

# The Music Box

An International Magazine of Mechanical Music

Volume 14 Number 7

Autumn/Fall 1990

Edited by Graham Whitehead

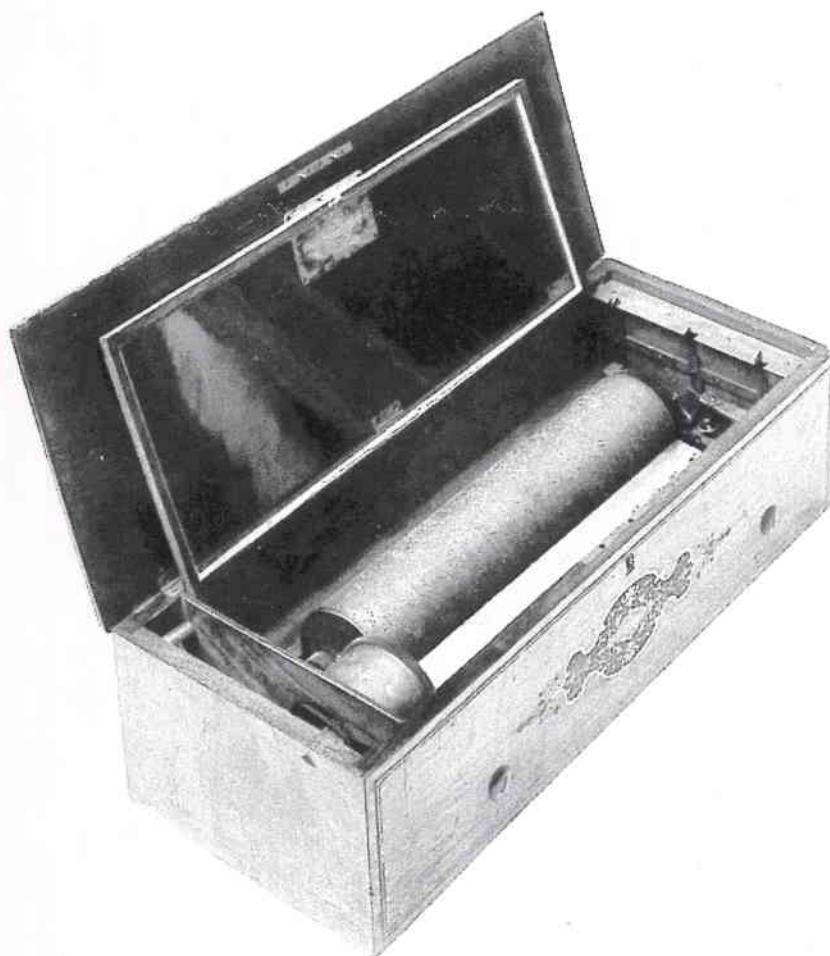


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**The Journal of the Musical Box Society of Great Britain**



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# The Music Box

An International Magazine  
of Mechanical Music

The Journal of the  
Musical Box Society  
of Great Britain.

Volume 14  
Number 7  
Autumn/Fall 1990

## Officers of the M.B.S.G.B. and their duties

### *President: Alan Wyatt*

The Willows, 102 High Street, Landbeach,  
Cambridge CB4 4DT.

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### Front Cover:

A Victorian Lithograph from Ted Brown's collection.

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The Music Box is printed for and published by the Society quarterly  
27th February, 27th April, 7th August, 7th November, from the  
Editorial Office, Broadgate Printing Company, Crandal Road,  
Exhall, Coventry CV7 9NH.

Back numbers obtainable from:  
Roy Ison, 5 East Bight, Lincoln LN2 1QH.

## Editors Notes

When I hear of the next theatre wanting a Stage Manager or the next boat wanting a Captain, I now know just the right man.

Our AGM last June saw the stepping-down of our President for ten years, Jon Gresham. Ten years at the helm requires a lot of commitment for the officer of any society and in this edition, our former President reminisces, looking back and seeing the changes that have happened during that time. A society such as ours does not find it easy to find the voluntary officers needed to run the society. I know that Jon would have liked to have stepped down many times previously but held on to the reins because there was work to be done. After all, the President's position is the most respected and the highest office in the Society and like a good sea captain, Jon would not consider leaving a ship in troubled waters. On dry land, a theatre audience can be enjoying the most smooth running show, where backstage if it wasn't for the stage manager there would be absolute chaos, Jon has certainly played that role too. Not causing the chaos - simply preventing it. To the membership at large, many traumas have gone practically unnoticed - thanks only to the professional leadership of Jon Gresham. Jon has always said that he would not step down whilst the society was in any sort of difficult position and when in the past he was faced with the dilemma of the last Editor, the Advertising Manager, the Subscription secretary, all wanting to retire, then he knew he was needed backstage until the ship was sailing smoothly again.

Such devotion to duty can only be rewarded in one way and it is the Society's intention to nominate Jon Gresham as a "life member" of the Musical Box Society of Great Britain at the next Annual General Meeting. In the history of the Society, this is an honour that has only ever been awarded to four other people:- the ultimate "vote of thanks".

### Our new President.

Alan Wyatt joined the society in 1974. Alan lives in Cambridge and is a retired asparagus farmer. Alan is interested in all forms of mechanical music and has a sizeable collection of his own, all housed in a private museum in Cambridge-shire. During his asparagus farming days, he spent much of his out-of-season time fiddling with barrel pianos. Well it seems that farmers make good mechanical music makers - don't forget it was the farm workers of the Black Forest who turned their hands to making cuckoo clocks and organ clocks during the long snowy winters. Likewise Alan has become quite an expert and authority on barrel pianos which now forms the main part of his collection, restoring and repairing for others as well as himself.

Alan is best known to the membership for the many society trips he has organised abroad, visiting Germany, France, Switzerland, Holland and Belgium. The highly successful meeting that he organised in Cambridge in 1980 earned him the position of Meetings Secretary. Both he and his wife Daphne will be well known to all those who have attended the society's quarterly meetings that he has organised in London and across the country, when until Alison Biden took on the position of Meetings Secretary, Alan's wife Daphne would be seated at the entrance of each meeting dealing with registration and acting as cashier. Alan's previous office in the Society was that of Membership Secretary and Correspondence Secretary - those posts he still holds! With 3 offices, Alan has set himself quite a task, but then he seems to find playing the musical saw easy enough - a man with masterly talents!



**Our new President, Alan Wyatt plays the musical saw.**

## SOCIETY TOPICS

### FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

**Annual Organ Grind and Autumn Meeting, weekend 14th - 16th September, 1990, at the Hermitage Hotel, Bournemouth.**

**Christmas Meeting, Saturday 1st December, Tuke Common Room, Regent's College, London.**

Details of programme and booking, etc., available from the Meetings Secretary, Tel: 0962 61350.

### REPORT ON PAST MEETINGS

by Reg Mayes

**Summer Meeting  
2nd June 1990  
Regents College, London**

Our President Jon Gresham welcomed us. There was a Mr. Voss from the USA, who was making his fourth visit and a new member Mr. Parkham from the UK, as well as many familiar faces.

The erudite part of the meeting was started off by our old friend; contributor and author of the book 'Cylinder Musical Box Design & Repair':- Anthony Bulleid. The title of his talk was "More on Cylinder Musical Boxes". He said "that in presenting this talk he was conscious of the great help he has had from many members in supplying information and checking facts for him." Which give him a fund of information from which he can clarify a point, and add to detective effort.

His slides included a Mojon Manger in Buffet style with double spring drive and six bells, an exceptionally good 3-bell box by Ami Rivenc with 57 teeth, and a late 77-tooth rarity from Czechoslovakia. Details of an 1861 4-air Langdorff included some key-wind components modified for lever-wind and the case had some loose and missing beading and stringing; for accurate cutting of replacements Anthony recommended using a 6 inch saw blade ground flat or better still an inch diameter bonded slitting disc running at 10,000 rpm. After showing several related tune sheet types he closed with details of a PVF mandolin box adorned on both tune sheet and governor with the neat but short-lived PVF monogram. On the completion of his talk Anthony answered a variety of questions, again exhibiting a profound and wide ranging fund of knowledge.



The second very knowledgeable speaker was David Tallis who spoke to the title "From Chaffinches to Camels." From the initial slide presentation the Chaffinch consisted of not much more than a small brass plate and a derelict pair of bellows. David advised that the bellows skin should be cut off the wooden frame with a razor blade, so that the old skin could be laid on the new skin to give the pattern. Lambs skin can be used when made airtight with watercolour or dilute Evostick. Resin W or Secotone adhesive can be used to stick the new skin to the frame. To prevent the bellows 'blowing out' it is necessary to reinforce the folds with card. With regard to the bird, he recommended that the body should be built up with balsa or lime wood. The adornment with feathers is best achieved by using the skin of an antique stuffed bird, placed on the wood base. Slides showed the completed bird which was very realistic.

The next restoration was that of a small musical snuffbox with a watch which controlled the start/stop of the mechanism. As received it was missing the wheel train, which was replaced along with the pinned barrel. Then we saw slides of an exquisite gold and enamel fruit basket birdbox made in 1805. A novel feature was that of the maker's name, FRIZARD, which was engraved under a small panel fixed by tiny screws.

Finally, David described how he had restored an automaton featuring a camel, driver and rider, that seemed to have been sat on. The head of the camel was suspended and counter-balanced, and the musical movement controlled the actions of the driver and rider. David would strongly advise that anyone taking on such a restoration should study the object hard and long and make some sketches before starting to dismantle it."

Both these talks were very well received and Jon saw to it that they each received their just acclaim. After lunch Christopher Proudfoot ably supplied by David Walch and his helpers conducted the Society Auction, which was a light hearted affair but nevertheless had plenty of bargains and added some £'s to the Society Funds.

## **Report on The Musical Box Society of Great Britain Annual General Meeting Held 3.50pm, Saturday 2nd June 1990 in The Tuke Common Room, Regents College, Regents Park, London.**

1. **Apologies for absence** were received from a number of members, including the Vice President.

2. **Approval of The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting** held 4th June 1989, was given and they were signed by the President.

3. **There were no Matters Arising** therefrom.

4. **The Hon. President** reported he was standing down as President at this meeting and was pleased to be able to do so at a time when the Society was on an even keel and consolidating. He thanked all the Officers and Committee Members who had given him so much support during his 10 years as President, and of course the Membership in general. He said it gave him great pleasure to second the nomination of Alan Wyatt as his successor, made by Reg Waylett and he was sure this would be popular with the membership.

It was with regret he reported that Ralph Heintz the Vice President, who had intended to be at the meeting, was prevented from doing so due to the death of his mother and his wife being taken ill, all within one week. He and the Society sent their condolences and best wishes to Ralph and his family.

5. **The Secretarial Reports** were received.

(a) **The Membership Secretary** reported that 46 new members had enrolled during the year and compared this with previous years. He said new introductory leaflets were now available on request and encouraged each existing member to try to recruit a new member. The Society now has a listing in the London Business Telephone directory to help it to be located by potential new members and interested organisations.

(b) **The Correspondence Secretary** outlined the correspondence he had dealt with during the year. He asked those members who were able to give talks etc. on Mechanical Music and who were willing to have their name added to a list he was compiling, to contact him.

(c) **The Subscription Secretary** was understood to be unwell and no report was available from him. Jon Gresham said on his behalf that Subscription records were now on computer. It would be of great assistance if members could quote their membership number (the first four digits of the first line of the address labels used to mail the Journal) when paying subscriptions, especially by Bank Standing Order, or indeed with any communication with the Subscriptions Secretary.

(d) **The Meetings Secretary** Alison Biden reviewed the meetings held during the year. Details of future meetings as always, can be found in the Journal.

She thanked all those involved in each of the meetings for all their hard work, and the members for attending and making it all worthwhile.

She repeated her plea made last year for volunteers to come forward to share their wealth of knowledge and experience with the rest of the membership by contributing to future meetings.

6. **The Hon. Editor** sent a written report as he was unable to attend until much later in the day. He was pleased to report that now the financial restraints had been lifted, the journal "The Music Box" had returned to its former size and quality. With the increase in size the need for articles and material to publish was even greater and he appealed for more contributions from the membership.

7. **The Hon. Archivist** reported having satisfied two enquiries and received 92 items into the Archives for which he expressed his thanks in particular to contributors from America. He repeated his plea of last year for material for the Archives saying he was particularly interested in suitably notated photographs, slides, and newspaper cuttings recording the activity of the Society at Meetings and Organ Grinds etc.

8. **The Hon. Auction Organiser** was pleased to report that the Auction Entry Forms included in the Journal had been a great success being used for about 70% of the items. He thanked Christopher Proudfoot and all others who had officiated and the vendors and purchasers for making it run smoothly.

9. **The Hon. Treasurer** distributed copies of the audited accounts and explained the various items. He was pleased to say the deficit had been reduced from £3521.77 to £264.07 and thanked contributors to the appeal for their donations which played a major part in the reduction. He was not recommending an increase in the subscriptions this year.

The reports were unanimously adopted, en bloc.

**The Advertising Secretary** encouraged members to make more use of the "Small Ads" section at the back of the Journal.

## 10. Election of the Honorary Officers and Committee.

The following appointments were made with the unanimous support of the members present.

President:-	Alan Wyatt
Vice President:-	Ralph M. Heintz
Treasurer:-	Bob Holden
Editor:-	Graham Whitehead
Subscriptions Secretary:-	Ted Bowman
Membership Secretary:-	Alan Wyatt
Meetings Secretary:-	Alison Biden
Recording Secretary:-	John Phillips
Archivist:-	Peter Howard
Auction Organiser:-	David Walch
Committee Members:-	Jon Gresham Christopher Proudfoot Reg Waylett

### Non Committee Appointments:-

Honorary Auditor:-	Stephen Cockburn
Advertisement Secretary:-	Ted Brown

Jon Gresham, who at Alan Wyatt's request continued to conduct the meeting to its close, explained that because the number of Committee members was limited by the constitution to three, Reg Mayes had stood down in his favour. He gave notice that the committee intended to immediately co opt Reg Mayes and Ted Brown onto the Committee.

## 11. Any Other Business.

Alan Wyatt made an emotional speech thanking the membership for bestowing the office of President upon him and thanking Jon Gresham for the major contribution he had made to the Society during his ten years as President. Alan gave formal notice that the Committee wished to make a formal proposition, to be voted upon at the next A.G.M. (it could not be acted upon at this A.G.M. because the requisite notice had not been served), that Jon Gresham be made an Honorary Life Member of the Society. The proposition was seconded by Ted Brown and supported unanimously by the members present.

