

The Music Box

An International Magazine of Mechanical Music

Volume 15 Number 6

Summer 1992

Edited by Graham Whitehead



Inside An Early Electric Piano
Register News

Renew Your Faith in the Player-Piano

The Journal of the Musical Box Society of Great Britain

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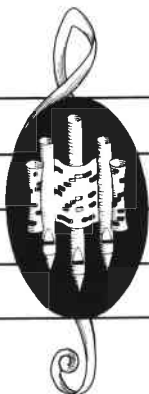
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The Music Box

An International Magazine
of Mechanical Music

The Journal of the
Musical Box Society
of Great Britain.

Volume 15
Number 6
Summer 1992

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

President: Alan Wyatt

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

Vice President: Ralph M. Heintz

725 University Avenue, Los Altos,
California, U.S.A.

Subscriptions Secretary: Ted Bowman

April Cottage, 24 The Slade, Clophill, Bedford MK45 4B2.

To whom all subscriptions and subscription enquiries should be addressed.

Membership & Correspondence Secretary: Alan Wyatt,

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

To whom all applications and queries relating to new membership should be addressed and to whom all general correspondence should be sent.

Meetings Secretary: Alison Biden,

Tel: 0962 861350.

Treasurer: Bob Holden,

10 Southcliff Park, Clacton-on-Sea, Essex CO15 6HH.

Recording Secretary: John Phillips,

'Langley', Denmans Lane, Fontwell, West Sussex.
Tel: 0243 543830.

Auditor: Stephen Cockburn,

Marshall's Manor, Cuckfield, Sussex. Tel: 0444 455357.

Editor: Graham Whitehead,

Broadgate Printing Co. Ltd.

Crondal Road, Exhall, Coventry CV7 9NH. Tel: 0203 361800.

Archivist: Peter Howard,

9 Manor Close, Felpham, Bognor Regis PO22 7PN.

Auction Organiser: David Walch,

11 Harford Close, Bristol BS9 2QD.

Advertising Manager: Ted Brown,

207 Halfway Street, Sidcup, Kent DA15 8DE.
Tel: 081 300 6535.

Committee Members:

Jon Gresham, Westwood House, North Dalton,
Driffield, North Humberside. Tel: 037 781 248.

Reg Mayes, 171 Barnet Wood Lane, Ashted,
Surrey K21 2LP. Tel: 03722 75977.

Christopher Proudfoot, c/o Christies,
South Kensington, London SW7 3JS. Tel: 071 581 7611.

Reg Waylett, 40 Station Approach, Hayes,
Bromley, Kent BR2 7EF. Tel: 081 462 1181.

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Front Cover:

"Children with Ariston", from the picture collection of Herr Georg Schuhknecht.

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Editor's Notes

Another collection stolen

As we go to press I received the alarming news that another collection has been burgled and many instruments stolen – This time a museum that is open to the public. The burglary took place in the night when the premises should have been protected by an alarm system. The collection belonged to Clive and Lester Jones and the Mechanical Music and Doll Collection, Chichester. Our sympathy must go to Clive and Lester for no matter how well they may have been insured, it is items from a life-time collection that have been lost and a collection that you simply cannot go out and buy again tomorrow.

The brief descriptions of the instruments appearing on page 175 do not provide much in way of identification. Whilst Clive may be able to identify a suspect box, the descriptions may well prove to be inadequate when it comes to raising the suspicion of a prospective buyer. However, it is perhaps fairly rare to find a disc musical box for sale with just one disc which unless the thieves have other resources this may prove to be the all important clue when or if these items are offered for sale. ■

Notice of Annual General Meeting

The annual general meeting of the Musical Box Society of Great Britain will take place on Saturday, 6th June in the Tuke Common Room, Regent's College, Regent's Park, London. The AGM will follow the society auction and commences at approximately 3.45p.m.

SOCIETY TOPICS

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

**Summer Meeting, Society
Auction and A.G.M.
Saturday 6th June, 1992,
in the Tuke Common
Room, Regent's College,
Inner Circle, Regent's
Park, London.**

Programme:

9.30am onwards - Registration
and refreshments.

10.00-12.00 - Guest speakers.

12.00-1.30 - Lunch and auction
viewing.

1.30 (half an hour earlier than
usual) - Society Auction.

3.45pm - AGM.

Members bringing items for the auction may unload them from 9.00am onwards. Road access for the Tuke Common Room is via the Lodge Gate on York Road. Temporary waiting for unloading is allowed, but vehicles must be removed for permanent parking elsewhere or they will be clamped. Parking (free) available in the Inner Circle of Regent's Park, and sometimes is available within Regent's College grounds (paid). Further details from myself, on 0962 861350. ■

**Autumn Meeting and
Organ Grind,
25th - 27th September,
1992, The Gonville Hotel,
Gonville Place,
Cambridge CB1 1LY.
Tel: 0223 66611**

The Gonville Hotel, situated in the heart of one of England's most beautiful cities, provides an ideal venue for a Society meeting. Full, modern facilities offered, with plenty of parking space. Single, double and triple rooms available, with no extra charge for single rooms. A maximum of two children under 10 per family accommodated free if sharing their parents' room, with only the children's meals extra.

Hotel package:

Dinner, bed and breakfast
Friday 25th and Saturday 26th
September, 1992: £91.50 per
person.

For information regarding the
Dinner on Saturday night, please
contact Alan Wyatt. ■

REPORT ON PAST MEETINGS

**by Reg Mayes
Christmas Meeting,
Regent's College, London.
7th December, 1991**

Due to our convivial socialising our
President had difficulty in getting
us sat down for the meeting.

The first speaker was Clive Jones, of the Chichester Mechanical Music and Doll Museum fame. The title of his talk was 'Renaissance Discs'. The talk was to record the effort and remarkable achievement to be able to cut new copies from old originals, of any diameter and format. It represented the culmination of 2½ years sweat and toil of his son Lester, no doubt egged on by Dad.

The highly technical part was that of using a computer/laser combination, to first of all 'read' the apertures in the disc, in a continuous spiral, from the centre to the outside to the centre of the disc. This information, so gathered is 'played-back' into a control system of a punching machine, which works from the centre to the rim of the blank disc, which has previously been cut to size and the 'driving holes' etc punched out. The built-in accuracy is phenomenal at 0.0001 inches, even on a 34 inch disc, by using a computer programme with 160,000 bytes.

Production starts from obtaining the steel blanks, which are in 1 metre square pieces, of correct thicknesses; temper etc. British Steel will only supply in not less than ½ ton quantities.

Clive would provide the reproduced disc in a strong clear plastic envelope, through which can be read the title and the appropriate logo for the manufacture of the original disc.

Clive played us several of his discs on his 15½ inch Regina and they sounded very well indeed. This story represents a real triumph and a major step forward in our cause of restoring items to their original condition and to propagate original discs – well done Clive and Lester and I am sure that they would like to

acknowledge the help and advice they received from others.

Next came Richard Cole, the Curator of the Musical Museum, Brentford which was founded by the late Frank Holland. Richard's title was 'The Aeolian Pipe Organ'.

He related that Aeolian started trading around 1878 in New York with small, hand-cranked organettes. They soon produced a 46-note reed organ and about 17 years later, in 1895, produced an enlarged instrument, the Aeolian Grand, which was operated by a 58-note music roll. Both types of instrument were operated by air under suction. At the turn of the century, the "Orchestrelle" was produced. A far superior instrument, this was operated by air under pressure, and the reed banks were fitted with rows of modifying chambers which further refined the tones produced.

A few years later, the "Solo" Orchestrelle was marketed. The banks of reeds were separated into two sections and a 116-note music roll operating over a tracker bar containing *two* rows of holes was used to control these separate divisions. Beautiful solo and accompaniment effects could be created. The first model to appear on the market was the Style "F", and the Musical Museum has recently restored a splendid example of this type.

The first Aeolian pipe organ was built in the closing years of the nineteenth century, and the first models used the 58-note style music roll. This was superseded by the 116-note "solo" roll as used on the later Orchestrelles. Due to tracking problems created by the very narrow pitch of the 116 perforations across the roll (12 per inch), both roll spools and take-up spools were fitted with adjustable flanges to allow for changes in the width of the paper caused by atmospheric conditions.

Richard continued by relating the story of the installation in his home of his own Aeolian Pipe Organ. The organ was salvaged from Ardross Castle, Ross-shire, Scotland, where it had been installed in 1910. With some friends he travelled up to Inverness, continuing to Ardross and loaded all the organ parts onto a 3-ton truck. The return drive to London took 17 hours! The organ parts were put into store whilst he extended his house to accommodate them.

He closed by showing us many pictures of organs from an old factory album. The original index had been lost during the 1939-1945 war, but

by means of a little detective work, Richard is slowly tracing the locations.

In the interval Keith Harding of the well known restoration and museum enterprise, entertained the assembly by playing a portable street organ, which has an interesting history. It was brought to Sunderland by a refugee from the Franco/Prussian war 1870-1. A young girl had to play it in the streets to raise funds with which to live. Keith's workshops had refurbished it to very good effect.

Keith had also brought with him, for display in an anteroom a wonderful example of a restored George Pyke organ clock of 1744, once owned by Catherine The Great of Russia. The drive was by a verge movement and the music by a three rank pipe organ. It looked and sounded beautiful. The restoration took one year. We are grateful to Keith for giving us the opportunity to see it in all its glory.

After lunch Ted Bowman and John Powell gave us a talk on Musical Temperament. Ted started by posing three questions; what is meant by a musical sound, by a musical scale and by musical temperament? He explained that musical sounds were generally complex, consisting of a fundamental pitch with accompanying overtones, usually harmonic, i.e. overtones whose frequencies were exact multiples of the fundamental. As examples, he quoted a dull-sounding stopped diapason organ pipe which has only one harmonic overtone, brighter open organ pipes with up to 14 harmonics, and a strident reed trompette with as many as 30 harmonics.

Ted used his home-made sonometer (incorporating a wrest pin given to him by Bechsteins in Berlin!) to repeat the experiment of Pythagoras. The sliding bridge on a sonometer allows the string to be divided in different ratios, whose pitches are proportional to string length, thus demonstrating that the notes of the natural or Pythagorean scale have pitch (or frequency) ratios of simple fractions, e.g. 2:1 giving an octave and 3:2 a major fifth. Today Western music uses an octave divided into 12 semitones. Ted mentioned other scales such as an Indian one of 22 notes, and the very old pentatonic scale of 5 notes (e.g. "Auld Lang Syne"). The problem of musical temperament arises with keyboard instruments with a 12 note scale. If we play 7 octaves, we end on

a note whose frequency is 128 times that of the starting note. But if we had tuned the keyboard with perfect fifths (each ratio $3/2$), and played 12 consecutive fifths, we would end at the same place on the keyboard, but at a frequency 129.7463 times greater. When this discrepancy is shared amongst the intervening notes in the 12 note scale, the latter is said to be tempered, and thirds, fourths and fifths may no longer be in simple numerical ratios. In Equal Temperament, the pitch ratio between successive semitones is constant (1:1.059). Only octaves are in perfect tune, and all musical keys have the same interval ratios. Many other tuning systems exist, in which some keys are more nearly in tune than others; a tape of organ music was played in which the same piece had been recorded with three unequal temperaments, as well as equal temperament; the latter was not preferred by the majority of members present. Organs do exist with extra notes to lesson tuning discrepancies, e.g. the McClure instrument with 19 notes per octave, with 7 extra drawstops to select them.

John then demonstrated the electronic pitch meter which he had built and used to measure the precise frequency of each tooth of a series of musical boxes. A cylinder box plays only a limited number of tunes, in few different keys, perhaps justifying unequal temperament. John's data was displayed graphically adding overlays with different temperaments showed that in no case was there a matching pattern. However, all tunings were "stretched" in the upper octaves, as is done in piano-tuning. Short piano strings, because of their relatively large diameter, have overtones of higher frequency than true harmonics; it is possible that similar effects occur in musical box teeth. Finally, Ted suggested that it would be interesting to measure the overtones in musical box teeth, and also to find out if any surviving "master" combs had been tuned to a recognisable temperament.

The last speaker was Alan Godier on 'Tuning a musical comb', which is something he does professionally. He brought several combs with him to illustrate his points.

Alan made the point that as the work progresses one should be particularly careful to see that the sequences of the work are not taken out of order or duplicated, so he uses coloured paints; pens and dots to

identify the teeth and check the progress of the sequence of the repair.

Having decided which is the 'key note' on the comb, he marks that with 3 dots (if it has not already been done) of paint, being the first note; 2 dots for the third note and 1 dot for the fifth note and no dots for the seventh note, as with all intermediate notes of the scale and so on throughout the whole length of the comb.

