. Write a letter or send a complete "article". Photographs of unusual pieces are also required for "Members Showcase".

Address your correspondence to:

Graham Whitehead,
Broadgate Printing Co. Ltd.
Crondal Road, Exhall,
Coventry CV7 9NH.

WANTED

Music for **14 Note Costwold/Clareaphone organette** 7 1/4" wide, damaged or not, or would like to hire for copying. Will pay well for the hire and all postage. Tom Callow, 177 Belton Ave., Grantham, Lincs. NG31 9JQ.

WANTED PRE 1900

Cycles, Tricycles, Bells, Lamps, Saddles, Block chain and any rusty parts of frames. Will pay your price.

Phone anytime:

Peter Hoyte 025 125 3373

Send in your classified
for the next edition
NOW!!!

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.

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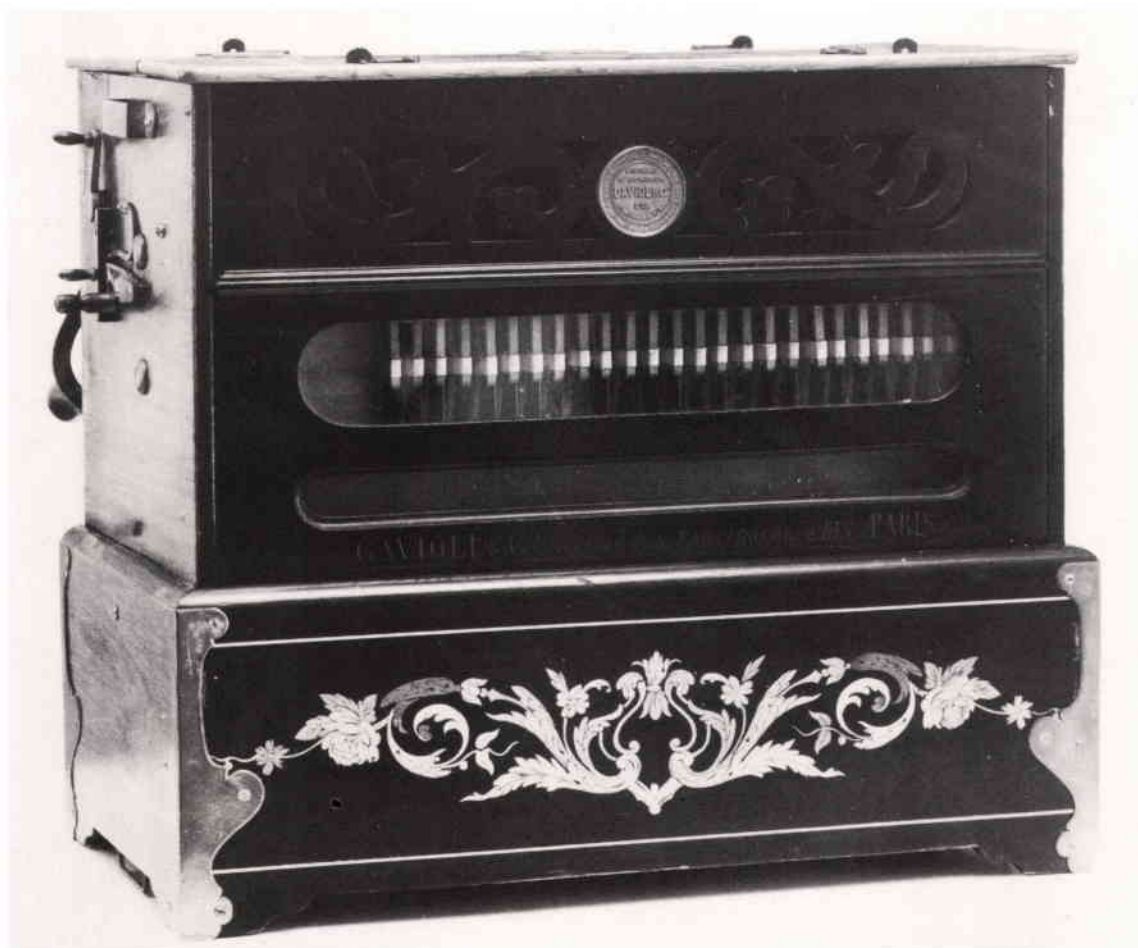




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