Jon Gresham expressed his thanks for the proposal and said he had another to make (to be voted upon at the next A.G.M. for the same technical reason). He Proposed that the posts of Membership Secretary and Correspondence Secretary be merged into one as through experience they were complimentary to one another. The proposition was seconded by John Powell and supported unanimously by the members present.

**For the sake of clarity this report is to be taken as giving official formal notice that these two Propositions will be put to the next A.G.M. To save on costs, no further notice will be given.**

12. There being no other business Jon Gresham thanked all members present for their contributions and attendance and declared the meeting closed at 4.37pm.

Note:- The Auction produced approximately £600 for M.B.S.G.B. funds. J Phillips (Recording Secretary). ■

# NEWSDESK

## Obituary

We sadly record the death of Hubert Paul Corin, who died on the 14th July aged 87 years. Better known as Paul Corin, he is believed to be the first British collector to open a mechanical music museum on a full time basis. His museum, located at St Keynes Mill just into the county of Cornwall, opened as a tourist attraction in 1967. On his retirement the business was handed over to his son, Pip Corin to whom we send condolences. The business will continue trading in his fathers name.

## Sinsheim Weekend

On 22nd and 23th September 1990, 9.00 to 18.00 hrs. the third International Exchange of Mechanical Musical Instruments will take place at the famous AUTO & TECHNIK MUSEUM Sinsheim.

This extraordinary fair of curiosities deals above all with electric pianos, orchestras, hand organs, music boxes, automata, music clocks, gramophones, phonographs and of course everything having to do with historic automatic musical instruments. More than 130 collectors and offerers from all over Europe and from overseas will come to this international fair in Sinsheim. Organizer of this historic show is the renowned organ builder and renovator Gotthard Arnold from Bad Schönborn.

During the fair there will also be the first international festival of androids with participants from Switzerland, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, France and Germany. The culminating point is the presentation of the organ "Aeolian Grand," third section with 4128 pipes and twelve and a half octaves. The smallest pipe is just five millimeters and the biggest is 8,30m and has a weight of 435 kgs.

Moreover more than 50 orchestras, automatic mechanical instruments and the biggest dance organ of the world in the AUTO & TECHNIK MUSEUM Sinsheim contribute to create an attractive venue for all those who like nostalgic sounds.

## Music Box Society goes on the phone

From the deliberations of a committee meeting came the proposition that the Musical Box Society should have a phone number listed in the London area. The idea was muted because some committee members felt that prospective members who did not know anyone in the Society would otherwise never be able to make contact with us.

Following a "resolution" that evening, Reg Mayes kindly agreed to act as our initial contact by having his own number listed. Within a week of his number bearing the Society's name being listed with directory enquiries, an application for membership had been received.

The number is not being printed here as existing members have a contact list on the contents page of each Musical Box magazine.



## *A New Mechanical Museum Venue*

### **The York Museum of Mechanical Music**

The weekend of 16/17th June presented an opportunity to see and hear a unique collection of self-playing musical instruments, brought together from all over Europe. They included giant Belgium Dance Organs, ornate German Fair Organs, Automata and Orchestrons from a bygone age.

Behind this enterprise are two men, Brian Blockley - a tyre dealer from Ossett in West Yorkshire; and John Harrison - a transport entrepreneur from South Yorkshire. Both readily agree that without total commitment and dedication of their families the idea of forming this collection would not have become reality.

John Harrison's farm at Rufforth has proved to be an ideal location for storing and maintaining the collection of organs and has now given them the chance to show the public their work. By Christmas it is hoped the museum will be fully open on a daily basis.

So how did all this begin: Brian's childhood fascination for Fair-ground Organs in later years to some extent, became an obsession. This remained with him until 1974 when the first organ was purchased. From this, with enthusiasm continuing to grow, various instruments have since been obtained, many in a very sorry state of repair. These have taken Brian, his friends and family many painstaking hours to restore.

John's early years were spent in farming, where the repairing of machinery became second nature. Restoration of old machinery soon became a hobby, especially the challenge of rebuilding an early Standard Fordson Tractor. On visiting his first show with the tractor a whole new world of preservation was opened up to him. Soon the challenge of steam followed with the restoration of a Traction Engine. To own an Organ then became his goal, but here things became a little difficult. Organs often need expert knowledge to overcome many complicated problems to ensure their fine musical presentation is once more regained. So help had to be found, a chance

meeting with Andrew Pilmer, a young man who was starting out in the career of mechanical organ restoration, soon ensured John could present the organ to the same high standard as his Traction Engine.

Andrew Pilmer's expert research and skills have been of great assistance to both Brian and John thus ensuring the collection of Mechanical Musical instruments being perfectly restored to their original condition. Andrew as a result has become quite an expert on many kinds of rare and unusual self-playing instruments, with a flair for recreating their unique sounds and skilful in the art of (Noteur) - the interpretation of both classical and modern music for these instruments that they so wonderfully reproduce.

So what began as a hobby has almost become a way of life for both families. Brian with his wife Anne, who has been fully involved with all aspects of the restoration projects, have travelled many hundreds of miles on the continent seeking out organs and indeed many more miles in presenting their organs at various shows around the country.

Brian and Anne's eldest daughter Catherine, has now joined the team. She looks after all the Secretarial duties, and is learning some of the intricate skills of organ restoration together with the pains-

taking task of punching cardboard music.

Sheila Harrison the wife of John, has not only been fully involved with every restoration project, but is often found at the wheel of the organ trucks driving many hundreds of miles to shows with a large Showmans Living Wagon in tow behind. But her interests doesn't end there, She has for many years been involved in the beautiful and decorative art of flower arrangement. Sheila will be giving talks and demonstrations, to interested visitor groups, on flower craft using many organ features as part of the displays. This will make an interesting and unusual attraction in the Museum.

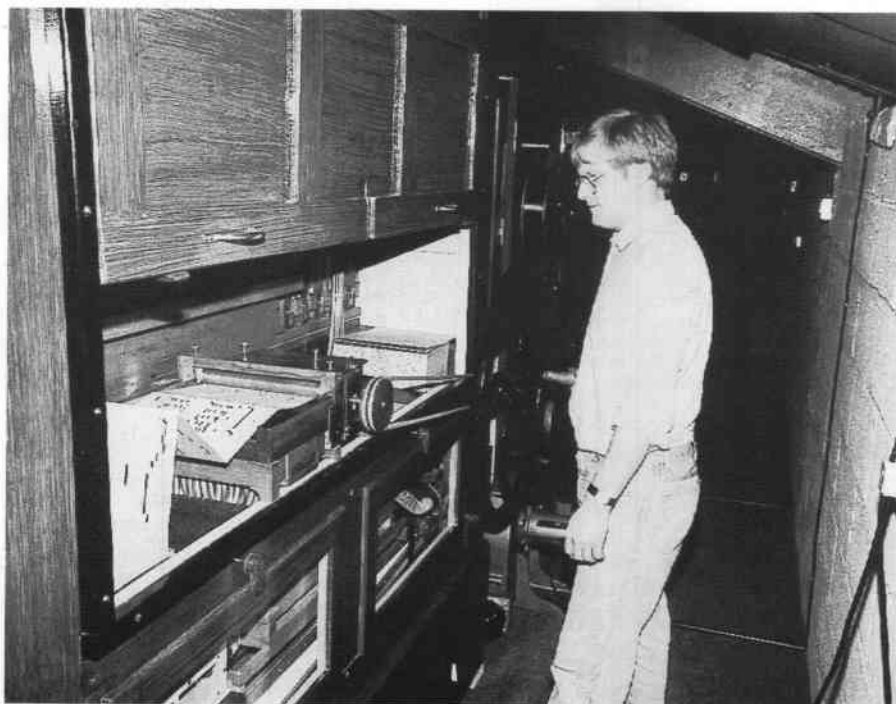
Set in the beautiful Vale of York some 5 miles to the west of this most historic city, the Museum at Bradley Grange offers a musical experience not to be missed.

**HOW TO FIND THEM:** Access from the B1224 Wetherby - York Road in Rufforth village, follow Bradley Lane - signposted 'Askham Richard'. Bradley Grange is about one mile on your right.

#### **Contacts:**

Howard Snowden - Manager  
Sheila Harrison - Director  
Andrew Pilmer - Director  
Telephone: 0904 83 773

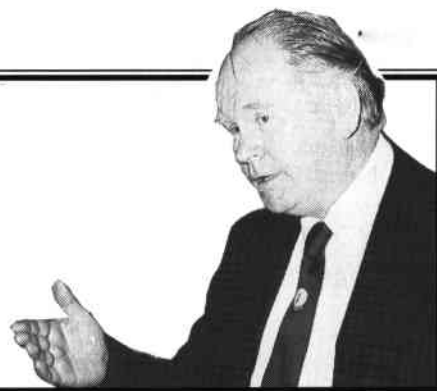
York Museum of Mechanical Music,  
Bradley Grange, Bradley Lane,  
Rufforth, York YO2 3QW. ■



**Andrew Pilmer at the York museum of mechanical music tries out an almost finished organ in preparation for opening day. A full feature on the York museum will appear in a forthcoming edition of "Music Box."**

# A past President reminisces

JON GRESHAM



Having passed on the Presidency of the Musical Box Society of Great Britain to someone else to be the recipient of all the members' grievances, I am able to relax and review some of the changes in our Society over the more than ten years that I have been the person to whom members complain.

Over this period changes have gradually occurred of which one is not conscious at the time they are happening.

A change that once caused me considerable misgivings was the increase in price over this period of all types of musical box.

When the Society was formed, they were very inexpensive. Even when I joined they were frequently found in antique shops and many country auctions had one or two in every sale. They were affordable and it was within most peoples' reach to build up a collection.

Today they are rarely encountered except at specialist sales and dealers, but their acquisition can only be contemplated by the comparatively wealthy.

I was afraid that the inability of the average person to be able to afford to collect musical boxes would limit the prospective members of our Society. Our membership has declined over the period, as has that of our American sister society, which I blamed upon this factor and could only see a worsening of the situation.

I now consider that I was completely wrong. The majority of the members of the Fairground Organ Society do not own organs: few members of the many steam engine societies own steam engines, all the cinema organ society members do not actually

own cinema organs and members of the Circus Fans Association do not own circuses.

I feel our Society must subtly change what it offers: in the past our meetings, talks and articles in *The Music Box* have tended to have been automatically addressed to instrument owners. In future I think we must consciously cater more for those who do not own boxes and give them more opportunities to see and, at our meetings, hear them.

## THE COMMITTEE

Administratively our Society is of an unfortunate size, rather too big for voluntary officers to comfortably administer but too small to be able to pay for work done on its behalf.

When I joined the Committee Reg Waylett cheerfully and capably did nearly all the work of the Society, excluding editing the *Journal* and acting as Treasurer. He was able to secure help from the staff of his office, although this is no reflection on the colossal burden of work he personally undertook. He and Marie manned the registration desk displaying back copies of the *Journal* at every meeting and Reg claimed that in all the years he was Secretary he never heard one lecture at a meeting since he was always tied to the desk.

Just how much he undertook was only fully appreciated when Peter Whitehead gallantly tried to take over from him and found, as a busy General Practitioner, it was just impossible for one person to cope. Back copies of the *Journal* were given to one person to look after and the post of Secretary was split between four Officers - Correspondence Secretary, Membership Secretary and Sub-

scriptions Secretary. It is only now, after the experience of several years, that we feel able to combine the posts of Correspondence Secretary and Membership Secretary, as they are individually not too demanding and tend to overlap. The terrible task of the Subscriptions Secretary has hopefully been simplified by putting the membership records on to a computer.

I have seen several people occupy every office and the membership owe each and every one of them a great debt of gratitude for all the work they have freely given on behalf of the membership.

It may be unfair to single out one office but that of Editor is probably the most prominent to the membership at large. The production of the *Journal* is, in my opinion, by far the most important single activity of your Society and almost entirely the responsibility of the Hon. Editor, each of the four we have had having imparted his own distinctive flavour to the *Journal* during his period of Editorship. Obviously, none has produced what in the eyes of every member is the perfect magazine with exactly the right balance of style and content, but our present Editor is close to achieving the impossible as far as budgetary constraints will allow. Every complaint I received over the years that certain aspects were being neglected got virtually the same reply: "I agree with you. The Editor's task is to edit the *Journal*, not write it, and if you would only write, or persuade a friend to write, about the aspect you refer to, I am sure he would be delighted to receive it." Not surprisingly, this did not to my knowledge produce a single article!

## MEETINGS

Another facet of this Society which has changed completely over the period is the format of the meetings.

In earlier days it was the London meetings that were the highlights and best attended, particularly the summer meeting. Held in a prestigious London hotel they lasted two days and included a banquet of some distinction on the Saturday night. In contrast the provincial meetings were the poor relations, not well attended and only lasting half a day, or one day spread thinly.

Today the reverse is the case, the London meetings last only one day and attendance is down while the provincial meetings last for two days and attract more members.

This state of affairs has not been planned. A number of unrelated factors have brought it about.

Firstly, the London hotels imposed swingeing increases for the hire of their rooms. Your Society, which currently charges £6.00 registration for our meetings to cover everything (in this writer's opinion due, no, overdue, for an increase) would have to be charging at least £15.00 per head to cover the costs if we were to return to London hotels and your Committee does not think many of the members would be willing to pay this.

There is one rule with regard to meetings your Committee has always been very careful to observe, all their expenses should be paid by those attending and under no circumstances should they receive support from the general funds of the Society as this would mean those unable to attend (such as overseas members) having to subsidise those that could, which would be grossly unfair.

We were fortunate in having had the facilities of the Press Club (which went into liquidation), Wood Street Police Station and Regents College at prices we can afford, but it must be admitted they do not have the same ambience and amenities as a first

class hotel. I have not forgotten that we have had London meetings at the Oval and the Magic Circle, but these were exceptions from the norm.

London is well served by road, rail and air so the majority of our United Kingdom members find it easy to get to and from a meeting in London and expressed a preference for ending the meeting Saturday evening, rather than incurring the expense of a hotel in London on the Saturday night in order to enjoy something on the Sunday. Because of confining the meeting to one day to let members get home, and our not having the facilities of a hotel, the banquets disappeared. Another additional deterrent was the cessation of the annual visits of an American party, led by Hughes Ryder, which used to coincide with our summer meeting, and their presence greatly added to the sense of occasion at that meeting, especially the banquet.