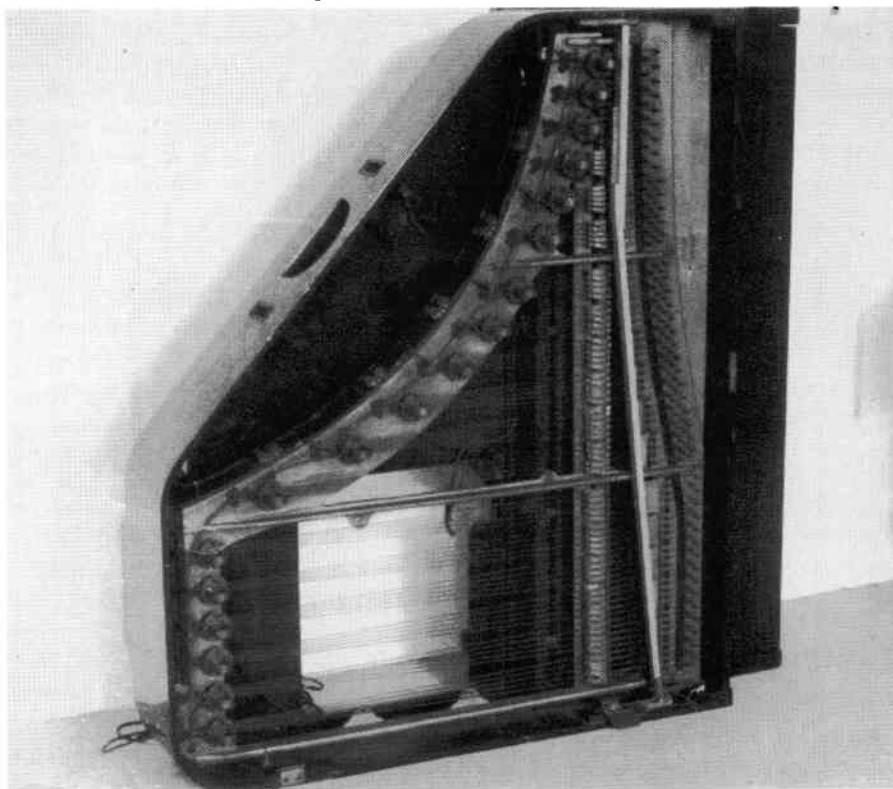
Different manufacturers had different ways of marking their combs (over the years some firms had changed their method of marking). Some methods of marking were as follows:- Nicole Freres box No. 52110 has a number for each note, marked on the comb base. Langdorff & Lecoultrre have dots for the bass end of the comb. Tuning a new Polyphon comb and comparing it with a reference comb, the 'C' are marked blue and the 'G' red. Before any tuning it is necessary to grind down the tips so that, for example to 0.4mm thick for the highest treble – the bass end is 1.0mm thick, as manufactured.

Using a master comb, a rough tuning of all the individual teeth of the comb, then the fine tuning is undertaken, then marked with a blue pen so that it would not be worked on again, by mistake. To lower the pitch of a tooth the underside of the back of the tooth is ground away, slightly. To raise the pitch the tip of the tooth is ground away, slightly. The depth of grinding is say from 1 - 5 thousandths of an inch. Where there are leads fitted to the teeth then the pitch is raised by cutting away the lead. For this a specially made pair of cutters is applied between the teeth to remove the lead. All teeth must be shaped to the final width before tuning.

The number of notes and their groupings on all combs are classified by Gamme numbers, some examples of the scales brought along ranged from 160 - 3008. Those up to 1000 cover $5\frac{1}{4}$ - 6 octaves, from 1000 they are mostly 6 octaves. Polyphon disc combs have $5\frac{1}{4}$; $6\frac{1}{4}$ and $5\frac{1}{2}$ octaves on $19\frac{5}{8}$; 24 and $15\frac{1}{2}$ inch disc respectively. ■

**HAVE YOU PAID
YOUR
SUBSCRIPTIONS
YET ?**

An Early Electric Piano



The Neo-Bechstein Grand Piano awaiting restoration at the British Piano Museum.

Electric Pianos are today nothing unusual, but in 1934 the electric piano produced by Bechstein was quite something. The piano was called the "Neo-Bechstein-Flugel" made in Berlin in 1933. The touch and hammer-action were as normal but only one or two strings were used for each note. The soundboard was replaced by electrical amplification and reproduction. In addition to the normal sustaining pedal a second pedal acted as a volume control. Despite his excellent workmanship, this revolutionary instrument failed to win support and was withdrawn. The piano has a valve amplifier and loudspeaker and for good measure a radio set. A microphone is provided for each group of four of five strings, to pick up the vibrations. These are then amplified by the loudspeaker. In all 18 pick-ups were employed. The keyboard - hammer - damper action was similar to that of a conventional piano but redesigned to accommodate the much lighter touch necessary for this instrument. The introduction of an amplification system also made possible alterations to the timbre of sound by means of altering the position of the pick-ups at different points along its strings or filtering or amplifying the harmonics. An example of this piano can be seen in the Deutsches Museum, Munich, whilst much closer to home, a model is undergoing major restoration at

the British Piano Museum, Brentford. The above information was submitted by the late Frank Holland, OBE. ■

NEWSDESK

Ilfracombe Victorian Weekend

Ilfracombe in 1890's style will be alive 6-14th June 1992. The Victorian week is being organised by the Channel Arts Association who have arranged for nine organ grinders to play their street organs on Saturday and Sunday 13th and 14th. If you join in the fun and bustle that weekend, don't forget to drive around to Watermouth Castle where MBGB member Richard Haines operates a popular tourist attraction which includes a mechanical music room and a dancing-water organ. ■

We were very saddened to learn that Richard Haines' lost his wife at the end of February after quite a long illness.

Major collection stolen

Our sympathy goes to Clive and Lester Jones of the Mechanical Music and Doll Collection, Church Road, Chichester, who lost well over 100 items in a theft that occurred on the 24th March 1992 when thieves entered the church, which houses the museum, and disarmed the alarm system. A reward of up to £15,000 subject to the usual conditions is offered, information to Clive on 0243 785421/372646. Fortunately as their collection is a large one, it's "business as usual" and visitors who are not familiar with the collection will of course not realise that anything is missing. A list of stolen items follows:

DISC MUSIC BOXES

(page numbers refer to The Encyclopaedia of Automatic Instruments, by Q. David Bowers).

REGINA 15½" Duplex. Carved case. Model 9 (+ 1 new disc). p. 188.

POLYPHON 15½" Single comb. Model 43B (no discs). p. 150.

KALLIOPE 13¼" + 10 bells. Model 62G. p. 108.

SYMPHONION 11⅞" Rococo case. Model 25C (+ 1 disc). p. 220.

SYMPHONION 11⅞" Lever-wind. Model 25A (+ 1 disc). p. 220.

FORTUNA 11" + 8 bells. (no motor, no discs). p. 241.

BRITANNIA 9" Smoker's cabinet. Model Alexandra (no discs). p. 243.

POLYPHON 8¼" Lever-wind. Model 41C (+ 1 disc). p. 146.

FORTUNA 8¼" Lever-wind. Model 225 (+ 1 disc). p. 238.

SYMPHONION 7⅞" Highly-carved case. Handle-wind.

KALLIOPE 6" Hand-turned. Black case (+ 1 disc).

CYLINDER MUSIC BOXES

BAKER-TROLL INTER-CHANGEABLE with 4 cylinders. Sublime Harmony; on matching burr walnut table (cabriole legs).

NICOLE FRERE PIANO-FORTE. Key-wind. 4 airs. 10" cylinder ap.

BREMOND B.A. Change-at-will. Lever-wind. 8 airs. 12" cylinder ap.

STAUFER Lever-wind. 4 airs. 9" cylinder ap.

PAILLARD, VAUCHER FILS (PVF) Playing hymns. Alternate tips. 14" cylinder ap.

LANGDORF Tremolo Expression. Lever-wind. (Burr walnut case). 14" cylinder ap.

ANOTHER SIMILAR BOX 14" cylinder ap.

TWO ORGAN BOXES (One in bevelled-cornered case).

BELLS-IN-SIGHT-BOX with 6 bells.

TWO MUSICAL PHOTOGRAPH ALBUMS Leather bound; gilt tooling. Cylinder.

ALL OF THE ABOVE ARE FULLY RESTORED AND IN IMMACULATE CASES.

Other items stolen from the Museum:

"NATIONAL" CASH REGISTER. Cast Bronze, highly decorative, with pediment.

CLOCK GARNITURE - Clock and 2 warrior-style figures. Clock surmounted by 'Marley-style' horse. All 3 pieces of silver and gold gilt, under glass domes.

TEA CADDY. Rosewood inlaid mother-of-pearl. 'Sarcophagus' shape case. 2 inner boxes - no mixing-bowl.

90+ VICTORIAN CHINA-HEADED DOLLS. All in original clothes.

AREWARD OF UP TO £15,000 IS OFFERED - SUBJECT TO THE USUAL CONDITIONS.

OBITUARY

Mr. J. Thompson

One of the country's most respected auctioneers, Mr. James Thompson of Kirkby Lonsdale, has died at the age of 96.

He went into business on his own just before the Second World War. After the war, he built up the business as a general auctioneers, dealing in agriculture, chattels, houses and general items.

One of his sons, Jim, said: "He achieved quite a coup just after the war when he got the last sale at Underley Hall. It was a week-long sale of the property of Lady Henry Bentinck and it helped to establish him as one of the premier auctioneers in the north west."

The firm's reputation continued to grow, and the old drill hall was bought to be turned into its main auction hall. His son, Jim, joined the firm in 1957 and saw the 1960s nourish a boom in antiques. The firm developed that area of work, and Jim's interest in paintings led to further expansion. In 1980, the Royal Barn was acquired to become the firm's second saleroom and main paintings saleroom.

Mr. James Thompson continued selling until he was 81.

At one time, he owned an enviable collection of music boxes and was a member of the Music Box Society of Great Britain, but his main interest was always his work.

(from *The Westmorland Gazette*, 20-3-92.)

Society Auction

The Society's annual auction will be held on Saturday, 6th June in the Tuke Common Room, Regent's College, Regent's Park, London. Auctioneer Christopher Proudfoot (by kind permission of Christie's, South Kensington). A great chance to sell and buy. Commission rates - Buyers premium 7.5%, Selling commission 7.5%.

BOGA off to a Grand Start

The new British Organ Grinders' Association got off to a grand start on April 11th when it organised the biggest gathering of organ grinders ever seen in this country. The inaugural meeting took place at Ashorne Hall near Warwick, which houses Graham Whitehead's collection of mechanical musical instruments, and was attended by nearly 100 people.

In addition to giving organ grinders the opportunity, which they seldom get, of meeting each other the day also enabled them to make contact with many of the UK's leading Organ Builders and Music Arrangers/Cutters. Builders attending included Ian Alderman, Roy Davis, Michael Dean & Family, Paul McCarthy, Rob Barker (Alan Pell) and Peter Trueman and they were joined by Music Arrangers Ian Alderman, Kevin Byrne, Nicholas Dean, Steve Clarke, Alan Pell,

Francis Stapleton, Peter Watts and Melvyn Wright.

The glorious weather meant that the organs on show could be



Organ grinders and onlookers gather in Spring sunshine outside Ashorne Hall.

outside rather than crammed into the hall and Members were able to listen to no less than 17 different hand-turned organs – just about every model available in the UK – playing arrangement from a variety of Noteurs, including several pieces specially cut for the occasion.

Despite the doubts expressed in some quarters that an association for organ grinders was not needed events have shown that view to be mistaken and the new Association now has 126 members, 6 of whom joined during the afternoon. Membership of the British Organ Grinders' Association is open to anyone owning or having an interest in hand-turned organs and full details together with a copy of the current Newsletter are available from the Secretary, Peter Churchard on 0296 612995.

Issued by: Mike & Christine Belcher - British Organ Grinders' Association.

For further information contact: Peter Churchard, 46 Ligo Avenue, Stoke Mandeville, Bucks HP22 5TY. Telephone: 0296 612995. ■



Register News

Listed below is the first part of the Register. Each section is preceded by information on the maker or agent. Like the main part of the Register, this information is constantly being corrected and updated.

I would welcome any additions and/or corrections to any part of the Register. In subsequent versions all corrections and enhancements will be included. A footnote will indicate the date of the entry and also what version it is. e.g. 3/92. v. 2 would indicate copy was written in March 1992 and it is the second upgrade.

May I here thank the authors of the various books on musical boxes for their excellent work which has been a basis for much of my research. Contributors to the Music Box and other members of the Society have also been most helpful.

I promised last time to include some general information on musical boxes and on this occasion some information concerning Junod may be appropriate.

JUNOD DOCUMENT

This is a description of a document found in the lever compartment of a Junod box which was sold at Sotheby's in 1990.

The paper was a buff colour and rather thin. It was folded in half and the instructions were printed in

English on the first page. The other three pages had the same instructions printed in German, French and Spanish. The size of the paper was 4.5" x 7".

There was a design pattern as a header and as a footer to each of the pages.

EXPLANATION FOR USING MUSICAL BOX

(Design here). Straight line halved by diamond shape.

Take out the pieces of cork placed at each end of the cylinder and the pieces of cardboard placed between the teeth of the comb.

To start: Pull forward the first knob.

To stop at the end of the first tune: Push backwards the first knob.

To change the tune: Push back the second knob.

To repeat the same tune: Pull forward the second knob while the tune you wish to have repeated is playing.

When not in use, the box must always be stopped at the end of a tune, so that there is no strain on any of the steel tongues.

(Design here). 3 straight lines halved by diamond shape. Top line fairly short, second line longer, third line equal to the first line.