As to the provincial meetings, many of these have been immensely enjoyable and due to the distances travelled by many of the members one needs a meeting commencing Friday evening and terminating Sunday lunchtime to justify the distance travelled.

The Barrel Organ Grind, which traditionally occupies half a day of our September meeting, was initiated by Peter Whitehead at Leeds in 1980. There are some who say this grinding of organs occupies an amount of time disproportionate to the members' interest. It is my personal opinion that half a day at one meeting a year is not unreasonable, but I do feel that the rest of that meeting should be more packed with other items relative to the mainstream of our activities than has sometimes been the case.

There has also been criticism that some of our meetings are becoming too much of a social event with not enough attention paid to our supposed main interests. I think it is all a question of balance. In visiting areas of the British Isles I consider it desirable that we be given the

opportunity of a scenic tour and visits to museums and collections with no direct connection with mechanical music, providing there is additionally a strong input of mechanical music matters.

## THE PENALTIES OF GROWING UP

The problem of finding lecturers to speak at our meetings is as acute as it ever was, as is the Editor's task of finding articles for the Journal. In this area things are far more difficult than they were in the early days.

When the Society was young, comparatively so little was known about mechanical music that anything anyone cared to talk or write about was new and of interest to almost all the members.

Now, thanks in no small measure to the activities of our Society, so very much more is known about our subject that it is difficult to find lecturers and writers able to strike a happy medium between being informative and interesting to the novice collector, but at the same time far too elementary for the expert, and those who are able to intrigue and interest the advanced collector/restorer, but would be way over the heads of the newcomer. It is my opinion that those who describe their own personal collection and how they acquired the items make interesting and entertaining listening for everyone.

At the start of these reminiscences I complained about the price of musical boxes getting beyond the reach of the average member. However, the most important and valuable thing that I have acquired during my membership of the Society has not been the boxes but the many friends I have made, drawn from all walks of life, all over the world, drawn together by a common interest. While members worry about increasing their collections, insuring them, protecting them from fire and theft, one's collection of friends is always there and I am thankful for the many made through the Musical Box Society of Great Britain. ■



# Organ Grinders chat

by Geoff Alford



## 200 Years Street Organs

There appears to be a popular misconception (though not among MBS members I am sure) that the street organ is just a smaller version of the fair organ, with the implication that the latter pre-dated the former. This is very far from the facts but is understandable for while most of us can remember fair organs from childhood who can recall seeing an organ grinder. Very few, I submit, as most like me must only recall the barrel piano player. The position was much different over substantial areas of the continent for as most will know, the music box or leierkasten (literally, repeating noise box) was developed over centuries, eventually taking part in the developing fair scene, then appearing on bioscopes and inserted in carousels where they became known as fair organs.

This year the street organ has been specially commemorated by the Bundespost with the issue in Berlin on 3rd May 1990 of a special one mark stamp with the inscription '200 Jahre Drehorgel.' The stamp was designed by the son of Dr. Hellmut Wiemann, well-known Berlin organ-grinder and active member of the Berlin Organ Friends Club. The stamp depicts the figure of an organ grinder in the foreground with a strap carried instrument, which picture was taken from a drawing by von Kaieberg published in the Leipzig paper Daheim in 1871.

I am not clear why 1990 should have been chosen as a 200th anniversary of the street organ. Certainly they were around in some quantity well before 1790 as there is written evidence to support this.

It is appropriate to have an organ festival in Berlin in 1990, not because of the commemorative stamp but because this year sees the merging of the two halves once again, a most emotive occasion for any Berliner. Already there is unrestricted movement between east and west Germany for nationals via many extra re-

opened roads. Hopefully, after currency unification on July 1st other Europeans will also have this privilege. With political events moving so swiftly the situation changes almost daily and it must be difficult for the festival organisers to assess how far their event can be carried into East Berlin. In August Llandrindod welcomes its first organ grinder from the DDR. Perhaps in 1991 we shall be putting down the red carpet for entrants from Czechoslovakia or Hungary.

## Correspondence

A recent visitor to the U.K. has been Bud Bronson from Michigan, U.S.A. Bud is no mean collector of mechanical musical instruments who has recently been bitten by the street organ and now owns a 49 note Pell and a 31 keyless Raffin. His collection is housed in what he calls the Bronson Musikalle. One photo he sent me shows no less than seven instruments along one wall, mainly orchestrions although one looks like a Polyphon. Another picture gives glimpses of what look suspiciously like a couple of Mortier Dance Organs in the background.

From Germany comes news that Schlemmer Orgelbau of Balingen near the Black Forest have moved into new premises. The Schlemmer family regularly participate in organ festivals and produce several models of roll-playing street organs, including a 20 note strap-carried pipe instrument.

## Wuppertal Organ Festival

The weather was perfect for the first event in this large industrial city. It was organised by the Abeler family to celebrate 150 years retailing in Elberfeld. There is no missing the clock and jewellery shop with its large unusual three wheel pendulum clock suspended over the display windows which is visible from the end of the pedestrian street. Some 13 years ago the family opened a clock museum in their premises, which also includes a number of mechanical musical instruments. Whilst we couldn't take part in the festival as originally intended, we were able to pay a brief visit and renew acquaintance with a number of organ friends from Holland, Austria and Switzerland

as well as Germany. Some 70 organ grinders and more than 50 organs took part. We were pleased to see Cor Anjema and Piebe Boomsma, recently returned from Holland where they had been working on the 90 key Carl Frei De Hagenaar, which they reported as playing well. Cor Anjema had organised an organ festival in Holverd on the north coast of Holland with about 30 odd organs which had been very successful.

Seppel Walch had appeared at Wuppertal with his fine Ruth fair organ and we were delighted to see him again after a long break. Although retired, he doesn't take things easy and, apart from his two Black Forest organs, he has now purchased a beautiful double-decker carousel which is over 100 years old. I don't know how rare these rides are - I have only ever seen one, at Erse Park near Hannover - and I doubt if there are any in Britain.

## Pensioner Problems

Old age doesn't come alone they say, and certainly most of us suffer from rust in the joints as time wears on. This makes the business of organ grinding more difficult, particularly with some larger instruments. I was having a chat with member Alex Duman recently. Alex has owned a variety of organs over the years and currently possess a 45 keyless Hofbauer and a 35 key Prinsen, both of which are out of production, so are probably building up a rarity value. Arthur Prinsen is now out of the organ building business and Hofbauers have switched to microbox organs. The 45 note Hofbauer trumpet organ is a good powerful instrument but it is very heavy to turn indeed. So Alex is considering having the organ modified to take micro music and be electric powered. Although 'customising' is all the vogue nowadays, I am completely opposed to making anything a hybrid unless it is absolutely necessary, and particularly good organs which have nothing wrong with them. For one thing I think it can adversely affect its value, being no longer in original condition. Also the end result may be less than satisfactory. Finally, as soon as you have to plug an organ into the mains to run it, in my book it is no longer a street organ. Hofbauers make a 45 trumpet

microbox organ which sounds identical to the roll-playing instrument. It is much easier to turn of course which could make it ideal for Alex's needs. In addition, Alan Pells range of organs using a similar modern music transport system is growing all the time.

Although more of a traditionalist, I am not at all opposed to more modern music systems. They have their place and have a number of distinct advantages. But why should some organs be so hard to turn compared with others. For example the 45 keyless Bruns is infinitely easier to turn than the Hofbauer, and my 44 pipe Bruns is much easier to turn than many small British made organs. Clearly it is possible for organ builders to do something about this problem and I hope that some may read this. The average age of organ grinders is probably over 50, the largest age group is undoubtedly that of pensioner age with a number in their 70s and even 80s. So commercially the subject has some importance to the builder. Not everyone has the turning ability of our Dorothy, myself included. Some years ago I tried my hand at a 27 note Pell and was amazed at how stiff it was, though I confess that the owners didn't seem to experience the same difficulty, though there were several of them to take turns. Some time later I came across a modified and rebuilt 27er Pell in Swiss hands. On turning it I was amazed at how easy it was, as easy in fact as my 20 note Raffin. Of course I asked what the owner had done to achieve this and of course I received the reply that it was a trade secret. But to my mind it showed conclusively that organs do not have to be hard to turn and that builders generally have it in their power to make things easier for their customers in this area. Part of the secret is the speed of rotation, for example, Raffin organs have to be turned quite fast which is much more tiring than if they could be turned more slowly. Although it is a large street organ, Kurt Niemuths 45er trumpet organ needs turning quite slowly, and it is run in, so is almost certainly easier than Alex's Hofbauer. So come on organ builders. Think of us decrepit pensioners and consider making those handles easier to turn. It can be done! ■

## Superb Collection For Sale

*including*

### Magnificent Decap Dance Organ

*101 key*

### Arburo Cafe/Dance Organ

*fine condition with many rolls*

### Steinway Red Welte

*grand reproducing piano, fine condition, lovely tone with rolls*

### Red Welte Vorsetzer

*with rolls*

### Belgian Cafe Barrel Piano

*with mirrored and lighted front in style of Phillips Violini*

### Estonia

*new full concert grand piano fitted with Ampico B reproducing system. Unique and superb*

### Poppers Happy Jazz Band

*with rolls*

### Keith Prowse

*coin-in-the-slot barrel piano*

### Edison

*Fireside phonograph*

### Weber Grandezza

*orchestron with rolls*

### Aeolian Orchestrelle

*model V with rolls*

### Steinway

*full concert grand piano, superbly restored, formally property of King Edward VII*

### National

*cash register, large ornate electrically operated model*

### Model of American locomotive

*with tender and saloon coach on trestle bridge, 7¼" gauge electrically driven motion for display purposes. Bridge 9ft long x 3ft high.*

**For further details contact:**

**Peter Knighton, 1 Ashfield Avenue, Whickham, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE16 4SS. Tel: 091 4887251.**

# — MONKEY BUSINESS —

David Secrett the well known automata maker recently repaired this Monkey Tea Party automata for Bob Finbow and wrote on chance to the makers:- The Fife Engineering Co. Little chance of the firm still existing but a lady who lives in a house built on the factory site phoned. Her letter enclosed explains all the monkeys' heads are of cast aluminium and cams cast brass - clearly one of a batch. The 24V (?) Dynamotor runs on 12 volts at 4 amp, with 15 amp starting current!

Dear Mr. Secrett

*Did you think that I was never going to write to you? Sorry but time has just flown past - I don't know where it has gone.*

*When I phoned you months ago I indicated that I had traced the family of the owner of Fife Engineering Company - in fact his brother just lives round the corner from me. I arranged to go and see him but, of course, time went past and I never did. Last week I decided that I really must find the time to do so and met him and his wife when curling. I spoke to them about going to see them and he said that his brother - the one who owned the Company - was over from Canada staying with them at present. Yesterday he came to*

*see me so now I can put you in the picture.*

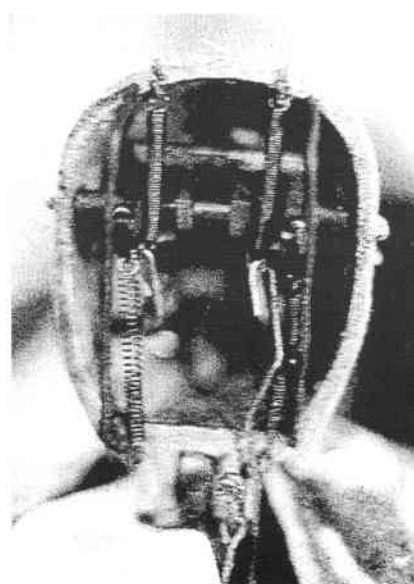
*The company was started in the 1940s by a Mr. Reekie and a Mr. Duncan Boden Smith (who unfortunately died in December 1989). They used to make (sorry if the spelling is wrong) Scarrab Oil Firing Burners, Smeilier Valves amongst other things and did work for Massey and other companies.*

*In 1946 Mr. Reekie went to a sale of surplus war stock and bought American Dyno Motors from aeroplanes - Inventor motors he said. That is what he used to make the thing go. He copied it from a French clockwork driven one which he says was*

*very old and he was asked to make 50 window displays units for Peter Pan Oatmeal. The figures were originally dressed in tartan and they had a bowl and spoon. They spooned the porridge, moved their heads and blinked their eyes. The bodies were made of brass and cam shaft wires through the body. They were originally sold for £2,500 each. Originally there was a brass plate along the front advertising Peter Pan Oatmeal.*

*There were only 50 made and Mr. Boden Smith, on his retiral from the company went to live in Suffolk hence why one has maybe turned up there.*

**Louise A. Innes.** ■





# Collectors Showcase

## —GRANDPAPA CHETTLE'S PRESENT—

Around the year 1880, Grandpapa Chettle bought his grand-daughter Elizabeth Hall a present. She must have been his favourite grandchild, or even his only grandchild, as it was a

very fine present; a Weill & Harburg musical box with a 12 note organ playing 8 hymns. She was delighted to find her name engraved on the lock-plate; "Elizabeth Hall from

Grandpapa Chettle."

The present must have been appreciated and enjoyed, as the worn ratchet mechanism will bear witness to, but it has been extremely well cared for and is a credit to former owners. The finish of the case both inside and out is so good that it requires no work, and when offered for sale by auction recently it played almost as well as it did when new. No one found it necessary to remove or draw on the tune sheet, stand a vase of flowers or a lighted candle on it, or abuse it in any way. For a photograph of a similar Weill and Harburg box complete with the British Royal Arms over the organ mechanism (not the arms of a previous owner as in the caption,) see "The Music Box," Volume 9, Page 91. ■



**Weill & Harburg 2069**



# A 1928 Knabe Reproducing Piano

by James Brady, USA

From classical times music was regarded as a gift of the gods. I considered myself to have been favoured by these gods when I had the good fortune to acquire the William Knabe, 5' 8", reproducing grand piano featured here.

Competition for the acquisition of such rare pieces is so fierce that I might have missed its purchase if I had delayed even 24 hours from first learning of its existence. In the 48 hours following its sale, foreign collectors offered first twice, and then three times the original price.

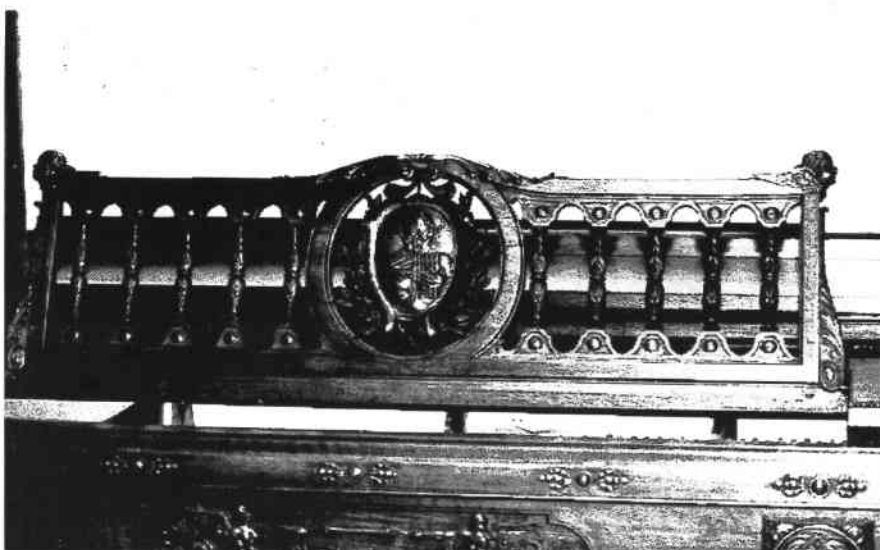
This is the second of ten such pianos. The first, a Mason and Hamlin, was featured in the Journal of Mechanical Music, Spring 1989. All were manufactured by the American Piano Company which owned seven or more highly successful companies. Four Mason and Hamlin, three Knabe and three Chickering pianos were all sent to Florence, Italy, for master carvers to devote up to two years to accomplish the magnificent work you see pictured. Upon completion, reproducing mechanisms were installed.

The Knabe name, carved in the fallboard of this piano, is surrounded by two stylized winged muses. The music rack is the God, Pan, surrounded by a laurel wreath, the earliest classical symbol of artistic excellence.

Excellence is the most prominent quality of this masterfully carved piano. Egyptians were not the only



Wm. Knabe & Co. piano surrounded by two stylized, winged muses.



Full view of the music rack.



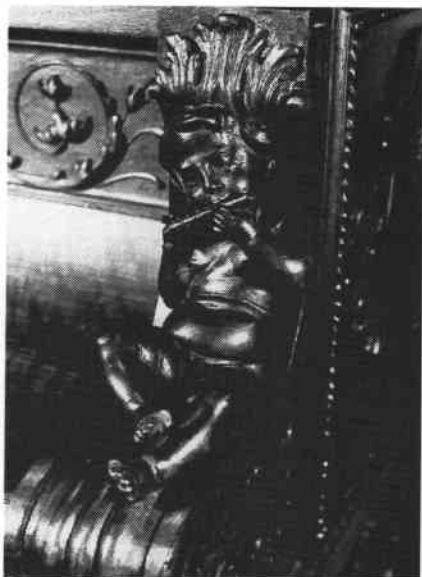
The music rack with the God, Pan, surrounded by a laurel wreath, the earliest classical symbol of artistic excellence.



Thalia (bloom) daughter of Zeus and Hera. One of three "Graces" shown on the piano.



Aglaia (brightness), daughter of Zeus and Hera, another of the three "Graces."



**Cupid (child of Venus and Ares), playing a brass instrument, symbol of fleshy pleasure.**



**Cupid, child of Venus and Ares, playing a stringed instrument, symbol of spiritual pursuits.**



**Ram's head, representative of Zeus, a Solar God of Farming and Fertility.**

culture who thought of pictures as bridges into the invisible realm of immortality. The mythological motifs lavishly decorating the piano principally symbolise luxury. Education, leisure and wealth were all prerequisites for the ownership of such an instrument and were reflections of the lifestyles of the ruling and propertied classes of their day. This particular piece is rumoured to have been removed from the Hurst castle and sent to the University of California, then it passed through two additional owners before I acquired it from Santa Maria, California.

A second symbolism appearing in the motif of this piece is a sort of dualism represented in classical mythology by Apollo and Marsyas; in Christian churches as the opposition of the sacred and profane or religious and pagan; and by Nietzsche as Apollonian versus Dionysian. We first contact this curious yet classic dichotomy with the cupids (child of Venus and Ares) on either side of the fallboard: one playing a brass instrument, symbol of fleshy pleasures and the other playing a stringed instrument, symbol of spiritual pursuits.

The lyre of the piano is carved as a Ram's head, representative of Zeus, a Solar God of Farming and Fertility. Among his personal symbols were vines, such as those seen coming out of the cornucopia and be-ribboning the perimeter of the case and the oak tree. There are many oak leaves and acorns adorning various areas of the piano. We also see three female figures called "Graces," daughters of Zeus



**Euphrosyne(joyfulness), daughter of Zeus and Hera, another of the three "Graces."**

and Hera. Usually the three are Aglaia (brightness), Euphrosyne (joyfulness) and Thalia (bloom).

The son of Zeus and Semele (Phrygian word for earth), the symbolic marriage of heaven and earth, was Dionysus, a Nature God of Fruit and Vegetation, especially of the vine. He was often associated with dolphins such as those seen on the decorative columns. Zeus himself often appeared as a dolphin.

Each composer had a habit of relating to romantic themes. These, found throughout the decorations of this piano, can be partly explained by the fact that the instrument makers, artists and musicians, and in most situations the customers and owners, were all men. This male majority determined the subject matter of the decorations and by far the most popular subject of representation was the female form as well as motifs of romance and fertility.



Vines, such as those seen coming out of the cornucopia and be-ribboning the perimeter of the case and the oak tree were personal symbols of Zeus. Many oak leaves and acorns adorn the piano.



**Pan shown with pan pipes.**





**Franz Liszt, 1811-1886, Hungarian pianist and composer.**



**Johannes Brahms, 1822-1897, renowned German composer.**



**Peter Ilyitch Tchaikovsky, 1840-1893, Russian composer.**

Several composers' visages are carved into the piano and I have identified them as: Franz Liszt (1811-1886), Hungarian pianist and composer. The premier pianist of the 19th century. Liszt wrote wildly romantic solo piano music.

Johannes Brahms (1822-1897). German. Brahms was venerated even in his own lifetime as one of the giant composers.

Peter Ilyitch Tchaikovsky (1840-1893), Russian composer. One of the greatest composers of the time.

The effect on the audience and musicians was both considerable and deliberate. The pursuit of art and music was thus also portrayed as a service to beauty.

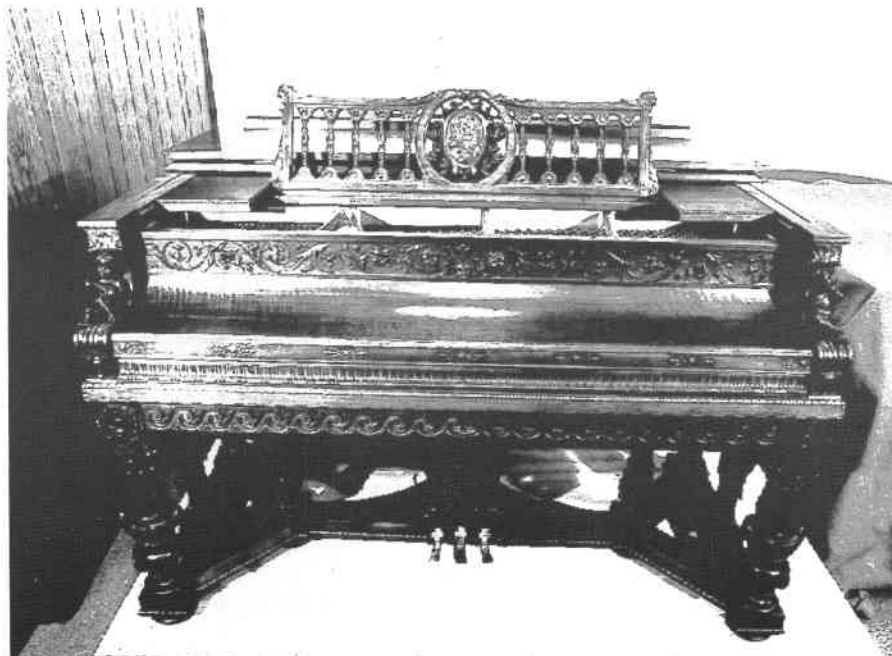
In the continued service of such beauty, I hope to submit articles concerning the remaining eight pianos in the future as I obtain permission from their owners, or perhaps smiled upon by the gods once more, actually acquire them.

This mechanism, as well as many improvements to the piano roll

production process, were invented by Charles Fuller Stoddard, a man who turned pennies worth of profit into a fortune. This was accomplished by contracting with the American Piano Co. to realise a one penny royalty from each piano roll they sold rather than sell his inventions outright.

**James Brady** collects and restores reproducing pianos in his native Indianapolis, Indiana, site of the 1990 annual meeting of the Musical Box Society International. ■

*Egyptians were not the only culture who thought of pictures as bridges into the invisible realm of immortality. The mythological motifs lavishly decorating the piano principally symbolise luxury. Education, leisure and wealth were all prerequisites for the ownership of such an instrument and were reflections of the lifestyles of the ruling and propertied classes of their day.*



**Full view of the Knabe Italian-carved reproducing piano.**



**One of the five decorative columns with dolphins. Another form taken by Dionysus, son of Zeus and Semele.**

# The Aeolian Orchestrelle Today

The Aeolian Orchestrelle, as most readers will know by now, is a 58 note reed organ which was built in many shapes and sizes over a considerable period of time. I have so far only come across 53 of them in this country with examples known of most models except the smallest, the model A.

The Tables below summarize what I have found so far, either from many personal visits from Glasgow & Edinburgh in the north down to Chichester in the south.

Model	Quantity	Wood Veneer used	Quantity
Aeolian Grand	6	Oak	11
Model "S"	3	Mahogany	13
Model "V"	8	Walnut	6
Model "W"	11	Un-known	15
Francis the First	6		
Model "Y"	1	Total	53
Model "XY"	7		
Model "F"	10		
Model "M"	1		
Total	53		

N.B. There must be many more than this, please let me know if you have one.

The condition of the instruments I have seen have been rather wide ranging. The most common condition seems to be that of still running on all of the original leather pouches in the tone rank boxes which contain the reeds, but most of the primary pouches, and indeed secondary pouches where they exist, have been living on borrowed time. A few instruments have been seen which have been dismantled by an "enthusiast" at some point in the distant past to be left to warp and decay in locations ranging from a damp barn or garage through to actually being part in the house and part outside.

Needless to say my most recent acquisition 16 months ago had been stored for over 10 years in a wet barn and had many parts missing, but as the case was an unusual one with three cherub heads along the top of it I took the plunge and bought it. I have purchased about half of a model XY, which included the pizzicato rank, which I have used to help replace the missing parts which I did not feel could be easily made new again.

I have seen one instrument which has taken the owner over 10 years to re-build, including making new reeds with tongues tuned so well that I could not tell which ones were the new and which were the old. I have mostly seen cases in original condition with new material to let the sound out, but I have seen at least three which have had the cases rubbed down and completely re-polished and re-stained. I have also come across one instrument with a home made 1960's 'g-plan' type case which took some time to be sold but the new owner has a cabinet maker lined up to make a new case to a sympathetic design in solid hard-wood.

As for the mechanics of these various designs, the

early models have a wooden tracker bar with laminated wooden wind ways to connect to one set of primary pneumatics. These are very easy to repair as they are set out in one layer three rows deep with no top tier cups to remove during re-covering. These earlier ones have wooden push rods to operate the stop controls on most vacuum ones I have seen and steel rods on most early pressure models. The later models of course have brass tracker bars and rubber tubes leading up to pneumatic stop control valves which are usually in need of adjustment. The two stage secondary valves are difficult to strip down but my secret weapon is a soldering gun. This is a soldering iron with a trigger which has many different sized and shaped heads one of which will get you into most places from where you need to remove felt or leather. I simply cover the end of the iron in an old cloth which I then dip into some water and use the iron as a very fine steaming iron to loosen the joints in the secondary pouch 'mushrooms' which I find usually lever off quite well after this treatment.

As for the missing internal parts, such as push rods, I usually make them very slightly larger than the original size, from hardwood, as they will last much longer that way. You might also be surprised to know that old steel coat-hangers have the same size steel rod as many of the Aeolian push rods and so have been known to get the chop when needs must.

I would like to get a lot more details of instruments as regards dates of building and serial numbers and also photographs, any known history and details of any moving escapades of which I relate some below.

My first Orchestrelle which I bought back in 1985 was purchased from Mr. S. Cox of Pagham in West Sussex after he had finished with using it to play the rolls which he had been making. This instrument had been in a very bad way in the past and Steve had recovered the main exhausters and the individual pneumatics, as well as re-polishing the case. Well, as to the movement I was pointed towards a firm in the northwest who actually deliver new pianos to retail outlets from the manufacturer and importer. This sounded like a very good idea at the time but the organ did not arrive for nearly two and a half weeks. The reason being that the firm was short of space on the lorry at the next pick up point so the model 'S' was unloaded and left in a piano factory for about ten days.



Model F Solo Orchestrelle from the Museum of Science and Arts, Birmingham.

When it finally arrived at about 8pm on a Friday evening it was lying on its back on top of about six brand new pianos on a huge double deck lorry which contained over 40 brand new instruments, quite a few bobs worth I hear you say. Well the instrument was duly installed but of course took some evenings to sort out as travelling on its back is not the best way to keep the valves, or anything else in place. I am very pleased with this instrument and in over 5 years have only spent 2 days or so sorting out odd small problems.