Obviously when new, Junod

shipped their boxes out with these precautions in place. Some apprentices probably had the job of placing pieces of cardboard between the teeth and fixing cork in place to stop cylinder movement.

I wonder if the dealer or the customer had the chore of extracting all the card! No doubt some boxes arrived in a damaged state having been transported by sea, railway, horse and cart.

One story that has come down from the First World War period, I feel is well worth the telling:-

The Tank Musical Box

In the first world war when tanks were introduced and used in battle, the enterprising crew of one light tank named their vehicle "Musical Box".

The tank was most successful in battle as the Germans had not come across this form of warfare before and were very puzzled by it. "Musical Box" managed to break through enemy lines and put many guns out of action. It even attacked a train before it was finally set off fire and its crew captured.

Purists among the Society will be wondering if "Musical Box" was a Nicole or a Langdorff and were its guns 6 or 8 air? It certainly had a "run for its money, but really, to set fire to a musical box!

The Musical Box Register

B. H. ABRAHAMAS

Barnett Henry Abrahamas emigrated from Britain to St. Croix in Switzerland in 1857 and started manufacturing musical boxes. After his death his sons carried on the business.

B.H. Abrahamas made the cheaper range of musical box. Many had bells and were of the 10 or 12 air type. He was a prolific manufacturer.

His trade mark were the initials B.H.A. and an elaborate 8 pointed star which had at the centre a lion

facing left with its front paw placed on a terrestrial globe.

It would seem as though Abrahamas was content to aim for the mass market of the day and produce machines which picked out the basic melodies of popular tunes. As many of his boxes had combs of no more than 45 teeth, the arrangements were musically very limited.

Cases were of the cheaper type and were frequently decorated with transfer crossbanding and motifs.

They were often larger than necessary in an attempt to impress the buying public.

Their London agent was the Silver Star Department at 128, Houndsditch. B.H.A. also produced the "Britannia" and the "Imperial" disc machines.

It is interesting to note that John E. T. Clark in his book "Musical Boxes" does not even mention B.H.A. in his list of makers.

3/92. v. 1.

Name	T/C * = Yes	S/N	G/N	Comments	Reg/No.
Abrahamas B. H.	—	104	0	10 air	R-1
Abrahamas B. H.	—	3398	0	8 air. 2 bell 2 doll L/W	R-1550
Abrahamas B. H.	*	3766	827	12 air	R-2
Abrahamas B. H.	—	4214	0	20 air 2 per turn	R-3
Abrahamas B. H.	—	7962	0	8 air. 3 bell. L/wind	R-2097
Abrahamas B. H.	*	7971	0	3 bell box. Lever wind	R-4
Abrahamas B. H.	*	11634	0	10 air. Lever wind	R-2014
Abrahamas B. H.	—	11784	0	10 air	R-5
Abrahamas B. H.	—	12982	0	10 air. Lever wind	R-1879
Abrahamas B. H.	*	17658	0	12 air	R-6
Abrahamas B. H.	—	27305	0	8 air 3 bell L'wind	R-1748
Abrahamas B. H.	*	37152	0	12 air	R-7

F. ALEXANDER

The "Alexandria" interchangeable was a late period machine which had hollow sleeves which were positioned over an arbor. They were made for the popular market and were musically poor.

The hollow cylinders were 19cm x 4cm. Due to the lack of cement in

the cylinders and the limitations of the comb, the tone of these boxes is of no great quality.

Spare cylinders were stored on wooden pegs in a compartment to one side of the case. The "Alexandria" was an attempt to introduce the interchangeable type of musical box into the cheaper end of the market.

Cases were transfer decorated and the tune cards were colourful lithographs often depicting classical female figures to either side of the card.

It is uncertain if F. Alexander's was an actual manufacturer or an agent for these boxes.

3/92. v. 1.

Name	T/C * = Yes	S/N	G/N	Comments	Reg/No.
Alexander F.	—	8345	0	8 sleeves	R-1306
Alexander F.	—	9648	0	Interchange. 6 sleeves	R-8

F. ALIBERT

Francois Alibert worked from around 1820 to about 1850. Some historians list him as working as early as 1810. His address is noted as 10, Rue J. J. Rousseau, Paris.

Alibert seems mainly to have made Tabatieres, necessaires, small cartel boxes and a small number of musical clocks. His movements are of good quality and usually have sectional combs and feather dampers.

His boxes are similar in design to the work of Falconnet and of David the younger. There is speculation that he may have used the same source for "blanks" as these makers.

There have been cases where his name is scratched on a movement along with other names. This has raised the possibility that in these cases he was a repairer of these movements.

noted with the names of Bordier and Martinet and benoit stamped on them. Alibert could therefore have worked with these makers or bought parts from them. He may have been an assembler or part maker of good quality boxes.

Alibert's name appears on the top of a simple border design of tune card. In some cases it is also stamped on the comb, but not always.

Combs on his boxes have been

3/92. v. 1.

Name	T/C * = Yes	S/N	G/N	Comments	Reg/No.
Alibert F.	—	2581	416	2 air early Snuffbox	R-9
Alibert F.	*	3804	0	3 air. Necessaire	R-10
Alibert F.	—	5009	0	2 air Snuffbox	R-1993
Alibert F.	—	6245	0	4 air	R-11
Alibert F.	—	6749	0	6 air. Keywind	R-1416
Alibert F.	—	7672	0	2 air. Snuffbox	R-12
Alibert F.	—	9035	0	2 air Snuffbox	R-2007
Alibert F.	—	10751	0	2 air Snuffbox	R-13
Alibert F.	—	16290	0	2 air Snuffbox	R-2011

D. ALLARD and ALLARD & SANDOZ

There is little information on this maker/agent. They were known to

be active circa 1890. In his book, Arthur Ord Hume states that the firm was founded in 1880.

Two of the listed boxes have Allard

and Sandoz tune sheets. Other boxes have labels on their tune cards indicating Allard & Sandoz were acting as agents.

3/92. v. 1.

Name	T/C * = Yes	S/N	G/N	Comments	Reg/No.
Allard & Sandoz	—	4267	0	8 air. Concert Piccolo	R-14
Allard D.	—	4526	0	6 air Organocleide Inter.	R-15

AMI-GENEUX

This little known maker or agent produced key and lever wind boxes. An early key wind example has been mentioned in a magazine article, but without recording any serial number.

This example has the impressed "dagger" mark attributed to Geneux on many of the brass parts. Please note that this dagger mark has also been attributed to L'Epee!

On other examples the name Ami-

Geneux has been found stamped on the bedplate under the comb teeth and on the front edge of combs. Surviving examples appear to have standard movements of good quality.

3/92. v. 1.

Name	T/C * = Yes	S/N	G/N	Comments	Reg/No.
Ami-Geneux	—	623	0	4 air. L/wind	R-16
Ami-Geneux	—	8353	0	8 air. Lever wind	R-1375

AMI-RIVENC

Based in Geneva, Rivenc took over manufacturing musical boxes from Greiner about mid 1869. He continued to make a wide range of quality movements which were

technically very good.

Rivenc continued to use the numbering system established at the time of the take over. The evidence on this suggests that Rivenc movements continued on from serial

number 19000.

Early Rivenc boxes continued to use the Bremond style tune cards. Greiner had previously been in association with Bremond and a supply of these cards may have been

available for Rivenc to use.

Later Rivenc boxes used the well known coloured lithographic tune cards with the sphinx or winged lion trade mark. The first recorded box in the Register to use the new type of tune card is serial number 30623. Collectors' should note the possibility

of confusing early Rivenc boxes with Bremond movements.

Besides selling under their own name, Rivenc made boxes for Thomas Dawkins, the National Music Box Company and other agents. Dawkins were based in London at 17, Charterhouse Street and were

trading between 1880 and 1914.

A theory has been put forward that Rivenc supplied boxes with the distinctive rosette comb screw washers for Thomas Dawkins only. This theory is interesting but speculative.

3/92. v. 1.

Name	T/C * = Yes	S/N	G/N	Comments	Reg/No.
Ami-Rivenc	*	19024	0	6 air. L'wind	R-1182
Ami-Rivenc	—	19380	0	? air. L'wind	R-1002
Ami-Rivenc	—	22279	0	? air. L'wind	R-84
Ami-Rivenc	—	23370	0	? air. L'wind	R-468
Ami-Rivenc	—	25345	0	? air. L'wind	R-1520
Ami-Rivenc	—	26296	0	? air. L'wind	R-1114
Ami-Rivenc	—	28806	0	6 air. Harp-Harmon. Piclo	R-1713
Ami-Rivenc	*	29290	564	4 air. Forte/P. L'wind	R-20
Ami-Rivenc	—	29524	0	6 air. Hymn box	R-1551
Ami-Rivenc	—	29670	0	4 air	R-21
Ami-Rivenc	—	29896	0	6 air	R-1307
Ami-Rivenc	—	30623	0	7 air. L'wind	R-1132
Ami-Rivenc	—	31076	1706	6 air L'wind	R-22
Ami-Rivenc	—	31317	0	12 air	R-1504
Ami-Rivenc	—	31795	693	7 air S/Harmony Concerto	R-23
Ami-Rivenc	—	31829	0	6 air Harp Eolienne	R-24
Ami-Rivenc	*	32383	84	10 air	R-25
Ami-Rivenc	—	33132	0	? air. L'wind	R-1147
Ami-Rivenc	—	34459	0	? air. L'wind	R-1155
Ami-Rivenc	—	35021	0	8 air	R-1478
Ami-Rivenc	—	35109	0	4 air	R-1618
Ami-Rivenc	—	35135	0	6 bell box	R-26
Ami-Rivenc	—	36179	0	8 air	R-1714
Ami-Rivenc	*	36272	0	8 air. L'wind	R-27
Ami-Rivenc	*	37082	0	6 air. Lever wind	R-1912
Ami-Rivenc	—	37223	0	8 air. Hymn box	R-28
Ami-Rivenc	—	37528	0	7 air. L'wind	R-1166
Ami-Rivenc	—	37621	0	10 air. L'wind	R-29
Ami-Rivenc	*	38274	0	6 air Mandolin Ex. Intchg	R-30
Ami-Rivenc	*	38398	0	6 air. 3 bell. L'wind	R-1466
Ami-Rivenc	*	38618	0	6 air. L'wind	R-1715
Ami-Rivenc	—	38834	0	8 air. L'wind	R-1750
Ami-Rivenc	—	38873	0	12 air Drum/bell/castanet	R-31
Ami-Rivenc	—	38878	0	? air. L'wind	R-1175
Ami-Rivenc	—	39493	0	? air	R-1630
Ami-Rivenc	—	39599	0	? air. L'wind	R-1189
Ami-Rivenc	—	39643	0	6 air. Mandoline	R-1824
Ami-Rivenc	—	39668	0	8 air. L'wind	R-32
Ami-Rivenc	*	39720	720	10 air. L'wind	R-33
Ami-Rivenc	—	39897	0	? air Sublime Harmony	R-34
Ami-Rivenc	—	40046	0	? air. Organ box + bird	R-1308
Ami-Rivenc	—	40138	0	12 air. L'wind	R-1467
Ami-Rivenc	—	40645	0	? air. L'wind	R-1854
Ami-Rivenc	—	41271	0	8 air. Duplex. L'wind	R-2110
Ami-Rivenc	*	41924	0	12 air D & B + castanet	R-35
Ami-Rivenc	—	42878	0	8 air. L'wind	R-36
Ami-Rivenc	—	42917	0	10 air. Celestial Voices	R-1825
Ami-Rivenc	*	43102	0	8 air Drum + 3 bell box	R-37
Ami-Rivenc	*	43304	0	10 air. L'wind	R-38
Ami-Rivenc	—	43384	0	6 air. L'wind	R-39
Ami-Rivenc	*	43477	0	8 air. L'wind	R-40
Ami-Rivenc	—	43491	0	8 air 6 bell + drum	R-41
Ami-Rivenc	—	43800	0	10 air L'Wind	R-42
Ami-Rivenc	—	43808	0	20 air. 2 per turn	R-1716
Ami-Rivenc	—	44136	0	8 air Harmonique Piccolo	R-43
Ami-Rivenc	*	44191	0	Harmonical Harp Piccolo	R-44
Ami-Rivenc	—	44292	0	8 air Harmonique Piccolo	R-45

Organ Grinders chat

by Geoff Alford



At the moment we have in Britain at least five organ builders producing street organs for sale, which is quite good for a country which didn't produce any some ten years or so ago. They include Ian Alderman, Fussell Brothers, Paul McCarthy, Alan Pell and Peter Trueman. Most of these have concentrated on the 20 scale (book or roll) organ which has always been the volume end of the market and is likely to remain so if only for economical reasons. Only one builder to date, Alan Pell produces organs in quantity for more than one scale and in my view he is a builder who has examined the international street organ market seriously and in depth. This has led to decisions being taken which, for a British builder, were quite bold. His Harmonist system was developed almost simultaneously with the Hofbauer Microbox system, but unlike the latter firm he wisely didn't put all his eggs in one basket and rely solely on the electronic system. I have heard that Hofbauers have recently re-entered the traditional roll-playing market, although I haven't seen any at recent festivals. Most builders have been reluctant to depart from the traditional book system we imported with our early French fair organs even when building a small organ, ignoring the international mass market situation for street organs which has been roll-playing organs for over sixty years. So the technology has been in place for a long time, it is just that most builders have taken the attitude 'book organs have always been successful here so why change.' Alan Pell did make this change and I am sure that it will help him hold and expand his markets, including the export market. It has to be added that both Aldermans and Fussells used traditional roll-playing music systems from the word go, but neither firm are major producers in the British market at present.