The plot thickens as they say at this point as the local organ builder who came round to help me sort one of my instruments out said "I know of another orchestrelle which you can pick up very cheap - are you interested?" Of course I fell for that one and the details are as follows. The Organ was a Model "V" of very early date, 1898, and serial number 1801 which had been purchased by Quinton Parish Church, which is a small village south of Northampton, in about 1960. It had been purchased from a local Funeral Parlour and was transported to the church in a horse box which unfortunately was not high enough to take the organ and the top cornice lid. The lads from the church were so tired by the time it was installed in its final resting place at the front of the church that they never did go back for the wayward lid and so for the next 25 years it was usually played only from the keyboard with dirt and plaster falling inside all the time. The firm of A. E. Davis at Northampton had given a quote for the complete overhaul of this instrument which was felt to be too high and so in about 1982 a new reed organ (only 50 years old) which had a blower was purchased and the old Orchestrelle was relegated to the bottom floor of the bell tower. This of course was very damp and veneers peeled off and fret-work was broken by childrens elbows and so on. I went to have a look having already seen a copy of Mr. Davies's report so I knew what I was in for. I took my own test roll with me but found that they had never needed the player mechanism so most of it was not working properly, anyway I made an offer which was accepted and which even better included delivery. The delivery was, needless to say with a Land Rover towing, you guessed it, a horse box. One evening about a week later I was aware of three cars and the horse box drawing up outside, three people had travelled the fifteen miles or so in the back with the organ and there was hay sticking out of the trailer and moo-ing coming from inside. I had a good laugh next as it turned out that the village Rugby team had been turned out to carry the three wheeled organ across the polished wooden floor of the church. The moo-ing then transpired to have come from among other people, someone who I work with, who did not know that I was interested in such things. The organ was lifted up without any kind of trolley by 10 lads and quickly deposited at the back of my garage with just enough room to get the car in as well.

The organ was gradually stripped down and as each part was repaired or re-covered etc. it found its way into the large bedroom upstairs. Four months later I had my organ builder friend come round and give the parts a good looking over to tell me what I had still got to do before we would be ready for re-assembly. Anyway, having said jokingly to my family that I would have it playing for Christmas, I had the big re-assembly day on Christmas Eve. So, starting at the bellows going into the frame we spent just over ten hours re-assembling and adjusting the instrument. It played first time and has only had half a days work since then, although I vowed at that stage never to take on another one.

Having said that, I got married in 1987 and then, horrors, was to move house. This was a nightmare as having told the removal estimator that the biggest organ weighed about half a ton, he thought I just meant "it's very heavy mate." Anyway, on moving day instead of sending four men and a lorry with a tail lift

they sent two men and a lorry with a three foot step up onto the tail-board. At this stage I should say that there was a nine inch step from the dining room onto the patio and another six inches down onto the drive, although I had forgotten that the organ had been assembled in the dining room in pieces and so had to take a panel of fence down. After about half a minute of grunting and groaning they asked if they could call the 'boss' who then hired another lorry with a tail lift this time. We finally got loaded just after four o'clock in the afternoon which of course would have been a disaster but for the fact that we were moving out a day before we needed to just in case of any problems. Both instruments then spent six months in our garage along with all of our furniture whilst we lived, slept and ate in one room and had the house rewired, plumbed, walls, ceilings and so on. The instruments were moved into the house in early October and did not seem any the worse for the experience.

Once the house "project" as it became to be known was finished or perhaps I should say was about half way through, I bought another orchestrelle, this time a model Francis the First. This was out in the garage and not touched until the next winter. This had a history recorded on the inside bottom of the main bellows which started in 1914 when it was built. It was then sold in 1928 to the Masonic Lodge at Ampthill, Bedfordshire for £50 where it sat until 1957 when it was purchased by someone called Cecil Clarabut of Bedford for the sum of £10 in unrestorable condition. He seems to have re-covered many but not all parts and in 1978 it was sold to someone in Gamblingay, a small village also in Bedfordshire. When I went to look at it I saw a very nice clean case but was then very disappointed to find that most of the internal works above the bellows had been put in a barn nine years or so previously. I carefully inspected the damp bent parts and decide that this might be beyond me. But then I found out about half of an XY 116 note orchestrelle which was also available as a source of spares. I therefore took on mission impossible? and bought the organ and the parts and then had to organise another move. By this time I was not going to leave anything to anyone else and so I hired a three ton lorry and had a friend who was a lorry driver and therefore much more confident than me, come over to pick the organ up. We fetched the parts from near Huntingdon first and then four neighbours were commandeered to help carry the organ down the drive which was not surfaced of course. The tail lift made life very easy and we were soon on our way home after tying everything down with car tow ropes and blankets. Unloading was straight into the garage and the re-build then started about 3 months later. I decide to build a room/workshop by dividing the garage in half which would still leave room for the cars. The garage had previously been a car repair workshop but after having their drives blocked up by parked cars the neighbours got a petition up and the deeds ban anyone from doing this again. Mind you, organ building can probably create much more noise but at least you can't see where the noise is coming from.

The rebuild has taken 16 months so far and has needed far more time than I thought, not only did all the leather and valves need changing this time again but also over 400 pallet faces inside the reed ranks had been eaten away to nothing by moths. I am waiting for delivery of one last skin of bedding leather to finish the base reed unit and then I will have finished. Or will I?

It was about last July that I hit on the idea of trying to write a combined catalogue of all the Aeolian 58 note music which was ever produced. I had only got my own few rolls and a copy of the 1921 re-print catalogue made in 1974 by Dr. Frank Adams from U.S.A. I decided that as I was a computer programmer and had access to a very large accounts machine at work then



I would write a programme which would be able to list out the details in either Roll Number order, by Composer, or Alphabetically by Title. I keyed in my small quantity of rolls and then put adverts in the PPG and NWPPG magazines. I only had two responses and so I wrote to every one in the address list personally who had an 'O' for organ next to their name. Many of the people had not of course got an orchestrelle but I did manage six or seven replies. The people to whom I am very grateful have listed out their collection of rolls for me which brought the total of titles up to nearly 2,000. I then was contacted by Richard Cole from the Piano Museum at Brentford who sent me a listing of another 2,500 rolls which had been put onto a computer by someone in U.S.A. some years ago. This list had a lot of gaps and only three listed tunes made in U.S.A. I now started to write to all of the musical museums and societies in U.K. and U.S.A. to try to increase the response and also started phoning up people who had not responded either way so far. Some people said they did not have the time to list the roll collections and so I have spent many enjoyable but hard working Saturdays over the last three or four months visiting people to list their rolls. The computer can list out the missing numbers which makes things much easier for me and I have Richard Cole to thank for suggesting that all numbers should be listed even if I did not know the titles. I have therefore sent out about 30 lists of missing numbers and have had another few replies to them as well. I also had a photocopy of a 1918 catalogue of U.K. rolls sent to me by a museum and this had helped me fill a great number of gaps in the "L" or London series which were

only produced over here.

I then received an invitation to visit Mr. Ord-Hume at Guildford which I did on New Years Day after visiting the Music Museum at Chichester. We discussed how far I had managed to get and Mr. Ord-Hume kindly said that he would try and fill a few of the gaps for me. Over the last month or so I have received about three to four hundred tunes which have been found in early Aeolian Catalogues and so I feel very encouraged by his support.

The problem which I also have is that the computer on which all this information is stored is being scrapped and so I need to complete this list before then. I have listed the roll collection of the Piano Museum at Brentford and again this provided another sixty or so new titles for the list.

What I really need is sight of some more original Aeolian U.K. Roll catalogues or lists of rolls from collectors in the "L" series. I only need about another 1400 titles to complete the listing and would really appreciate it if anyone could send in a list of their rolls or ask me to send them a list of the missing titles which I am looking for still.

I must just say thank you to everyone who has helped so far but I do need more help to complete this listing in the next four months or so. Do you know of anyone with an Orchestrelle or a collection of rolls even if they are not a member of any society; they might just be interested and you might find the finished list of interest too?

*Kevin McElhone, 159 Beatrice Road, Kettering, Northants.*



**An Aeolian Grand 58-note player organ (Style A, No. 15537), with thirteen musical stops, in mahogany case with fretwork panels and turned and carved keyboard supports - 60 in. (152 cm) wide, with thirty-four rolls.**

# Musical Box Oddments

by H. A. V. Bulleid

Number 46

Despite their popularity and being composed in the period 1866-1882, tunes by Smetana are rare on Swiss and French cylinder musical boxes though reasonably represented on disc. This is probably because Smetana opera tunes were slow in emerging from their native Bohemia - now Czechoslovakia.

The early life of Bedrich Smetana (b. Litomyšl, Southern Bohemia 1824, d. Prague, 1884) was clouded by continuing political strife; but his musical reputation grew rapidly with his wide range of compositions, helped initially by his friendship with Liszt. He actively fostered the development of Czech music and the National Theatre in Prague where he became the principal conductor. His operas include . . .

The Bartered Bride	1866
Dalibor	1868
Two Widows	1874
The Kiss	1876
The Secret	1878
Libuse	1881
The Devil's Wall	1882

Three of them get a mention on the tune sheet of Fig. 1, including The Bartered Bride who remains an audience-puller to-day. Tune 4, The Queen of the Puppets waltz, is by Josef Bayer (1852-1913), a Vienna-born Austrian violinist, conductor and composer. He wrote a few run-of-the-mill operettas but made his considerable reputation

with ballet music, scoring an international success in 1888 with Puppenfee (Fairy Doll) which provides tune 4 and dates the movement shown in Fig. 2 at around 1890.

## Music from Prague and Vienna

The important early work of Bohemian musical movement makers led by Rzebitschek of Prague and Olbrich of Vienna is fairly well known; but what happened later - say after 1870 - is obscure. So it was a welcome surprise to find the extremely rare box shown in Fig. 2 and restore its lost ability to perform the music listed in Fig. 1. Unlike the great majority of Bohemian cartel type movements, it was not made for a clock, it was mounted in its own original case.

The case differs from the usual Swiss design by having the sounding-board base simply nailed on. To hide the join a moulding is attached all round. Three wood blocks support the bedplate; they are glued to the base and also fixed with round-head screws. To facilitate lifting, to allow egress of sound, and to save furniture from the protruding screws, feet are nailed to the corners of the base - they peep a bit coyly from beneath the moulding. The case and lid are of softwood veneered all over without any inlay or stringing, and the lid edges are finished with a moulding roughly similar to that around the base. The simple design, together with the tune sheet being written in Czech, strongly suggests that this box was intended for the home market rather than export. With German spoken in Vienna and Czech predominating in Prague it is quite likely that this box was made by Rzebitschek in about 1890.

## Technical details

The cylinder is 9 by 1 5/8 inches (227 by 40mm). The comb has 77 teeth, track width .019". The bass teeth are at the governor end. Teeth 25 and 26 from the bass end

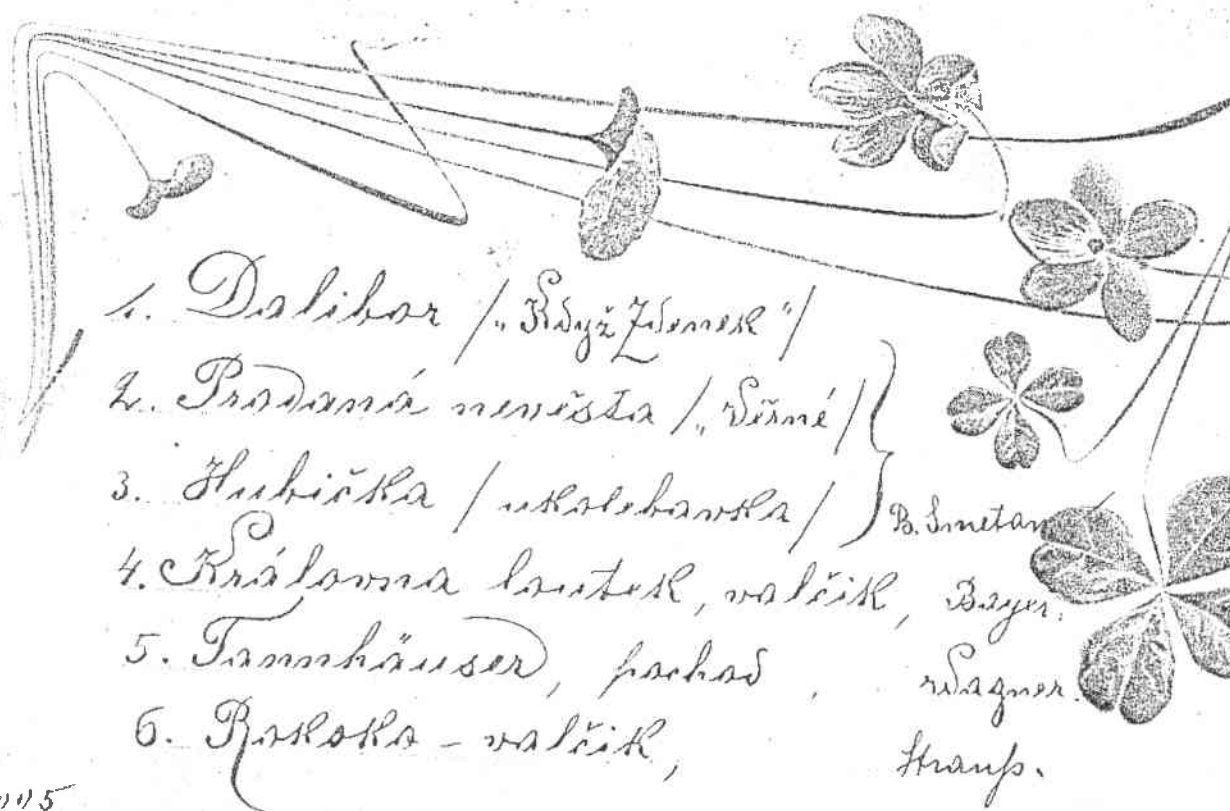
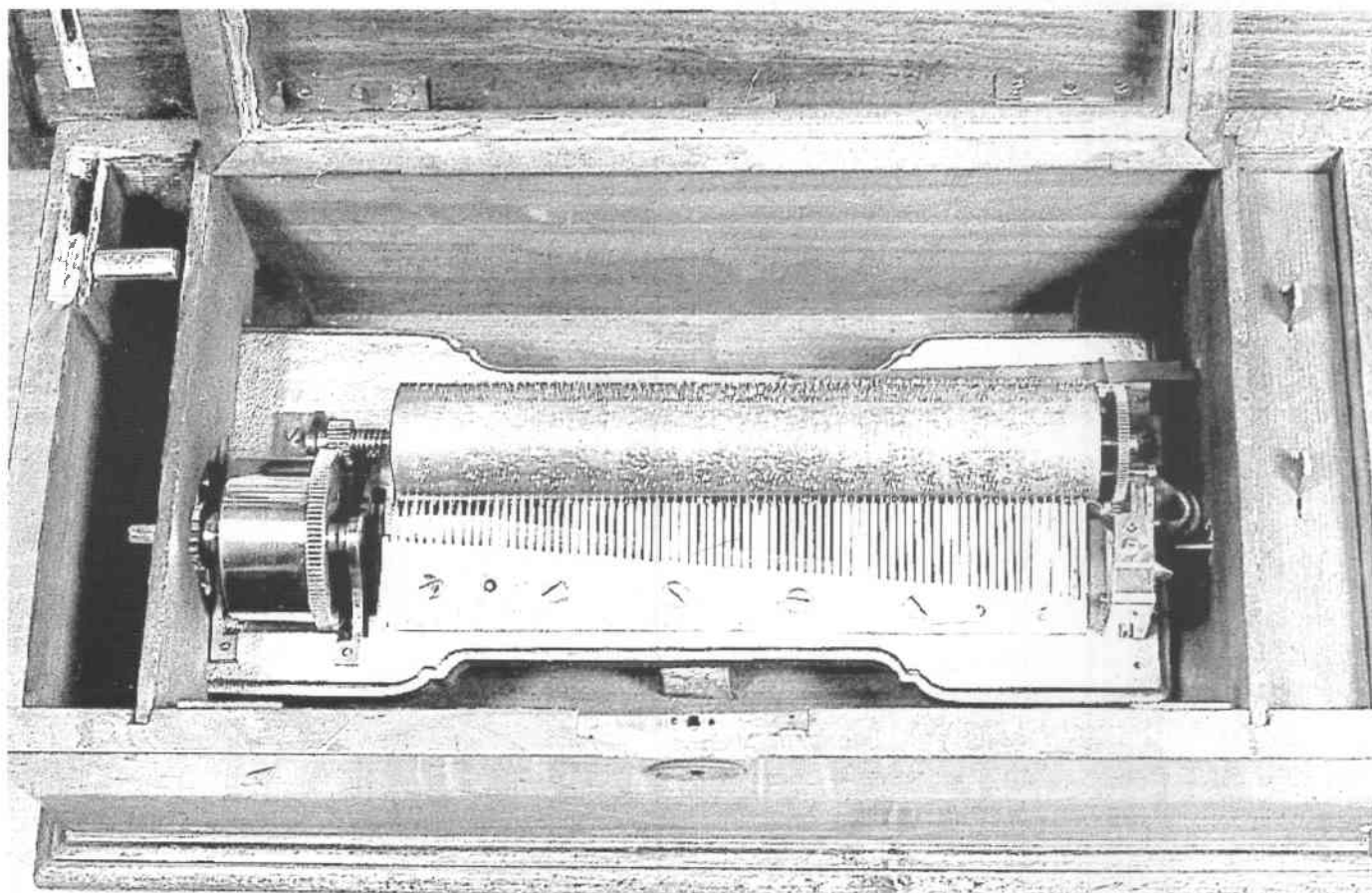