The Continental street organ scene has been developing for quite a few years, with the additional advantage, in the case of Germany, of all those years as 'market leader' to use. Here in Britain we are playing 'catch-up,' and the danger is we may try to run before we can walk. I hear rumours that several builders are producing trumpet street organs – indeed Ian Alderman has already built at least one. The problem with trumpets is that they are twice as loud as any other pipe, this makes it very difficult to get a pleasing balance of pipework. More practically from the grinder's point of view, it makes operation on the street more difficult. To put it at its simplest, if everyone suddenly

became the owner of a trumpet organ it would half the number of organs that could appear at an organ event. From the playing angle, the temptation to use the power of the trumpet is often too strong to resist, so that it gets used more often than needed. Indeed, many pieces of music are not really suited to trumpets. For waltzes, operetta and romantic music I rarely if ever employ the trumpets, though they can come into their own in marches and overtures. So although the trumpet is a valuable extra pipe, it is not as useful as the bourdon, violin and piccolo and needs much greater discretion in its use. Normally continental trumpet organs have always had a manual slider to enable the trumpets to be cancelled even when



Wolfgang Huttel's (DDR Wohl-Hausen) 35 key A. Holl. Trumpet Organ (1905), at Waldkirch.

built in to the music on their own register. My most useful street organ is my 20 scale Bruns. It is compact and light, yet its 44 pipes and three registers of flute, piccolo and violin give it an excellent range of music sound and output, which also makes it suitable for operation under any conditions. If I was a builder looking for a new model with market potential, I would be tempted to think along these lines.

The latest organ builder to seek to break into the street organ market, albeit somewhat reluctantly he tells me, is John Page who operates from his base at Pembroke Dock. I understand that it will use the basic 20 note book scale with the addition of top 'C' on melody and extended to accommodate nine trumpets on their own register plus piccolo register and cancel, making it a 32 keyless instrument. There is, of course, a great deal of advantage in using the 20 scale as existing music can be adapted without too much difficulty to accommodate the extra trumpet. With dimensions of 19" x 26" x 14" it will be a compact instrument and about the right size for an organ with about 42 pipes. And at an asking price of under £3,000 the price appears competitive. I hope that John Page will be able to find time to visit Llandrindod again in 1992 and exhibit his new model to the organ grinding public. Of course any street organ has to be a compromise because of necessary size limitations. No one can dispute that some excellent arrangements have been produced for 20 note instruments, but equally there are an awful lot of mediocre ones. The 20 scale is after all extremely limited, even with the addition of the extra note. Traditionally trumpet street organs have started with a basic scale of at least 24 notes or more and it will be interesting to see how well this new compromise in scale is achieved. I understand that the trumpets cannot be 'switched off' which I assume will make it difficult to be played in more restricted areas. Naturally I am disappointed that we have another builder clinging to the 'small fair organ' format. Perhaps a builder will take time to design a trolley that can be pulled plus a detachable trailer to hold the book music!

MUSIC. I am always com-

plaining about the lack of new music for 20 roll scale despite there being more street organs playing this scale than any other. Even when I get a list from a new continental supplier it is usually basically similar to any another list, perhaps with different permutations. Recently I received a music list from the Kollmer-Hoertig firm which was formerly part of De Leika and to my surprise it contained one roll of interest with five well-known Christmas tunes. Breaking my own rule of not buying blind I risked £40 to buy it and was very pleased with the roll as the arrangements are very well done.

I was very pleased to hear from Mel Colebrook that he had found time to arrange a third music roll for the 20 scale. I find that his

arrangements are very well thought out and he always gives good value. None of this business of ten metres of blank paper on the end! Roll No. 3 has no less than seventeen popular oldies and there are several 'natural breaks' to permit the grinder to pause. Now that Mel has his own 20 note roll organ we may be lucky and see yet more music for this scale.

Plastic moulded spools are now made in Britain which avoids the necessity of importing them, so with plastic paper also available we are now reasonably organised for the production of roll music. The spools are identifiable by being blue with Raffin-type ends for the 'drop-in' system which is more popular and easier for the grinder. The core length varies according



Peter Trueman playing his new 21er Card Street Organ, at Cannon Hill Park.

to the scale size. To all outward appearances they are identical to the spools obtained from the Continent, and they are much more satisfactory and easier to make (once the original capital expenditure has been made) than the 'made-up' type using screws which music suppliers have had to use before. I was surprised to learn, therefore, that one or two grinders had been experiencing problems with these spools. I am told that they were wearing the wooden sockets which should not happen if they are free-running. The only difference between these indigenous spools and the foreign ones is that the latter have brass inserts in the hexagonal socket end, presumably to provide extra strength to the spool. It may be that lack of this might affect the life of the British spools, but I cannot see how this difference could be related to the problem expressed. I have found the spools satisfactory in use so far, though on one 31 note spool the end plates were apparently not a sufficiently close fit into the core with the result that the ends came adrift and jammed in the organ. It is conceivable that too long a spool could in time cause wear.

THE INTERNATIONAL ORGAN SCENE has interested me for a number of years, in fact it started when I went to my first organ festival and bought my first street organ. Since that time my hobby has fed my pro-European sentiments and vice-versa. I now find myself sending almost as many seasonal greeting cards abroad as here in Britain. Membership of a variety of mechanical music societies has also helped and I only regret that I didn't take a greater interest in languages when I was younger. In fairness that was a time of English-speaking Empire and Commonwealth and languages didn't seem to matter much. Has it occurred to Music Box readers that interest in mechanical organs is much stronger in certain parts of Europe – roughly Britain, Germany, Holland and Switzerland and part of Belgium. Although there is a growing organ festival in France, interest appears to lag considerably behind the countries named. I hear little from Italy and even less from Spain. When one recalls

the very considerable involvement of Italians in the growth of the barrel organ and barrel piano industry, this is surprising. We have been fortunate in attracting a number of continental organ owners and builders to take part in British events over the years, but how many have taken their organs to the Continent to play? If Leslie Brown could do it in his seventies, on his own, surely more of us could do likewise.

Subscriptions to foreign societies are usually considerably higher than here at home, but this does enable them to do more for their members than we can. So December can bring a pleasant surprise landing on their members doorsteps. This year the German Organ Friends Club has sent everyone a 36 minute music cassette of seven different fair organs. Unfortunately the insert doesn't list the organs but there may be a reason for this. I understand that Voigts have been very unhappy about Ruth organs being recorded playing Ruth music which they supply and this has tended to make owners of Ruth organs chary in this respect. There are some excellent organs and arrangements on the cassette. My favourite, clearly a very large organ, playing Banditenstreichle, closely followed by a 6 minute arrangement of the Quadrille from Gipsy Baron. Wouldn't it be nice if members of British clubs could also receive pleasant surprises like this. I for one would be prepared to pay the higher sub!

IN MEMORIUM. It was with great sadness that I learned of the death of Gijsbert Perlee on the 29th September 1991. One of the great international figures in the street organ world, he was born in Amsterdam on December 18th, 1908, where he grew up and ran the family business. Until the time of his death he was repairing and hiring street organs. He was a Knight of the Order of Orange Nassau and a Freeman of the City of Amsterdam. Nearly twenty years ago I first visited Amsterdam, a major reason being to see and hear Dutch street organs. To my disappointment I couldn't find any. So I sought out the home of Mr. Perlee to enquire where and when I could find them (I must have had more cheek then!) He

kindly told me that one of his organs would be in the Damrak area after lunch. Sure enough I found his organ de Pipo with its crew and spent a most enjoyable afternoon with them, roving the city streets and finally treating them to a cognac in a bar. Over the years the Perlee name has appeared on many well-known organs such as Arabier, Grote Blauwe, Goliath, Gouwe, Drie Pruikien, Flamingo and Puntkap. Perhaps the best known Perlee in Britain, however, was the much smaller 27 note Perlee organ owned by Harold Jennings who used it to effect for the charity Guide Dogs for the Blind.

20 NOTE CARL FREI SCALES.

At one time the most common scale for street organs was possibly of around 26 notes as giving a reasonable range of music. In post-war years, however, hard economics dictated a much simpler organ and since its revival the 20 note Carl Frei scale has reigned supreme. More recently there has been a demand for bigger and better organs so there has been an increase in organs with more extensive scales, some of these use the traditional scales used by the barrel organ builders of the past, notably 26, 33 and even 45. Other builders have used their own scales. Here there has been a tendency by builders to look down on the 20 scale as being too limited. Whilst having some sympathy with that view I cannot agree with it. Any street organ has to be a compromise. A small street organ has many attractions – for the increasing number of lady grinders, for the professional out all day, for the charity-working owner who has a number of grinders standing in, for the less strong among us and the owners of small cars. For these and others the 20 scale is perfect in a cabinet of limited size. There is still scope for a second melody rank to provide variety for a doubling up of the melody rank for bourdon effect as with the Raffin and its copiers. If you increase the scale you cannot have extra ranks without making the organ bigger. The Hofbauer 20 and 26 note organs are of very similar size, but I think I am right in saying that some 20s had more pipes than the 26er. Listening to the two organs it was very difficult

to identify the model unless you knew music. So you paid substantially more for an uncertain advantage.

And what of the scale itself? Is it so terribly limited in what can be played. I purchased my first street organ knowing that its 20 notes imposed limitations but also confident that it could play a wide range of tunes quite competently. Since that time I have been surprised by what can be produced by a good arranger with so few notes at his disposal. As there aren't the notes to provide variety the arranger has to use other means to add interest to the arrangement and arrange each verse differently. Otherwise the arrangement becomes boring. The Dutch have always been adept at producing arrangements full of interest and perhaps this is why they have been able to adapt so much music for the 20 scale. Some time ago I received a phone call from organ owner Albert Taylor telling me about a 20 scale Carl Frei organ he had bought with 18 pipes. I was puzzled by this last information which gave me reservations about the purchase of such an organ, but intrigued also. However, when Albert sent me a cassette of the organ I was most agreeably surprised. So much so that I quickly contacted him to say that whatever he had paid it was a bargain. Such were the arrangements that it was hard to believe that the organ possessed a mere 18 pipes. The repertoire contained the kind of tunes that you would expect on any full-blown Dutch street organ, a mixture of Dutch, German and American tunes such as *On the Amsterdam Canals*, *In Muenchen steht ein Hofbraeuhaus*, *Circus Renz*, *Tipitipitin*, *Woodpecker Song*, *Kornblumenblau*, etc. The arrangements were cunningly arranged to delude the listener into believing it was a much more substantial instrument. Where the appropriate note is missing it is craftily circumvented, instead of what many arrangers do – insert the nearest available note, which to my ear emphasises the scale limitation. It appears that the organ was formerly owned by a Mr. Wolsleger of Tilburg who owned a number of organs of varying sizes – a situation quite common in Holland. Hopefully

there will be a 20 scale Carl Frei organ at Llandrindod in 1992, this one built by Carl Frei Junior in Waldkirch with roll-playing facility and owned by Jack Leemburg of Apeldoorn. It is probable that Albert's organ, which is book playing, was built in Holland, however by another builder and just uses the Carl Frei scale. Both have the larger highly decorated fronts we expect on Dutch organs.

GETTING BACK TO THE BUILDER. On a couple of occasions recently I have read the comment when referring to organ builders to the effect that 'of course you CAN buy a Continental organ but there is always the problem of getting back to the builder' if anything goes wrong. I really must challenge this attitude which I regard as highly parochial and incapable of substantiation. If we had all adopted this attitude over the years there would be precious few organs of any sort in Britain. What would we have put in our bioscopes, chairplanes and gallopers? To the potential buyer surely the essentials are – which organ sounds the best, is made the best and what after sales service is provided. Whether the builder operates from Lincolnshire, Pembroke, Amsterdam, the south of Germany or the south of France is, if not irrelevant, of very minor importance, indeed it may often be the case that foreign builders may be more easy to reach than British ones if distance is a factor to the purchaser. In these days of permitted excessive motorway speeds what difference does a hundred or two miles make. I am aware that a surprising number of people buy blind without much knowledge of a builder's reputation – even on occasion permit themselves to be a guinea pig for a learning builder, enticed by an attractive-sounding price. But this is not a nationality matter. We have in Britain a number of builders who are more than competent to rectify the normal kind of thing that may possibly go wrong with a new organ. After all, a street organ is not a TV set containing complicated electronics (except for Harmonist and Microbox organs). If something does go wrong it is more than likely to be the fault of the owner if it is a reputable builder, rather than a

fault of construction. There is, in fact, much to be said in favour of buying a less well-known Continental organ model – the reason must surely be obvious. A good organ will sell anywhere in the world, so Raffin organs may be seen in Japan (that MUST be an achievement!) and Pell organs in the United States. I wonder if their owners are worried about getting back to the builder!