Fig. 1. Tune sheet of No. 7650 written on a greetings type post card. Until 1902 one side had to show the address only. The card publisher's inscription reads: Meissner & Buch, Leipzig, publishers of art post cards, copyright. Tune 3 reads: The Kiss/Lullaby/ and is bracketed with tunes 1 and 2 to credit B. Smetana.



**Fig. 2. Conventional internal case fittings for Czech No. 7650 but distinctive mechanism with base at governor end and fancy finish around bedplate. The block intended to improve sound volume is seen under the bedplate.**

are tuned to a, 440Hz, and their relative stiffness is 109, about the same as pre-1850 Swiss practice. There are no steel dampers; instead the bass end teeth have a flat in front of the lead weight on which vellum dampers are glued. They are effective as the teeth are not very stiff, but they have limited life.

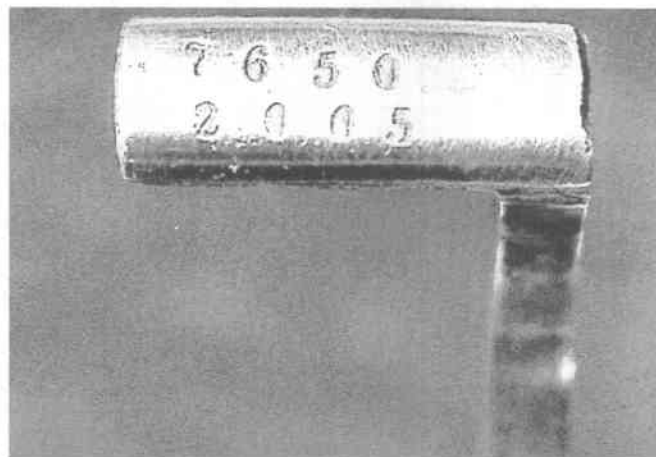
The cylinder pins are about .012" diameter and .05" long, not raked; but the cylinder has been re-pinned. Longer pins are a feature of Bohemian movements, combined with a narrow tune gap only a quarter of an inch, and cylinders pinned to allow a surface speed of about .09" per second - here giving 55 seconds per cylinder revolution and 52 seconds per tune.

The cast iron bedplate is conventionally secured to wood blocks in the case by two countersunk screws at the winder end and one at the governor end. It has a decorative scallop all round the edges, rather like large machinery bedplates of the period. It was left in the "as cast" condition, with no machining of the surface, so the seating of the governor and the four bearing brackets is only just adequate. The spring and winder and cylinder assemblies are of conventional design except that the cylinder driving gear is brass, and pinned to the arbor; and the click springs are fixed with large screws, not dowelled. The gear ratio, endless to cylinder, is 1728 to 1. There are no code numbers or letters on any components except for the 7650 and 2005 on the winder as shown in Fig. 3.

The governor differs from the usual Swiss design in three details: the lower endless bearing is fixed, screwed to the governor body; the stop arm catch is a wire finger to catch the fan blade; and the blades are made from a brass block  $1\frac{1}{2}$  by  $\frac{7}{16}$  by  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch thick, bored for a push fit on the endless and then each side filed away to leave blades about a millimetre thick. The blade ends can be curved easily enough for speed adjustment.

## Performance

The only basic trouble with No. 7650 is that it was inaccurately pinned. All six tunes have a lot of pins out of line, some by as much as half the track width, though their timing position is accurate. It must have taken the original "justifier" a lot of time to put the pins in line; and this job was shirked at re-pin, leaving some tunes badly garbled. Having got the pins in line (and I expect it took me twice as long as a patient Prague professional) the box plays well up to Swiss standards, but of course not as loudly as Swiss boxes of the 1880s due to the teeth being less stiff. If set for excessive lift, or set to play too fast, the bass teeth are not adequately damped by their vellum dampers.



**Fig. 3. Close-up of Bremond-shaped winding-lever stamped 7650 above 2005. The Gamme No. is stamped above the Serial No. on Rzebitschek bedplates so possibly the Gamme is 7650 and the first digit of the serial is omitted.**



The makers, aware of current Swiss and French standards, must have worried about volume which may have prompted them to insert a third block between the sounding-board and the centre of the bedplate under the comb. But the bedplate is only 13½ inches long and the end supporting blocks are only 10¾ inches apart, so there is scant technical backing for this idea. I could discern no difference in volume whether or not the third block was touching the bedplate - it wasn't when I got it. The same device is seen with more logic on some larger Swiss boxes and on some disc machines where it seems to score.

However, volume is perfectly adequate and the tune arrangements are attractive. Tune 2 is an endearing song from *The Bartered Bride*, here titled "Faithful." Tune 4 is on more familiar ground with fairly vigorous Wagner. Though looking rather old fashioned by Swiss standards of 1890, the Bohemians turned out an attractive job - and still going strong a hundred years later, thank you.

### Cylinder pin straightening

In *Oddments 16* (Vol. 10, page 361) I described how to ease the job of straightening bent pins and added a diagram showing permissible tolerances (repeated in my book page 125). Since then I have found cylinders with quite serious pinning errors, hence these additional notes on a tiring subject.

I am referring only to pins misplaced from their correct tune tracks; errors in the rotational direction which affect timing are extremely rare. And of course remember, if you are going to work on a cylinder that is already playing tolerably well, that any pinning errors will have been corrected by pin bending during "justifiage." So never start adjusting any pins without first examining the pins of all tunes every inch or so along the comb while playing. You will spot any lines of pins which have been bent sideways on purpose, and the last thing you want to do is straighten them. So just note any suspicious cases, - usually on all or part of one tune only.

There is no difficulty about doing the straightening and correcting job on the 95% of cylinders which usually have only a few clusters of bent pins here and there, and have clear circumferential lines machined through the dots. These lines make it easy to see along the tracks of pins, and only with cylinders of more than six tunes does one have moments of doubt as to the track in which a particular pin belongs. But when the track lines disappear over part of the surface things get tricky; and when in addition pins in two adjacent tracks are misplaced things get impossible. No way can you decide which pin belongs to which track without some reference point, and the only available reference is the corresponding tooth tip.

This ideal method of pin checking is best done by clearing the bedplate of everything except the cylinder assembly and tune change lever, and then fixing the

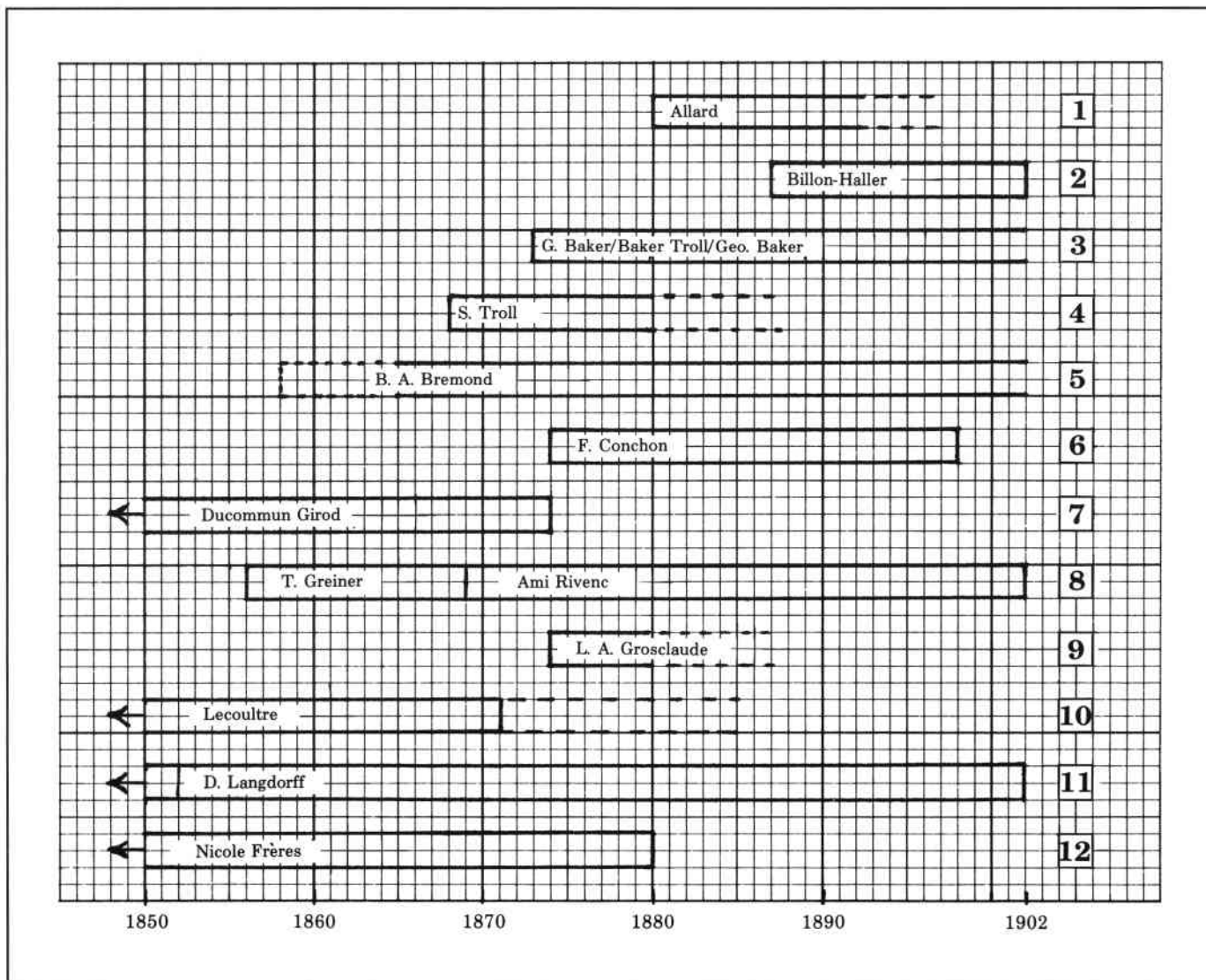


Fig. 4. Cartel musical box makers in Geneva, 1850-1902. Arrows indicate makers operating before 1850. Dotted lines indicate uncertain periods.





Fig. 5. Tune sheet of Grosclaude serial 869, with capitals and numbers in red ink. The same design used on S. Troll serial 6671 is on page 377 of the Ord-Hume book.

comb so that it just misses the pins by placing a packing strip about half a millimetre thick and an inch or so long under the front centre of the comb base and securing the comb by its middle screws only. Be sure to check that the cylinder arbor is free from any sideways movement, that the comb teeth are perfectly centred with the dots, that the snail cam steps are undamaged, and that there is no play at the dowels of the comb or combs.

The procedure is simple but tedious. Get the cylinder in line with the dots by rotating it with the tune change lever in "change" position; then correct any pins that do not pass the centre of their tooth. It involves one cylinder revolution per comb tooth per tune; mark each tooth when all its pins have been "done," or you will lose your place. It helps to have the bedplate raised over a sheet of white paper so you can see the pins approach their tooth from below as the cylinder is hand-turned in the playing direction - and occasionally reversed for verification.

When completed you have a cylinder of perfect accuracy, due to this Rolls Royce type of "justifiage." How lucky that the accuracy of the Swiss makers right from the beginning makes this so seldom necessary.

So why all this detail about a trouble so rare? Because many owners have a box which they think could "do better." If they apply this rigorous pin checking they may get a pleasant surprise.

### Back in Geneva

The accompanying diagram, Fig. 4, tries to show all the Geneva makers of cartel musical boxes, and their span of action, from 1850 until 1902 - in which year Billon-Haller, Langdorff and Ami Rivenc combined, "Reuniting

the old-established makers Rivenc, Langdorff and Billon."

I have summarised the recorded data about all these makers as follows . . .