Apropos of nothing probably, I switched to buying Continental cars many years ago when I at last found out that it wasn't normal for cars to let you down at regular intervals. That hasn't presented any noticeable problems. True, more recently I found it impossible to get a touch-up spray can for my aged VW from the local main dealer. After two years of this I recently called at a German VAG garage. Naturally they didn't stock it – but when I returned 24 hours later it was awaiting me. There must be a moral there somewhere but I am not sure what it is. Something to do with service I think.

GARY CLARKE is a name which may not be familiar to many readers, especially newer converts to mechanical music. For many years he helped Ray Elliot to rally the tuneful 46 keyless Chiappa and for a considerable period he ran the Record column in the Key Frame. He was also one of the few Britons who regularly travelled abroad to organ events. All this came to a fairly abrupt stop when he became seriously ill. Eventually a major operation enabled him to enjoy a standard of life that he never expected to see again and this permitted a degree of involvement in mechanical music once again. When he passed away on February 21st 1992 Britain lost one of its most genuine organ enthusiasts.

ORGAN BUILDER Ian Alderman has written from Dorset to point out that his own trumpet organ, of 20 notes I understand, actually pre-dates Alan Pell's 45 keyless trumpet organ. I had suggested in the Winter Music Box that Alan's might be the first British roll-playing trumpet organ. I am more than happy to stand corrected in this matter. ■

Collectors Showcase

A Fine & Rare Automaton Snuff Box with Watch

by Kenneth M. Goldman

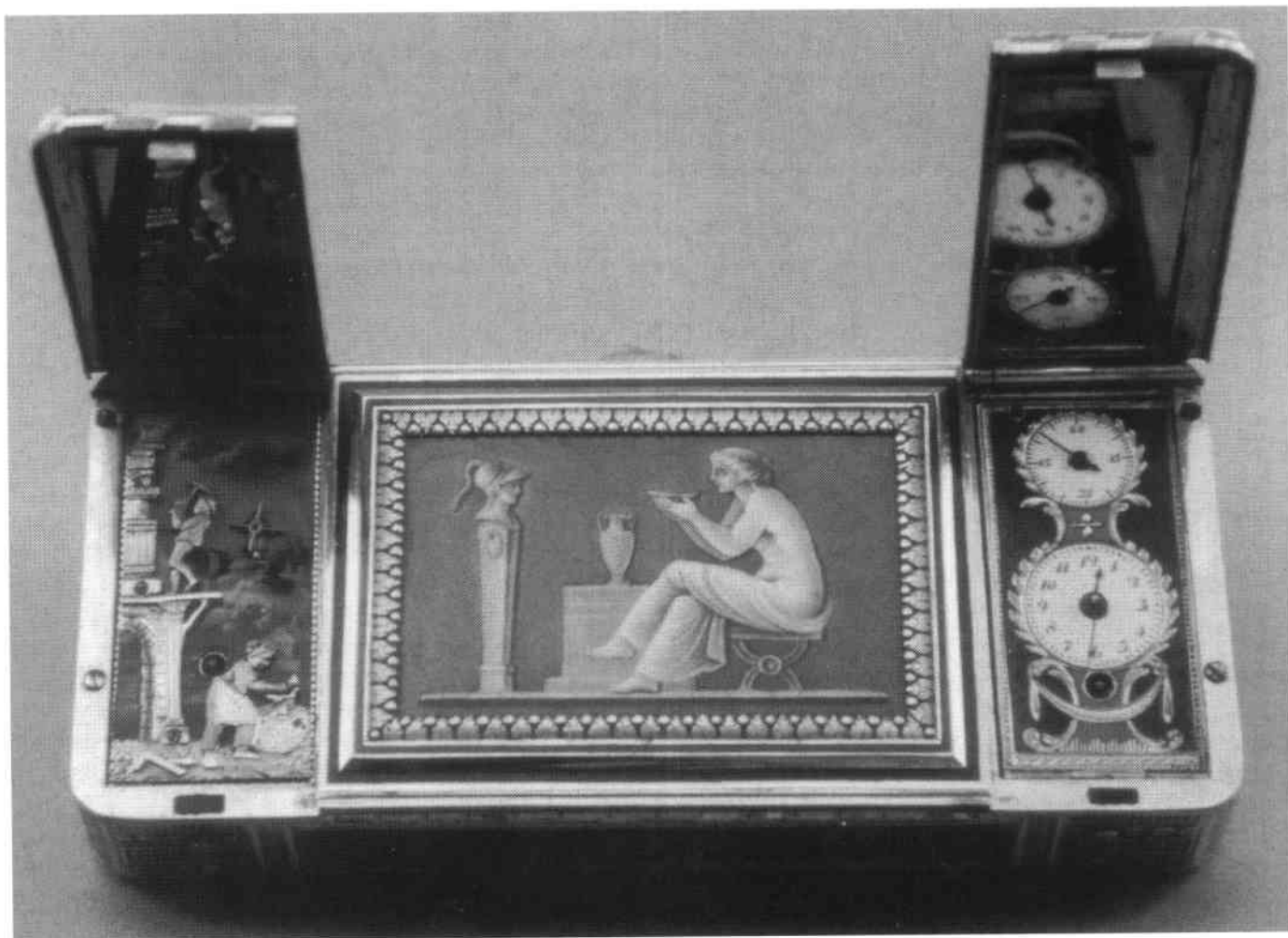
After collecting the orchestrions and automata dolls, I started to become quite interested in the smaller "Objects of Vertu." These small, precious objects were mostly made in the late 1700's and early 1800's by

Swiss craftsmen. Most of the items that I have acquired have been from Europe but I have obtained a few here in the USA as well.

The "triptych" box or piece with 3 compartments is quite a scarce piece.

This oblong box is decorated with dark blue enamel to the bases and side panels with white enamel borders. The centre panel has an enamel scene of a Grecian lady pouring a libation before a Warrior's statue on an orange-red ground framed by an egg and dart border. Underneath this panel is the snuff compartment. The right hand panel has a watch dial with second hand dial above while the left panel opens to reveal an automaton scene with a windmill with rotating sails against a painted landscape. The foreground shows two stonemasons at work. The articulated figures are done in four colour gold. The movement is unsigned but probably dates from around 1810. The entire piece is quite beautiful and very well done. It must have been quite expensive in its day.

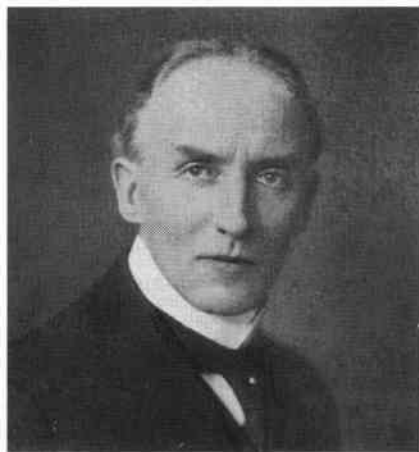
During my study of these "Objects of Vertu," I have found that information on them is quite scarce. Most of the books are long out of print and I know of very few collectors of them in the Music Box Societies. I would be happy to hear from any collectors of the musical or automata snuffboxes, bird boxes, pocket watches, etc. I can be reached at P.O. Box 404, Needham, Mass. 02192, USA. ■



Renew Your Faith in the Player-Piano

Mr. Reynolds is probably the world's best player-pianist. In this article we have allowed him to write just what he thinks, and though some of his statements relative to the piano and player may seem overpowering, yet they represent his honest belief. - EDITOR.

Writing this article for the trade is very like "teaching my grandmother to suck eggs." For you all know everything there is to be known about the player-piano. But the trouble is that



Reginald Reynolds

you have lost faith in it as a musical instrument and as a selling proposition. So I want to remind you of facts relating to its saleability and superiority to other instruments for the purpose of self-expression. Perhaps few dealers will admit that they are old enough to remember the coming of the *piano-player* into this country; but I am not ashamed of the fact that I sold some of the very earliest models, while I was in charge of Maple's piano department more than 30 years ago. Those were wonderful days! A short demonstration on the new instrument convinced the client

that it was the easiest method of making music. Orders were in excess of production, and some purchasers were so anxious to possess their piano-player that they insisted upon taking it away on the top of a four-wheeler cab, commonly called a "growler." Nowadays that term might be applied to some piano dealers! They growl because of the decline in the sale of pianos, just as dealers in harps must have complained about the decreasing demand for those charming instruments, so difficult to play effectively. Doubtless those worthy men were as prejudiced against the new fangled harpsichord (with its mechanical action and keyboard interposed between the fingers and the strings) as the modern dealer who objects to the addition of the pneumatic action to the already highly mechanised pianoforte. Yet in spite of passive and active resistance, the harpsichord came into great popularity, and was only ousted by another form of keyboard mechanism (the pianoforte) by means of which greater effects were produced with less effort.

Personal Expression

Even so will it be with the player-piano. People will find that the pneumatic action enables them to achieve results utterly beyond the capacity of two human hands, with an ease and certainty unknown to the performer upon any other instrument. Then they will insist upon having the 100 per cent of efficiency, whether the dealer likes it or not. Of course, you are not interested in the dim and distant future; you want

sales *now*. Well, you can have them *if* you stock reliable "players" at a moderate price, demonstrate them properly, and see that the client knows how to make the best use of his purchase. Remember that many a man, to whom an ordinary piano is useless, can get infinite joy out of a "player-piano." There are lots of people who feel the impulse to express their own idea of their favourite music, who have no technical ability. Each one of these is a potential purchaser of a "player."

Do You Realise?

At present this amazing invention is suffering from diminution of propaganda, lack of enthusiastic exponents, and apathy of the trade. While the public can scarcely be blamed for forming the idea that it is "a beastly mechanical instrument" if it is judged by its effect when played by novices or unmusical owners. Do you judge a piano when it is being thrashed by a rotten pianist? How would the harpsichord have fared if it had never been taught? In its early days it was played without using the thumbs; and there are plenty of "player" owners who fail to use the available controls of their instruments. Yet the manufacturers of the players deliberately negated the necessity for tuition. They advertised that "a child can play it." The most misleading statement that could be made about this wonderful music-maker. It is all the worse, because the phrase contains a molecule of truth. For, unfortunately, a child can grind out the notes with appalling precision. But this is only letting

the music-roll play itself, and should be forbidden by Act of Parliament under penalty of *death*, because it is nothing short of "murdering" music! With stupidity, the producers of the "player" introduced an instrument with astounding artistic possibilities as a toy for a child!

Now the child has found other toys, while the adult, who longs to make sweet music in accord with the emotion of the moment, does not know (after 35 years of player publicity), that the "player-piano" is the one and *only* instrument that will satisfy the cravings of a musical soul for self-expression with least possible expenditure of time and trouble. The hard-headed dealer will merely say: "That's only your opinion. You're a 'player' crank." Yes, perhaps I am, but I *was* a pianist, and it is possible that I still know something about piano playing. So, here are a few facts regarding the capabilities and limitations of a pianist, contrasted with the wider scope of the "player" - pianist.

Eight fingers and two thumbs cannot achieve the same facility of technique as when every note of the piano is provided with a separate unit capable of playing with varying degrees of touch at a speed of repetition equal to the efficiency of the pianoforte action. Thus it happens that all rapid passages can be played more clearly and cleanly by the "player"-pianist than a "dozen Paderewskis rolled into one." I am quoting Sir August Manns.

Now for the comparison of hand-touch versus foot-feeling. First, remember that the pianist's finger is *not* in contact with the string. If you object to the interposition of mechanism, you must go back to the harp! The pneumatic action adds comparatively little to the complexity of the pianoforte action. While the foot-pedals can be so sensitive to variations of

pressure, that delicate inflexions of touch can be imparted to successive notes, or sudden accents made instantaneously with a sharp movement of the foot. This being so, the question comes: "Is it more natural to use the hand or the foot as a means of expressing emotion and as a medium of rhythmical impulse?"

Delicacy of Touch

When a person wishes to express "a big, big D" without using the objectionable word, it is more instinctive to stamp the foot, than to thump the table. As for rhythm, the foot taps out the accentuations far more naturally than the hand beats time. From which I am entitled to conclude that the foot is a very suitable part of the human being for the transmission of emotional feeling. In fact, a "wag" once said that "suitors for the *hand* of my daughter had better beware of my *foot*!" It is true that I try to express every phase of passionate or subtle feeling through the movement of my feet; and the sensation of doing so gives me even greater gratification than the use of my hands, which were trained as a pianist for six hours a day over a very long period.

This brings me to the most vital comparison between the possible achievement of pianists and of "player"-pianists. The former have to work terribly hard to acquire any considerable proficiency of technique; and then each new solo of any appreciable difficulty must be given a lot of practice before it is fit to play, even to the satisfaction of the pianist. Now see the advantage held by the "player"-pianist who has acquired a fair control of the instrument – a matter of a few weeks' acquaintance with the "player-piano." The world of music is literally "*at his feet*." Difficulty of technique is of no

consequence; there will be no wrong notes, no scrambling and fumbling about. The new solo can be taken at the right tempo, and a really good reading of it can be obtained straight away. This is a joy unknown to the pianist. For I will wager that no one can play faultlessly, at sight, such music as I could choose.

Have Faith

Oh! Believe me! The "player" is the *better* half of the "player"-piano. But there is still the keyboard for those who want to use their fingers in the old-fashioned way. So why let your clients buy the worst half of the instrument? You have it in your power to persuade them to get the completely satisfying "player"-piano. You say: "Price counts." Yes, it does; but the additional cost of the pneumatic action is only a tithe of its actual value to the purchaser. A "player"-piano is worth at least ten ordinary pianos, and viewed from that standpoint is always a good investment.

I am in such deadly earnest about this subject, and am so anxious to convert the world to a belief in the true type of instrument for the home, that I would submit to be *cremated alive upon a "player"-piano*, if it would have the desired effect. But in these materialistic days it would only make a head-line in a sensational journal, and the verdict would be "Suicide, while of unsound mind." Lives are so cheap to-day, that mine would count for nothing, amid those sacrificed for a more flourishing industry.

If you dealers will only have *faith* in the musical capacity of the instrument and its unique utility for personal performance, you can bring about such a revival of "player" prosperity, that not only will it benefit you and the manufacturers, but will bring happiness into thousands of homes. ■

Musical Box Oddments

by H. A. V. Bulleid

Number 53

Two Italian composers educated at the Naples Conservatory were the brothers Ricci - Luigi (1805 - 1859) and Federico (1809 - 1877). They both composed numerous songs and upwards of twenty operas, a few in collaboration including the very popular *Crispino e la comare* (*Crispin and the Godmother*) in 1850, noted in Fig. 5.

Two solo successes by Luigi Ricci were

Chiara di Rosembergh	1831
Un'avventura di Scaramuccia	1834

and solo successes by Federico Ricci were

La prigioniera di Edimburgo	1838
Luigi Rolla	1841
Corrado d'Altamura	1841
Une folie a Rome	1869

This last item was an *opéra bouffe* for Paris, originally composed in Italian as *Carina*.

Twelve-air boxes

Demand for more tunes per box was first met with ten-air boxes in the mid 1840s, for example Nicole serial 22321 made in about 1845, two-per-turn. Proceeding with caution, makers modified their 4-overture format and produced twelve airs from "fat" cylinders and six air combs at two tunes per turn. They mostly had 11 to 13 inch cylinders (28 to 33cms) of diameter $2\frac{3}{4}$ to $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches (7 to $8\frac{1}{2}$ cms), allowing up to 130 comb teeth and tunes lasting nearly one minute.

Early 12-air 2-per-turn boxes of this type include Ducommun Girod 17121 and 21212; Lecoultré 11742; and Nicole 25429, gamme 960, made in 1847. We cannot yet date the others but they were probably

made well before 1850. The earliest Langdorff on record is serial 8010 made in 1854.

It was Nicole who first standardised the 12-air 2-per-turn type with cylinders 12 by $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches (28 by $8\frac{1}{2}$ cms). They were pinned with track widths reduced to .016" (.41mm) allowing 126 comb teeth. With two tune gaps totalling half an inch (13mm) and cylinder surface speed .09" (.23mm) per second the tunes lasted 54 seconds. These boxes were made in large quantities right into the mid 1870s, and with a mixture of old and new gamme numbers; for example serials 46514 and 46685, both probably made in 1874, had gamme numbers 3160 and 1469 respectively.

Nicole Freres seem to have had three reasons for preferring the 2-per-turn approach rather than a straightforward enlargement of their standard 8-air boxes: the "coarse" appearance of a 12-air comb; its considerable extra length to provide 120 teeth; and the hefty hammer-blow on the snail cam when the long cylinder was propelled against it by the necessarily stronger return spring after tune 12. Nonetheless they were certainly making straight 12-air boxes by 1854 and serial 31897, gamme 1208, is probably a typical example, Fig. 1. It has a cylinder $18\frac{1}{2}$ by a shade under $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches diameter (47 by 6.2 cm) and comb with 99 teeth (98 working) - in line with their standard 8-air, 13 inch cylinder boxes. An exceptional feature of this comb and cylinder is that the track width has been reduced to .0155" (.39mm), saving $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of cylinder length. Ideal playing time is 69 seconds per rev. (= 65 secs per tune) at .11 inches per second cylinder surface speed. Nicole's more usual pinning at .10" per second would have allowed tunes lasting 72 seconds.

The comb of serial 31897 differs from typical 8-air combs in two other ways; the *a* teeth (nos. 37 and 38) are of relative stiffness 250 compared with the contemporary average of about 200; and in addition

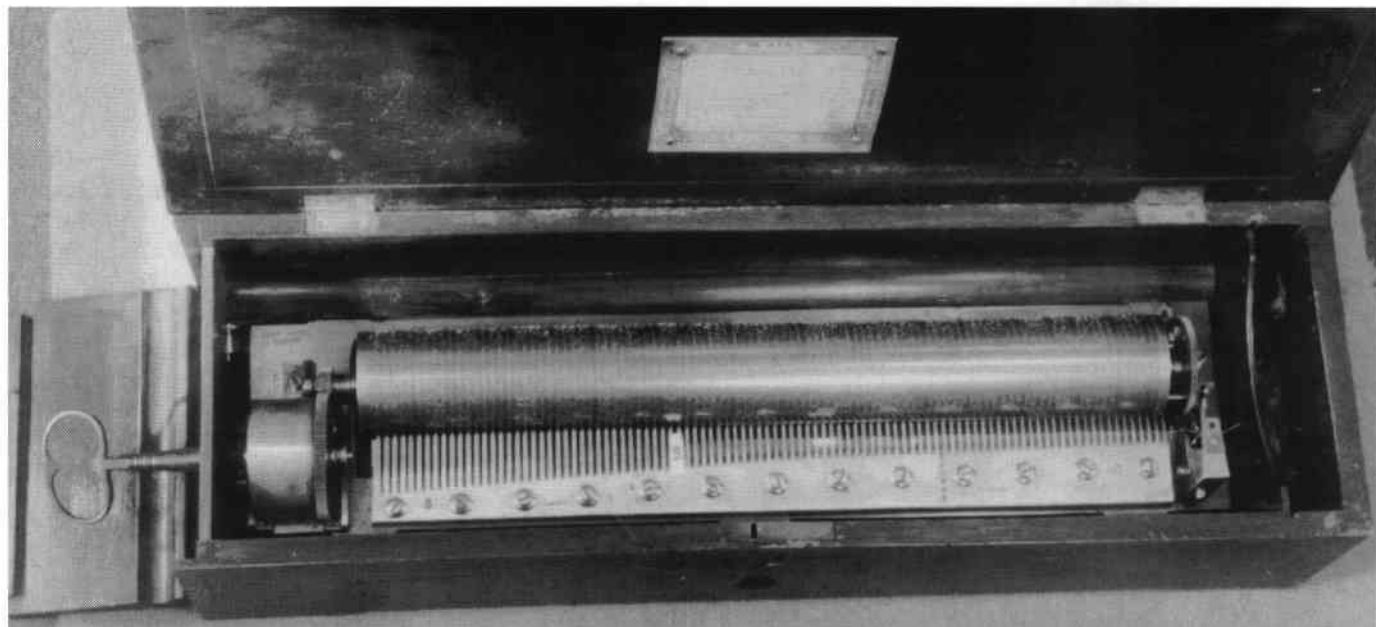


Fig. 1. Twelve air Nicole serial 31897, with 440 and 880Hz *a* teeth marked and dots indicating the "invisible join" in the comb steel.

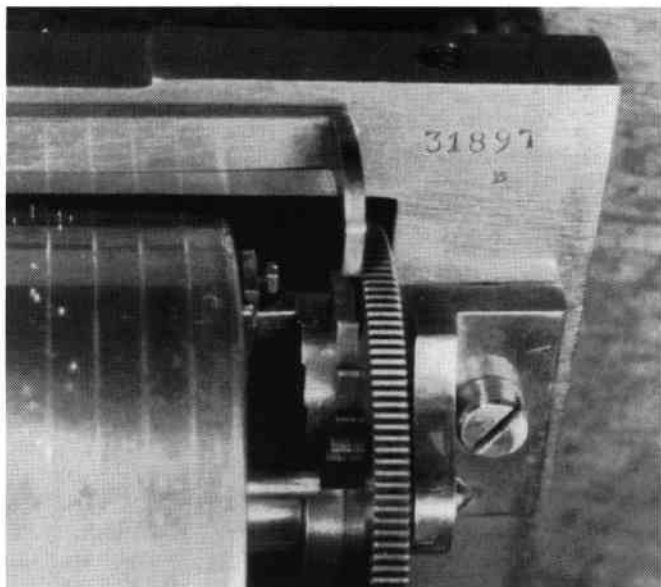


Fig. 2. Nicole serial number with letter B below; square-headed adjusting screw on cam follower; and steel bar, close to snail, which strikes the great wheel to share the blow when the cylinder returns to tune one.

to several groups of three teeth tuned to the same pitch there is one group of four and one of five, allowing occasional mandolin decoration. Though

strictly a one-piece comb, (and with large initials DD cast in the brass base) two pieces of steel were used, each stamped NICOLE FRERES, with the join excellently concealed.

Blank number 12 is twice stamped on the bass edge of the polished brass bedplate, and on spring and cylinder details and all three control levers. A mystery letter B is stamped below the serial number - shown in Fig. 2, together with the steel rod fitted to the cylinder which strikes the great wheel simultaneously with the cam follower striking the snail cam step for tune 1. This was Nicole's early device for protecting the snail.

The case is a close fit to the mechanism but still measures 26 inches by 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ (66 by 21cm) and the lid marquetry of flowers and leaves is framed with four lines of stringing. Serial 31897 is stencilled underneath.

The tune sheet, Fig. 3, is a programme of dance music - alternate waltzes and polkas with a couple of schottisches in the middle plus the excellent *Post Horn Galop*. Fortified by its large sounding board and comparatively stiff teeth, serial 31897 was probably much appreciated at small dances in and after the 1850s and certainly provided good variety.



Fig. 3. Nicole 31897 tune sheet lists popular dance music which must all have been composed in or before 1853.

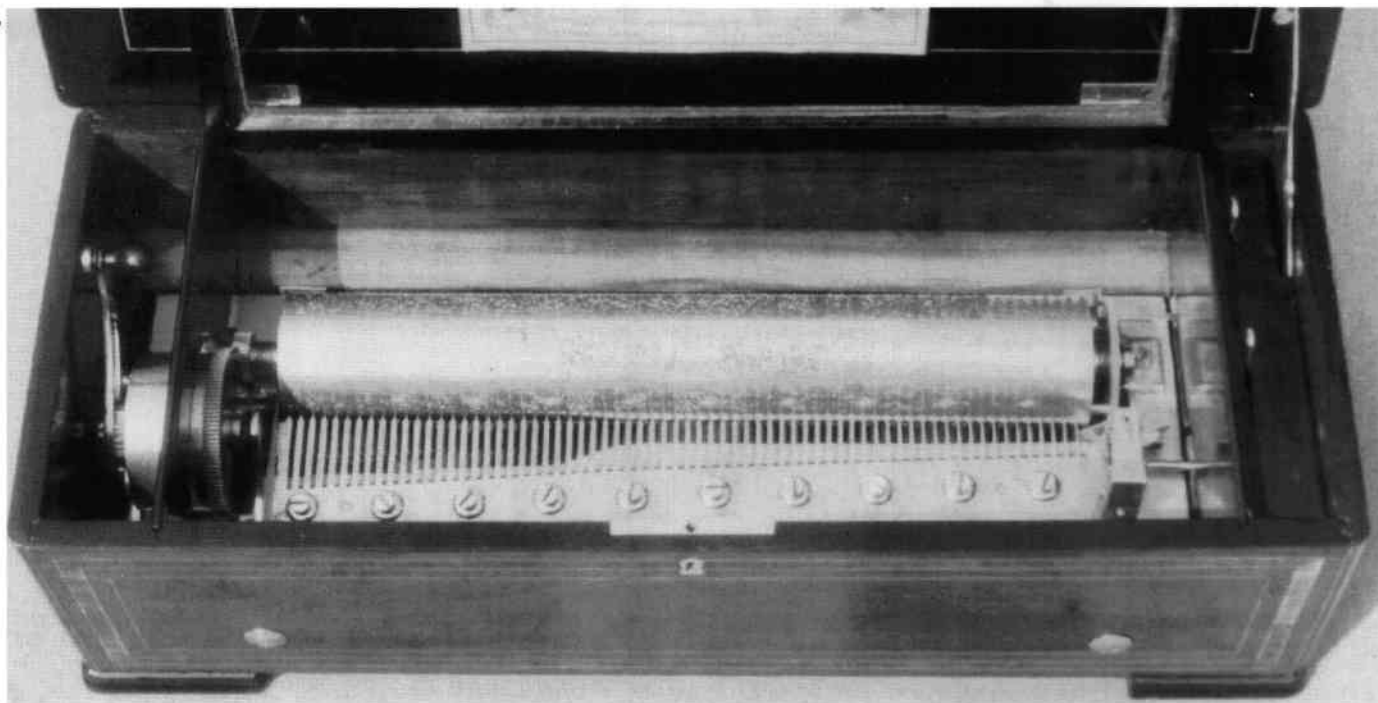


Fig. 4. Twelve air Bremond 9886, showing unusual Bremond winder – reversed and with wooden knob.