1. Allard, 1880 to at least 1892, sometime in partnership with Sandoz.
2. Billon started making blanks about 1844 and in 1862 set up the Société Billon et Isaac (SBI). His son added the making of complete musical boxes, branded Billon-Haller, in 1887.
3. & 4. Geo. Baker (1873 to 1906) and S. Troll (1868 to ?) had a period of partnership between 1880 and 1890.
5. B. A. Bremond, 1864-1908, spent from 1858 to 1863 in partnership with Greiner.
6. F. Conchon, 1874-1898.
7. Ducommon Girod, about 1822 to 1874; from 1869, Ducommon et Cie.
8. T. Greiner from about 1857 until taken over by Ami Rivenc in 1869.
9. L. A. Grosclaude is only recorded as a maker from 1874 (or possibly from 1871 with associate Perrelet) until 1880; but perhaps the business continued - nickel-plated movements are known with serial numbers up to 40,000, not an easy total to reach in six or even nine years.
10. Several of the numerous Lecoultries worked in Geneva and flourished from 1821 until 1871 when one was taken over by A. Perrelet who is said but not known to have been a maker. Other Lecoultries may have continued Geneva production up to the mid 1880s.

11. Langdorff and Metert. They were partners from 1844 until 1852, but D. Langdorff started about 1838. The firm continued as Langdorff et Cie. from his death in 1873 till his son John took charge in 1898.
12. Nicole Frères. Established 1815, production in Geneva finished about 1879.

The list is admittedly over-simplified as regards individual personalities, but I think it accurately dates all the makers and it will help to attribute and date various types of Geneva tune sheets. Comments and corrections welcomed.

## Manufacturers' metal plaques

Makers plaques are very rare on cylinder boxes other than Mermod and late PVF types. The few examples known seem to have been attached during short periods of establishing the business or claiming a patent - which became standard practice with Mermod. Here are three examples . . .

Paillard Sublime Harmonie serial 5794 with C/P/&/C on the governor cock and two 51-tooth combs, eight airs, 14½ inch cylinder. A rectangular plaque fixed to the left back corner of the bedplate reads, in four lines, *SUBLIME HARMONIE/PATENTED/In the United States March 1875/In England October 1874.*

The next example is on Bremond Concerto serial 31795 which has a standard Bremond tune sheet and B stamped on the cylinder bearings but winged lion on governor cock and two 60-tooth combs, eight airs, 17½ inch cylinder. It is typical of Ami Rivenc boxes made for Bremond and has a handsome case 29 inches wide with circular embossed plaque under the keyhole. The wording in the centre reads, in five lines, *AMI/RIVENC/FABRICANT A/GENEVE/SUISSE* and the circular legend around it reads *AU MONUMENT BRUNSWICK*. So it was probably made about the end of 1874 just after the monument was completed. It shows how the Geneva makers promptly copied the sublime harmonie patent disguised as Concerto. Other boxes made for Bremond by Ami Rivenc include serial 29290 with the same type of tune sheet, shown in Oddments 28, Vol. 12, page 195.

Finally, a rather baffling example on Baker-Troll serial 15644, with three 13-inch eight air cylinders. This has the usual transfer at the back of the case reading *Geo. Baker & Co. (late G. Baker-Troll & Co.)* but it also has a plaque fixed to the left back corner of the bedplate which reads *S. Troll late Geo. Baker & Co.* Possibly S. Troll went on longer than I have shown in Fig. 4.

These plaques may be a useful link between the serial number of a box and its date of manufacture (and maker?) so they are well worth noting.

## Tune sheets

Among tune sheets seldom seen - or seldom recognised - are those of Allard, Greiner and Grosclaude. So I was pleased to see the genuine Grosclaude sent by member L. Karp; it is a fairly well-known design, Fig. 5, previously attributed only to S. Troll. This one belongs to serial 869 (13 inch cylinder, six airs) which has *LA GROSCLAUDE GENEVE* stamped on the side of the governor. The tunes are inscribed on a metal plate and indicated by a leaf-shaped pointer; the combs have 80 and 43 teeth with pitch overlap of only three teeth; and the mounting for the zither is exactly as shown in Fig. 4 of Oddments 42 (Vol. 14, page 81)

Some tune sheets in long, regular use, like Langdorff's piano style in Fig. 6, underwent many detail changes over the years. Presumably they were ordered in quarter-reams (120) of each size, lasting up to a year; and when reprints were ordered there could be several reasons for detail changes, ranging from loss of the hand-drawn original to changes wanted by client. Examples at the right side of the 4-air Langdorff sheet are shown in Fig. 6; the left side had similar adventures. Being Langdorff, the changes can be dated from the serial numbers.

## Tune 2, Post Horn Gallop

In 1844 Koenig, the cornet soloist in Jullien's famous orchestra, composed this tune based on the posting calls used to announce the arrival of the mail. It comes over astonishingly well from the 115 teeth of 8-inch Langdorff serial 13013. I am sorry it is not more often heard on cylinder musical boxes. ■



Fig. 6. Langdorff 4-air tune sheet with upright piano. The one for serial 13013 (1861) is shown complete; beside it are parts of serial 11258 (1858) and at extreme right serial 5807 (1851). Different type setting and spacing and spelling variations abound and Verdi did not replace Lanner until after 1858. In 1861 Strauss had suffered two reverses and Labitzky had lost his t.

## Under the Hammer



An exceptionally fine selection of mechanical musical instruments were auctioned in London at Sotheby's on Friday 18th May. The highlight of the sale, estimated at £50,000 - 75,000 would have been the Imhof & Mukle orchestrion pictured below, but it failed to attract a bidder. When in the past similar instruments have fetched huge prices one must ask why did this one get the thumbs down from collectors? Perhaps the answer is for a reason I have expressed before that buyers are prepared to pay high prices only for choice instruments. There are 3 possible reasons why buyers may have been "put-off" by this one. Firstly the case style is rather plain, most cases are quite ornate, (although the Nidd Hall Welte orchestrion was successfully offered with no case at all!) Secondly, the instrument was made for the Indian market and plays some Indian tunes but most of the tunes are English, but that fact wasn't made clear, and thirdly, the fact that it plays from a barrel, restricts the possibility of obtaining more music.



A musical box with all the "whistles and bells" so to speak, was a rare 32" Regina concerto auto-changing disc orchestrion. It had a rack of 10 discs playing on piano, tubular bells, cymbals, bass and snare drums, in an oak case with glazed doors. The front flanked by pierced spandrels, and with 25 spare discs. The style 300 Regina Concerto was made in Germany and America. The case and changer mechanism were made in Rahway by Regina, the instruments and percussion were supplied by the Polyphon Musikwerke of Leipzig. This item had a price estimate of £10,000 - 15,000 but was withdrawn prior to the sale.



A 25¼" Symphonion disc musical box estimated at £6,000 - 10,000 was unsold when bidding stopped at £5,200.



A 21¼" Symphonion music box playing on two combs and 10 saucer bells, contained in an Art Nouveau style cabinet bearing a picture in the fretted pediment sold for £5,000.



A 24½" Komet playing on 4 combs with a very much worm eaten case, bleached and with some veneer missing was unsold when bidding stopped at £5,200.



A Bontems penny in the slot singing bird automaton which needed restoring sold for £1,600.



A nice "Bells-and-drums-in-sight" cylinder box playing 8 airs accompanied by snare drum and six saucer bells struck by 2 painted figures of mandarins and 2 wasps was sold for £3,200 against an estimate of £2,000 - 3,000.



An electrically operated Negro automaton bell boy, French circa 1910 estimated at £5,000 - 7,000, sold for £4,000. It had a papier-mache head with smiling opening mouth and moveable lower lip, with glass eyes which moved side to side. The cardboard body contained an electrically operated mechanism causing the hammers to close, the right arm to extend and the head to turn and nod whilst his body moves, smiling and moving his eyes.



The star piece of the auction was a rare Roullet Et Decamps "Pifferari" or Harpist made in France around 1880, the fine bisque head impressed 10 and stamped in

red Déposé TÊTE JUMEAU Bte. S.G.D.G. with red check marks, with closed mouth, fixed brown glass paperweight eyes with finely painted lashes and brows, applied pierced ears, cork pate with replacement blonde wig, the body standing and containing the key-wind stop-start musical mechanism playing two airs and causing her wooden forearms to move individually up and down and her head to nod first one side of the harp, turn and nod the other, the harp applied with gold leaf and her replacement clothes consisting of shocking pink sateen cloak over beige sink-satin metal-thread applied jabot ending in points with metal pierced metal balls, pink sateen waistcoat over cream satin high collared shirt and pink frilled breeches, with original crimson satin long boots laced with metal-thread (rubbed), forearms repainted, 75cm (29½ in) high. This item was estimated at £18,000 - 20,000 and sold at £15,000.



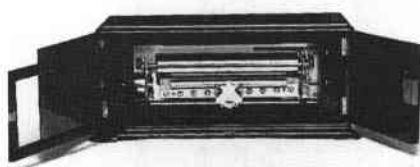
Prices of larger instruments appear to have sold significantly lower than the record prices achieved recently. Could this indicate that a slide in British and world economy is reflecting values in the mechanical music market?

**Sotheby's next mechanical music sale in London will be on Tuesday 4th September and includes a rare musical Valentine probably French, circa 1880. The lyre shaped case is covered in purple satin and decorated with gold thread and seed purls. The hinged**

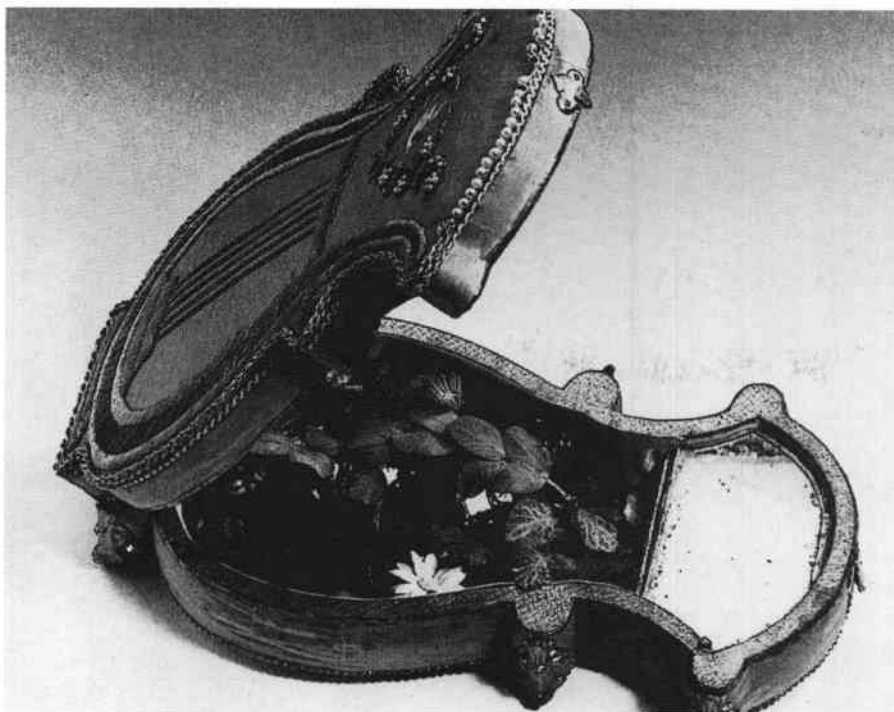
A 26 key Bacigalupo barrel organ playing on 2 ranks of wooden pipes contained in a mahogany veneered case with a marquetry inlaid front with a missing handle (so did it work?) sold for £1,700 (at this price it surely must have needed restoring).



There was good competition for the Langdorf Et Fils buffet style cylinder music box. The buffet style is in a case apparently mounted on its side which gives the listener the opportunity to see the musical box mechanism from a distant seated position rather than being over the musical box looking down into it. This one also had a zither attachment and sold for £2,400 against an estimate of £1,400 - 2,000.



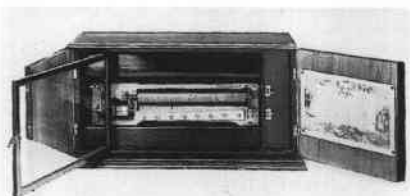




**A rare Musical Valentine, probably French, circa 1880. Coming up at Sothebys next sale.**

lid activates a small cylinder musical movement when opened and reveals a small simulated pond with flowers and a hummingbird. It is expected to sell for £600 - 1,000.

Another buffet style cylinder music box will be in this sale it has a 33 cm cylinder playing 12 airs as listed on the tune sheet and the governor cock is stamped mmc. The cylinder has several bent pins and the comb has one broken tooth. A piece of moulding is missing from the side of the case and another piece is loose. This is expected to sell for between £1,000 - 1,500.



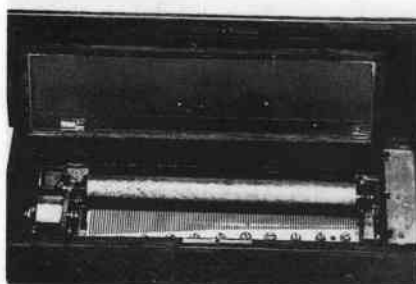
From the Nicole Freres stable comes this 33cm cylinder box playing twelve popular airs and estimated at £600 - 900.



Also in this sale is a 10¼" Komet disc musical box with 18 metal discs estimated at £350 - 500.

There is an orchestral organette, using standard 14 key music estimated at £200 - 300.

A Lecoulre cylinder musical box. 33cm cylinder playing 6 airs estimated £900 - 1,200.



There is another Lecoulre harp harmonique piccolo cylinder music box, again with a 33cm cylinder playing 6 airs as listed on the tune sheet on 2 combs with zither and piccolo at will, this is estimated at £1,000 - 1,500.



Viewing is on Tuesday 4th September between 10.30 and 2.30 and Tuesday 28th - Friday 31st August 9.00am - 4.30pm and at the same time on Monday 3rd September. There is no viewing on the day of the sale. The catalogue is available from Sotheby's, 34/35 New Bond Street, London W1A 2AA. at a price of £12.00 to non subscribers.