Bremond

Twelve air boxes by Bremond are rare, and some of the few known are with bells or orchestral. However they, like neighbouring Nicole, got over the fear-of-

coarse-comb complex and made some straight 12-air boxes. Serial 9886 shown here in Fig. 4 made in about 1868 has a cylinder $14\frac{1}{4}$ by $2\frac{3}{8}$ inches (36 by 6cm), 68 comb teeth, a teeth nos. 21 and 22, relative

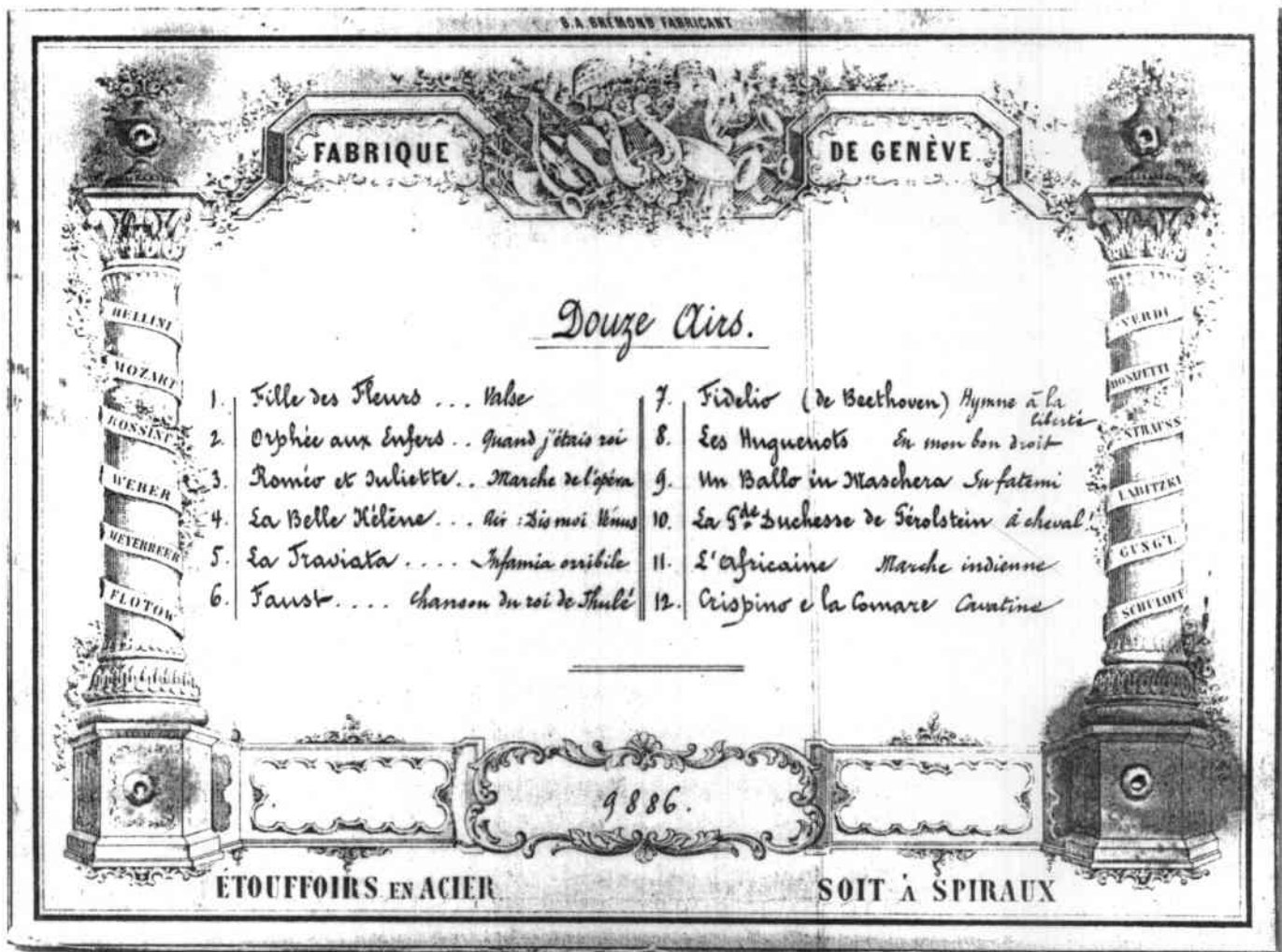


Fig. 5. Serial 9886 tune sheet is authenticated in the top margin, date about 1867. Tune 12 is by Ricci, 1850.

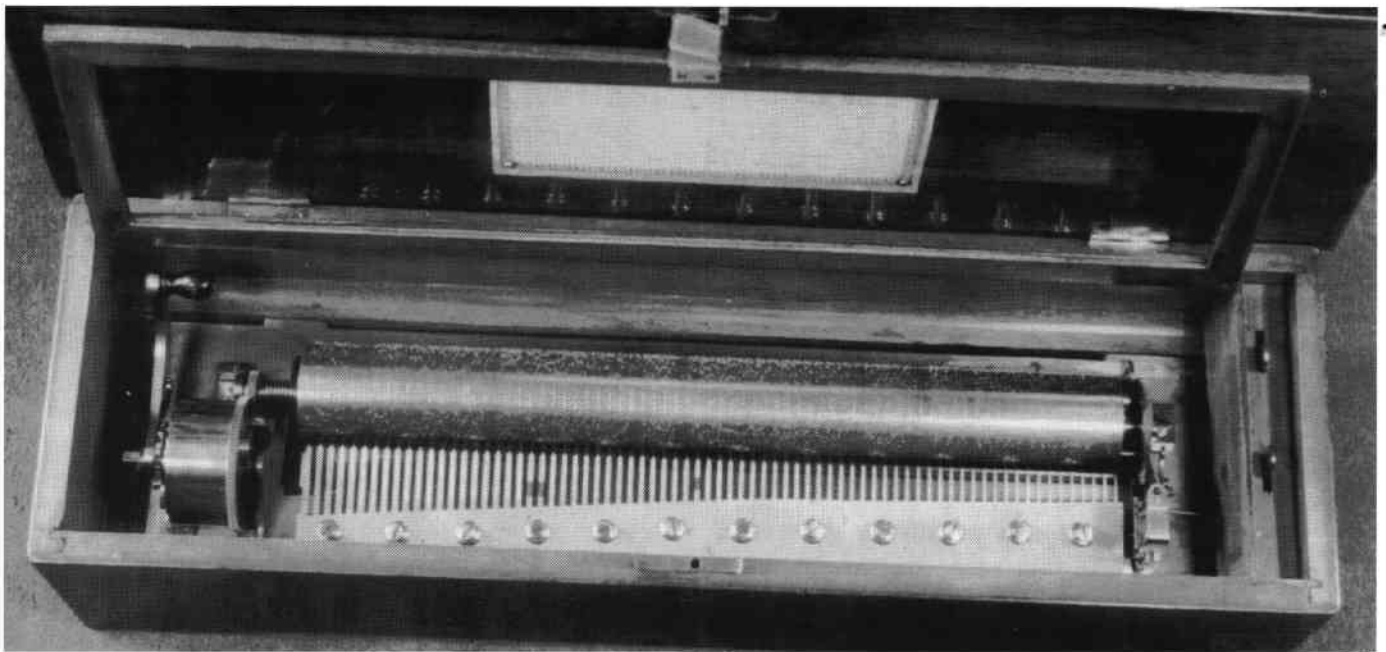


Fig. 6. L'Epée 26925, date about 1861. The marked teeth are *a* 440 and 880Hz. Winder is typical of L'Epée and glass lid covering it is typical of early lever-winds.

stiffness 230. It is pinned to play at .1 inch per second, so tunes last 70 seconds. A small step at tune six level reduces the blow on the cam step for tune one.

Blank code number 6 is stamped on the bass edge of the bedplate and on cylinder and spring details. Serial 9886 is written on the bedplate under the comb and stamped on great wheel, end cap, spring cover and SBI comb base.

This box has an authentic Bremond tune sheet, Fig. 5, and the governor cock is stamped BAB in a circle, but the blank is unusual for Bremond in two respects: the winder has a wooden handle, and the cast iron bedplate is planed to a smooth surface without ridges and has three integral cast legs which are threaded to receive securing screws from under the base, L'Epée style. Also, the treble edge of the bedplate has two tapped holes for fixing a control lever panel. But this movement is conventionally screwed in from front and back, and the control levers are on the usual wooden partition.

The mechanism is a very close fit, lengthwise, in its $21\frac{3}{4}$ by $8\frac{1}{2}$ inch (55 by 21cm) case as seen in Fig. 4, and the serial number is written underneath in Bremond's large, untidy figures. Both lid and front have three lines of stringing with an enclosed strip of 8mm banding, framing a complex geometric design on the lid only.

The tunes are well assorted, operas providing eleven ranging from an 1805 Beethoven to tune 3 by Gounod and tune 10 by Offenbach, both composed in 1867. *Crispino* makes a good finale. It was quite common practice to place the more vigorous tunes (or the latest hits) first and last.

L'Epée

I think L'Epée made lots of 12-air boxes, with and without bells but seldom 2-per-turn, so serial 26925

is probably typical, see Fig. 6. Made in or soon after 1860, for agent S. Woog, it has a $16\frac{1}{4}$ "=41cm cylinder and 74 comb teeth of which only 73 are used. The *a* teeth, 440Hz, are nos. 21 and 22, with relative stiffness 290. The tune track width is .018" = .46mm which slightly adds to the coarse appearance of the comb. The cylinder setting dots are on tune six. Ideal playing speed is .11" per second so tunes last 56 seconds.

L'Epée made their own blanks; there are no code numbers stamped on any components except no. 14 on the bedplate under the comb, the serial number and 623 on the bass lead, and the serial number on great wheel and cylinder end cap. The cast iron bedplate has integral cast legs and polished tin-plated surface, the movement is fixed in the case by three screws into the legs.

The $24\frac{1}{2}$ by $7\frac{1}{2}$ inch (62 by 19cm) case is completely plain except for two rectangles of stringing on the grained lid. The glass lid covers the winder. Interior French polish is bright red. Serial number 26925 under the case has been partly erased and the agent's number, 3011, added; both numbers with gamme number 623 are on the plain L'Epée style tune sheet, as usual headed *MUSIQUE de GENEVE*. Eight of the tunes are from major operas, all earlier than 1860, the rest are dance tunes including the evergreen *Il bacio* from about 1860.

This box could be accused of rather thumping out some of the tunes, but it gives an excellent and delicate performance of the phantoms dance from Meyerbeer's 1859 opera, *Dinorah*, fully utilizing its groups of teeth tuned to the same pitch – eight groups of 3 teeth and one group of 4. There is no piccolo effect. This compares with a mere two groups of 3 teeth on the Bremond comb apart from the two groups of 4 comprising the piccolo end.



Fig. 7. Tune sheet 6693, stating "12 inches" for its 13-inch cylinder, and with dirt band at top caused, as usual, by one of those Baker-Troll leather lifters. This tune sheet conspicuously lacks the Baker-Troll monogram.

Geo. Baker

One somehow does not associate Geo. Baker – nor Troll, for that matter – with run-of-the-mill twelve-air boxes, so quite likely serial 6693 made in about 1878 is not typical. Its 13" (33cm) cylinder allows only 62 teeth but these are so well utilized that it performs almost as effectively as the Bremond noted above, though without piccolo effect. The single *a* tooth is no. 20, relative stiffness 245. Ideal playing speed is .12" per second so tunes last 50 seconds.

The only blank code number is 5 on bedplate edge and on spring, cylinder and governor components. Serial 6693 is stamped in *all* the usual places, and scribed on bass lead and governor, and written in red chalk under the SBI bedplate.

The case with fine marquetry is 22 by 8½ inches (56 by 22cm) and has 6693 written underneath in 2¾" (7cm) figures, not easy to overlook.

The tune sheet is shown in Fig. 7 and is identical with those seen on Contralto Piccolo boxes noted in Vol. 13, page 91. Interestingly, these boxes have unusual safety checks similar in principle to those later fitted by Geo. Baker. So possibly he made those boxes. Or possibly he did not make this serial 6693 which only has two Geo. Baker clues – the monogrammed glass lid lifter and the frequently seen transfer stuck inside the case, reading Geo. Baker & Co (Late Baker-Troll & Co) Manufacturers/ Geneva, Switzerland. Despite Geo. Baker's known

trick of adding his glass lid lifter to boxes by other makers, I tend to incline to the view (as a cautious Banker would say) that this Baker probably did make serial 6693.

Book re-review

Musical Boxes. A History and an Appreciation. by John E. T. Clark. 3rd edition, 1961. pp264+24pp photos. Geo. Allen & Unwin, 42s. (= 2 guineas).

This book is the first ever written about musical boxes; it describes all types, including automata, with historical background; and its informal style mirrors the author's affection for his subject.

John Clark was born in 1884, apprenticed to Nicole Frères in London on leaving school at age 14 or 15, in 1898 or 1899, and worked under Henri Metert until 1903 or soon after. He then started up on his own as a musical box repairer, at which he had a successful career. His book was first published in 1948, and in 1963 he was a founder-member and first President of our Musical Box Society.

His book has subsequently become a "classic," with the attendant danger of everything in it assumed to be true despite being gleaned from an already distant past, and often at second or third hand. Henri Metert, aged 44 in 1898, had started with Nicole in Geneva at age 11 in 1865 – shortly after the key-wind era and with serial 42,000 probably among Nicole's current 20-per-week production schedule.



MUSIKWERK-FABRIK

HENRI VIDOUDEZ

Sainte-Croix (Schweiz)

Musik und Waaren

Automaten aller art.

FABRIK MARKE

Fig. 8. Vidoudez trade mark. It appeared in their musical boxes as a thin metal pressing with Swiss patent number 6058 added.

Of course his adopted firm was *the very best*, and this unproved message got over powerfully to young Clark. But many salient points did not get across, including the fact that since 1881 the firm had transferred to London with C. E. Brun in charge, and was no longer a significant maker of musical boxes.

Faulty information to Clark is clearly seen in his dating table on page 140: it claims all boxes up to 52,000 were made by Nicole; it gives serial 46,000 made in 1882 whereas serial 45,888 was sold in September 1876; and if it were accurate Nicole's annual output would have varied from 125 to 3,000.

Technical aberrations are mainly between pages 126 and 136, and include . . .

cylinder dividers soldered in position (untrue)
cylinder pins shaved to length with cutting tool (impossible)

six weeks in acid to dissolve pins (normally 48 hours)

These and other technical errors in no way impair the value of the book for the general reader, but for those interested in repair techniques they are seriously misleading and do not want quoting. The book never claimed to be technical, but appreciative; going into a third edition is a mark of its success; and it has the important secondary attraction of recalling public reaction to musical boxes, and to pop *vs* classical music, in the first half of the 20th Century.

Ste. Croix in 1905

A 72-page illustrated guide to Ste. Croix and surroundings, in French, German, and English, was published in 1905 by E. Junod Jr., printer of Ste Croix, price 50 centimes.



Fig. 9. Three of the factories illustrated in the 1905 guide to Ste. Croix.

It describes the local countryside, origins, industry, sport and hotel facilities with some historical background. It lists local facilities, naturally including the Post Office – open from 7am (Winter, 8am) until 8pm, Sundays 7 to 9 and 11 to noon. There were four mail waggons covering four local routes; to l'Auberson, Les Rasses and Bullet, Le Chateau, and about six miles due North to Buttes, quite near Fleurier.

The extensive advertisement section is mainly for local industry and hotels – and of course Suchard chocolate. Full page adverts were taken by P. Jeanrenaud (New gramophone with auto-change), Adrien Lador (small cylinder and disc movements, yearly production over 100,000), Mermod Freres (watches, Stella and Mira disc boxes, Miraphone disc gramophone), Hermann Thorens (cylinder and disc musical boxes, phonographs and gramophones), and, in the best position, E. Paillard & Co (cylinder and interchangeable disc musical boxes, phonographs and disc gramophones, also automatic pianos, metronomes, fancy goods with music and pencil sharpeners).

Disc machines and gramophones superseded cylinder illustrations. Most of the other local makers had smaller adverts, that of Vidoudez usefully incorporating his trade mark, see Fig. 8. Several musical box factories are shown in small drawings, those of Paillard, Vidoudez and Lador reproduced in Fig. 9.

When was it made?

Way back in Oddments 50 I gave dating information for Rivenc boxes and hoped to follow with Bremond. Unfortunately I have found a few contradictions, and so I need more data – serial number and *all* tunes – before I can safely report.

I also have in hand dating projects for L'Epée, PVF and C. Paillard, and Baker and Troll. Also Ducommun Girod – but for them, only serial numbers higher than 25,000 plus all their lever-winds.

So please help with more data. The recently announced REGISTER has already been helpful, though sadly only a small proportion of boxes so far registered have complete tune lists – without which they are no use for dating. Meanwhile, progress is quite good in dating some of the now obscure popular tunes of the last quarter of the 19th Century. ■

Letters to the Editor



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

Correct address

Apologies to member Etienne Blyelle for getting his address wrong in our last issue. It should have read:-

11, Boulevard du Pont d'Arve,
CH 1205, GENEVA, Switzerland.

From this address he has run CABAM (Conservatoire Autonome des Boites A Musique - autonome means self-governing) since it was founded in 1955. Its object is to accumulate data on all types of musical boxes, and a representative display is always available - including for example the Bistro table described in Vol. 13, Page 230.

The CABAM collection also includes associated literature, records, drawings and photographs.

Five collectors furnish the main support for CABAM, and they stage occasional exhibitions as for example at Montbéliard, 1989-90, which included marking the 150th anniversary of L'Epée. They also issue occasional technical reports, and an annual Bulletin. ■

M. Blyelle letter

Jean-Marie Verheggen writes from Belgium:-

A day or two ago I received the "Music Box", which I always await with impatience, specially for Mr. Bulleid's article which I read with much interest.

In Vol. 15, No. 4 you publish a letter from M. Blyelle, and you add comments in italics. This at first made me laugh a lot, but in fact it astonished me and my slow reaction was because, unfortunately, I am not well acquainted with your language. I felt I would not be the only one to react in this way, and so I was awaiting a correction in the next issue. But there was none, and that is regrettable. So I decided to write to you, hoping you would be able to understand my letter. Am I the only one astonished by your comments?

M. Blyelle is a real expert on musical boxes, certainly on their history but specially also on the technical side. He devotes himself to studying them, and he is always ready, with willing courtesy, to answer all questions put to him and to share his expertise. He spares no effort to learn more about these marvellous instruments, to which most of us devote only a small part of their time.

It is therefore essential to correct

two things in your comments:

1) **His address.** M. Blyelle always writes on paper headed with his name, and always stamps the envelope with his special rubber stamp. So how could you make such a hash of transcribing his address. It is an important address which everyone interested in musical boxes ought to know. M. Blyelle lives at 11, Boulevard du Pont d'Arve (the Arve is a small river), and not 11, Boulevard DuCons Deharve as you have written.

2) **Frankophone.** What does your comment mean? M. Blyelle himself clearly gave you the definition of the word *frankophone*: "people speaking French in Switzerland." In Switzerland several languages are spoken. The Frankophones are those who speak French. (In Belgium also several languages are spoken and I am a Belgian Frankophone because I speak French). Publications of the Conservatoire Autonome des Boites à Musique (CABAM not CABAN) are thus in French and not in "frankophone" which is clearly not a language.

I am surprised at such mistakes in your magazine. I think they need putting right, for the sake of all your readers and a correction for M. Blyelle who deserves more consideration. I believe in plain speaking.

Editors Note: Monsieur Blyelle's letter, Volume 15, No. 4, clearly stated that the information referred to was in "Frankophone" which he says is neither Swiss or French. It therefore must be something else which your editor presumed was a little known language. I was intrigued by Monsieur Blyelle's reference to "Frankophone" and rang the press relations department of the Swiss National Tourist Office. No one there was able to explain the meaning of the word which we now know simply means someone who speaks French in a country outside of France. ■

French speaking

Dr. R. le G. Burnett writes from Nottingham:-

With reference to the letter from Blyelle on page 125 of "The Music Box" for Winter 1991, his address is:

11, Boulevard du Pont d'Arve,
Geneva.

The term Frankophone simply means French speaking and I have frequently come across it in Belgium to distinguish the French speakers from the Flemish speakers. I think it might have been clearer if he had said that Caban is not restricted to France or Switzerland but is intended for French speakers in either country.

Blyelle spends a good part of his time in Paris, so anything he writes will be in normal French. ■

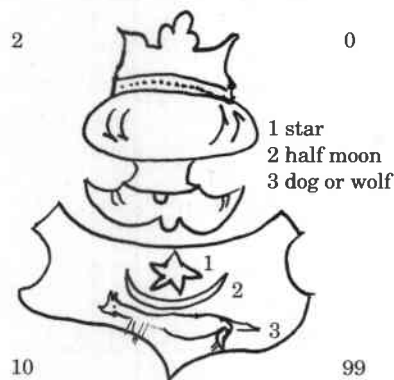
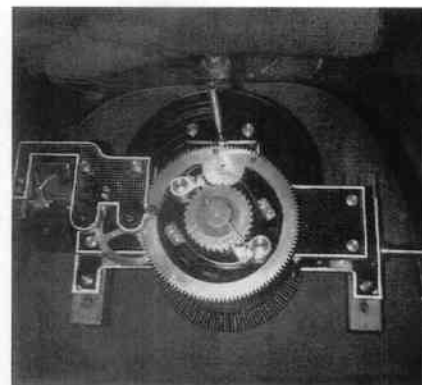
Help required

Claus W. Nitschke writes from In der Steinbreite 55, 3000 Hannover 91, Germany:-

For several years I have had a large upright disc box with only a spring mechanism in it, comb assembly missing and no discs. The size of the discs must have been approximately 60 centimeters in diameter. The whole is as high as the 62.5 cent. Polyphon style Mignon. The spring assembly is unusual and no other one is of the same shape in my collection. The spring is marked as shown below. Does anyone know which maker it was?

Also below is a Polaroid of the restored spring assembly. Perhaps one reader can help and has an idea of who manufactured it.

The storage is of that type when you open the door it opens from right to left turning vertically! ■



Early Austrian clock

George E. Speake writes from California:-

I usually make a trip to England in September and try to get to your Fall Meeting. This year September and October we were on a fascinating cruise around South America. Would you believe in Uruguay I found an early Austrian clock, about 1830, with a rare music box in the base. The music box was made by "Willenbacher & Rzeritschek" in Prague, very fine comb of 90 teeth and in good condition. It is one of those early reverse combs, with the square shoulder teeth. ■

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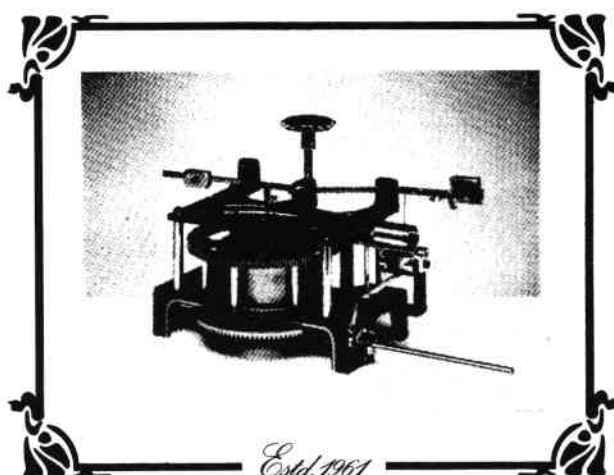
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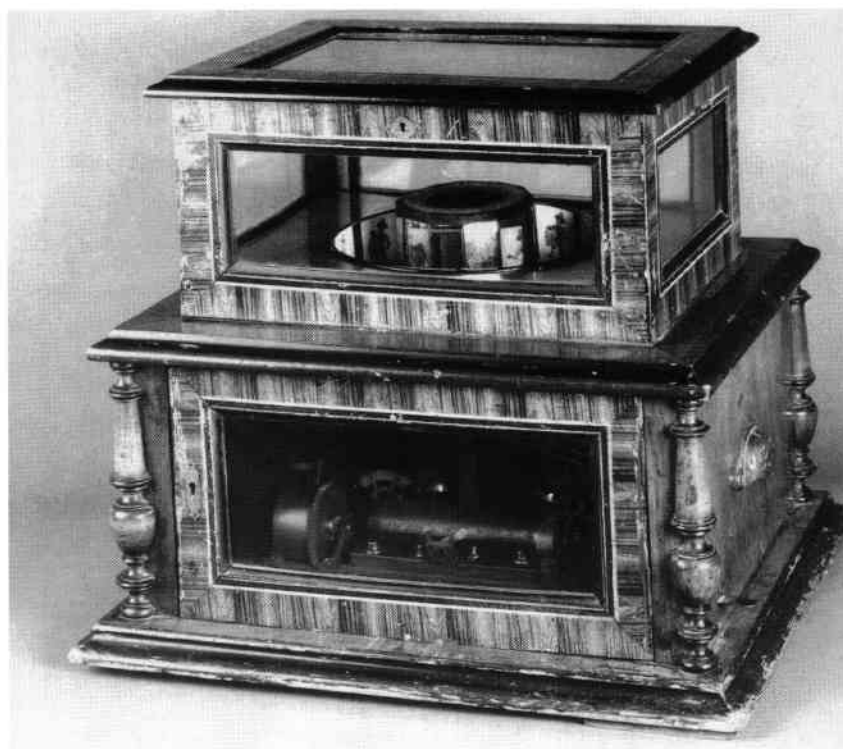
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Editorial copy **must** be submitted at least

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The Musical Box Centre

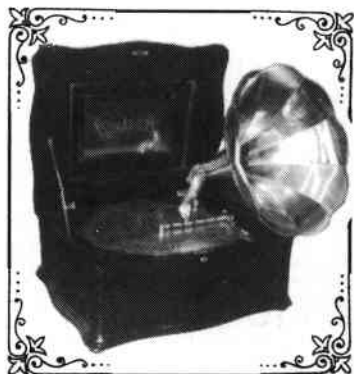
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