## **MUSICAL NOSTALGIA AT CHRISTIE'S SOUTH KENSINGTON**

**Mechanical Music - Thursday 26 July, at 2pm**

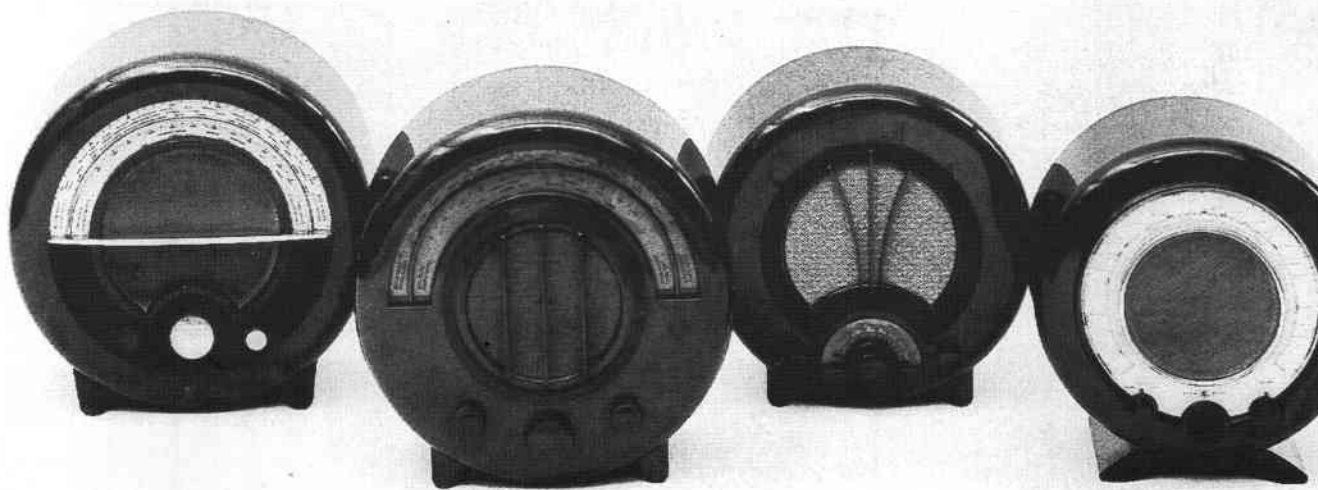
Musical nostalgia came to Christie's South Kensington on 26 July when Art Deco bakelite radio sets from the 1930s, 40s and 50s came under the hammer.

Bakelite radios in the appropriately called "Le Style Odeon" were highly fashionable at the popular end of manufacturers' ranges and have now become collectors items, with prices up to £650 being achieved over the past year.

Over 30 examples were offered, including the most famous design of all - Wells Coates' circular Ekco made from 1934 by E. K. Cole Ltd of Southend-on-Sea, (see picture on next page). Models of this famous receiver in the sale range from the original Ekco AD65 of 1934 to the 1945 A22 model (£250 - 400). Equally sought after is the B53 in Art Deco 'stepped' case with 'Jazz-age' stylized trees on the speaker panel ranging in value from £250 - 350.



From the early post-war era came a tiny pre-transistor Pye portable radio in cream and pastel green plastic with a thirties-style 'rising sun' speaker fret (£50 - 100).



### Wells Coates' circular Ekco's.

Even smaller and older were three miniature crystal sets by F. Clymer and his grandson A. B. Hench. F. Clymer's set made in about 1920, measures a mere 1½ in. high, a size bettered by his grandson, whose sets measure 7⁄8 in. high and ½ in. high.

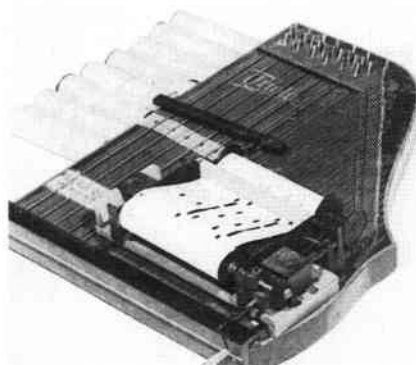
Also included, a tinfoil phonograph - the first type of sound recording and reproducing machine, dating from about 1880 (£1,500 - 2,500); and also a forerunner of today's combined LP, CD and cassette systems - a Reginaphone, an American invention combining a traditional musical box and a gramophone, (£4,000 - 6,000).

On the mechanical music front an Aeolian Grand 58 note player organ (style A, number 15537) sold for £450, a 58 note Apollo push-up player piano by Clark Piano Co, Chicago, sold for £200.



A Triola mechanical zither with 25 note roll mechanism and 24 hand played strings on ebonised

base with 9 rolls and instructions estimated at £1,000 - £1,500 sold for £2,000.

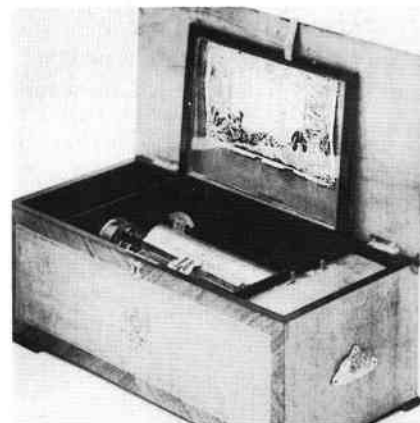


A penny in the slot singing bird in cage, probably by Bontems, a single bird with moving tail, head and beak in a brass square cage on guiltwood base sold for £1,500.



A Cabinetto 25 note organette in guilt stencilled walnut case sold for £650.

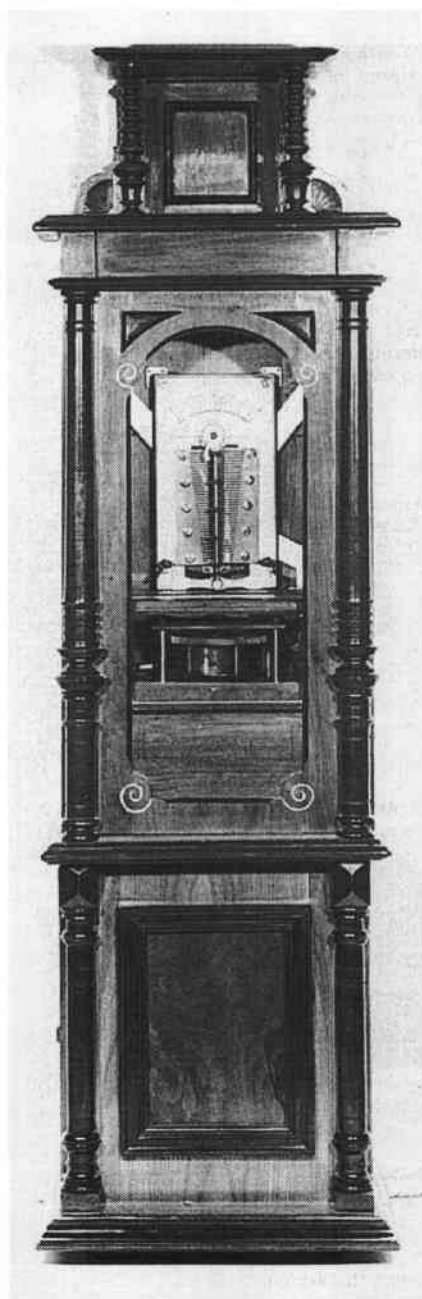
A musical box by BH Abrahams playing 30 popular airs (2 per turn) with nickel-plated movement, tune indicator, zither attachment, tune sheet with brass spandrels and a cross-beaded walnut veneered case with royal coat-of-arms to front and lid sold for £650.



An unusual 15 5⁄8" upright Polyphon in a longcase-style cabinet surmounted by a "what not" (an upper tier on balustered supports, I've only ever seen one other, my own) sold for £5,000, (see picture on next page).

A 17¼" Britannia upright disc musical box with duplex comb movement, coin mechanism and walnut case, sold for £4,500.

The most expensive cylinder musical box was an interchangeable with mandolin combs (mandolin teeth in groups of 4 - 6) with 4 six-air cylinders (one each comprising Krias from Il Trovatore and La Traviata, printed tune sheet, brass



**An unusual 15 $\frac{5}{8}$ " upright Polyphon in a long-case style cabinet.**

bed plate stamped 6769 rosewood veneered case with bevelled corners stringing inlay and strap work birds in maple inlay to lid on projecting base with draw and sliding cover for cylinder storage. This sold for £4,200.

Christies next mechanical music sale in London will be on Thursday December 13th. Closing date for entries, Thursday October 18th.

Another London mechanical music auction house not normally mentioned in the "Music Box" is **Phillips West Two, 10 Salem Road, Bayswater.**

Their next mechanical music sale will be held on Wednesday, 21st November at 12 noon.

Viewing will be on Tuesday, 20th

November 9am - 5pm and the morning of the sale 9am - 11am.

Items include:-

A 23 key portable barrel piano (£400 - 600).

A Cabinet roller organ (£500 - 700).

A trumpet barrel organ (£5,000 - 7,000).

A Nicole Freres key wind musical box No. 36,000 playing twelve airs (two-per-turn, Gamme No. 1648) inoperative (£700 - 1,000).

An Abrahams three-bell eight air musical box (£300 - 500).

A Symphonion musical mantel clock with 4 $\frac{1}{2}$  inch disc movement (£250 - 350).

A 15 $\frac{3}{4}$  inch table Polyphon with exposed spiral spring and bedplate to bottom of case (£800 - 1,000).

A 15 $\frac{5}{8}$  inch upright Polyphon (£2,000 - 3,000).

Catalogue available from 21st October. Entries accepted until 1st October.

Enquiries: George Glastris, 071-229-9090 ext. 214, Fax: 071-792-9201. ■

**Musical Box Society of Great Britain**

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## **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".

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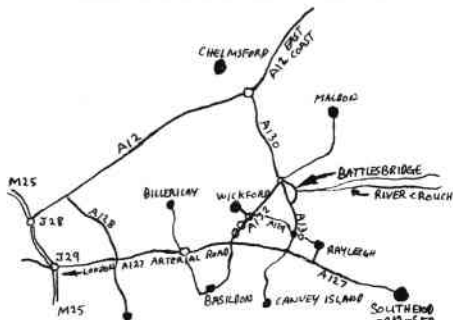
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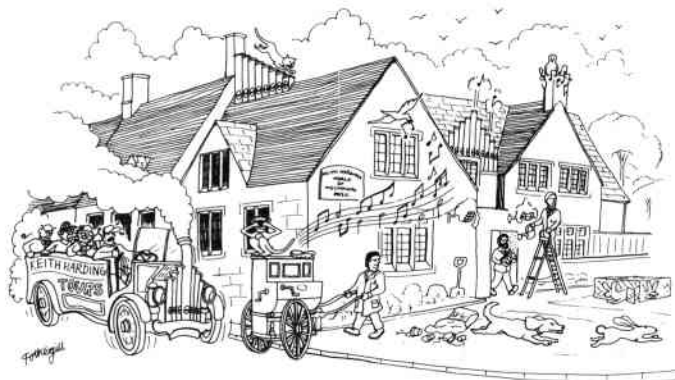
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*In fact anything necessary to completely overhaul your musical box. Part jobs welcome.*



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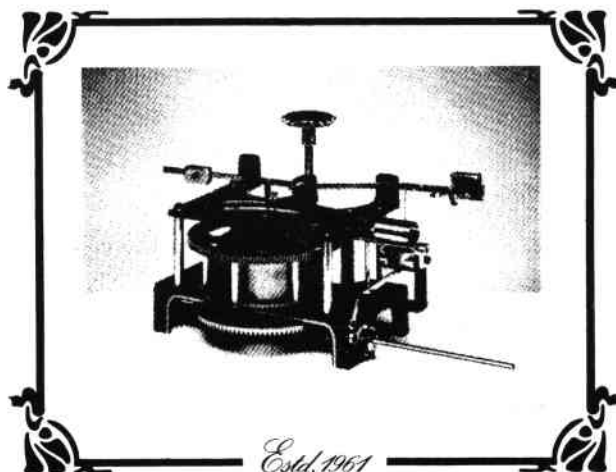
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Members: 11p per word (bold type 5p per word extra).  
Minimum cost each advertisement £3.  
Non-Members: 22p per word.  
(bold type 10p per word extra).  
Minimum cost each advertisement £6.

Semi display single column 3cm max. 30 words £9.  
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Full page £82, Half page £48, Quarter page £30, Eighth page £20  
5cm box in classified area £17, 3cm box in classified area £12

These charges include typesetting but are exclusive of any artwork and camera work which may be required. Half-tone, line, and line-and-tone negs plus artwork, design and layout facilities can be provided if needed at additional cost. Squared-up half-tones £11 each. Cut-out half-tones £15 each.

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Full page 10½" x 7½" (270mm x 180mm), Half page 10½" x 3½" (270mm x 88mm) or 7½" x 5½" (180mm x 135mm), Quarter page 5½" x 3½" (135mm x 88mm).

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**Symphonion Gambrinus**, 27" Regina Autochanger, also 24½" Polyphon discs:- 'My Austria' and 'Over the Wares'. Mark Singleton 03917-78640.

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7th April; 7th July;  
7th October; 7th February

Editorial copy **must** be submitted at least

8 days prior to above dates.

**Posting of magazine:**  
27th February; 27th April;  
7th August; 7th November

**Burney Streamline Car**, made in the early 1930's wanted. Anything from a complete running vehicle to a pile of bits that might once have been one wanted, also information, articles, brochures relating to same. **A bottle of good quality single malt Scotch Whisky will be sent to anyone who tells me of one for sale.** Please write to Jim Weir. Address follows next advertisement.

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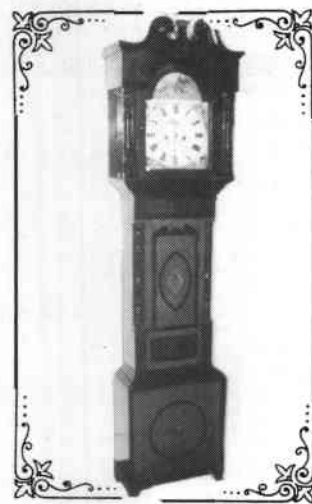
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*The Musical Box Centre*

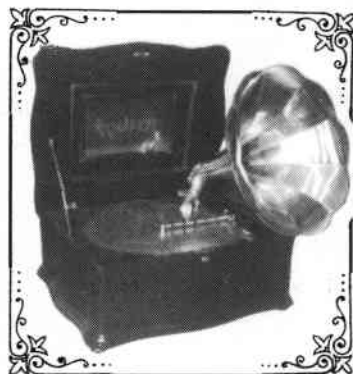
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