

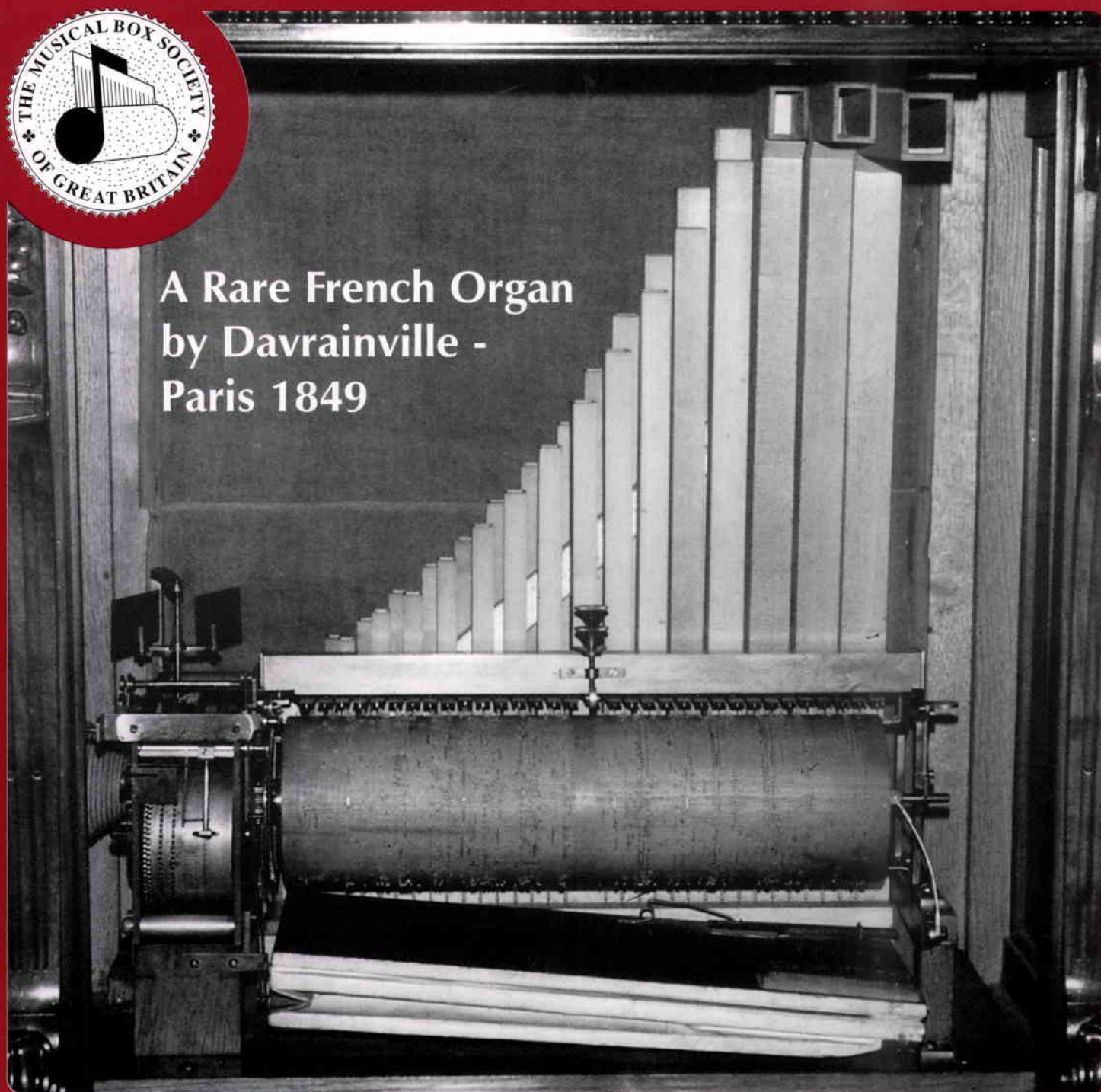
# *The Music Box*

Volume 19 Number 6 Summer 2000  
Edited by Alan Pratt

*An International Journal of Mechanical Music*



**A Rare French Organ  
by Davrainville -  
Paris 1849**



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

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# Out of sight - but not out of mind

Putting an edition of *The Music Box* together is a bit like doing a jigsaw puzzle. You start with (hopefully) a lot of pieces and fit them together to make a complete picture.

Sometimes a particular item catches the eye and makes one think about how the magazine could be improved. One such piece, which is included in this issue, came from one of our American members, Bill Kromer Jr. Reading this description of organ building, I was reminded that we do not often receive information about the activities of our overseas members.

We are an 'international' publication. Our membership covers the US, Europe, the Far East and Australia/New Zealand, and yet we do not hear from these more distant members as much as we would like.

At the recent Spring Meeting, reported elsewhere in this issue, we were delighted to welcome three American members who came over especially for the meeting from New York. We have also had recent visits from members in Australia and New Zealand and, whilst it is clearly not possible to make trips like this very often, we would like to hear from you and learn about your local activities.

Our Collectors Showcase feature is one way in which you can tell us about your interests. This could be a regular feature but we do not get enough items to make it so.

Another way in which our members can keep in touch is through the MBSGB website. Wherever you live in the world, you can get onto our site for the price of a local phone call. If you haven't visited the site recently (or even at all) you will find several

new features. One especially worthy of note is the bulletin board feature where you can ask questions and other members can post possible answers. If you are doing some research or seeking information about some obscure instrument give the website a try. The combined knowledge of our members is truly incredible and here's a way you can tap into this wonderful pool of wisdom.

So, if you are reading this in a country far from the UK, please don't feel isolated or abandoned. You are in our thoughts and we do like to hear from you. ■

*We are still looking for volunteers to host our Spring & Autumn meetings in 2001. If you want to know what is involved or how you can help, talk to Roy Ison on 01522 540406, e-mail: [ison@bight.demon.co.uk](mailto:ison@bight.demon.co.uk)*



Alan Pratt

The Journal of the Musical Box Society of Great Britain Volume 19 Number 6 Summer 2000

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The Editor welcomes articles, letters and other contributions for publication in the Journal. The Editor expressly reserves the right to amend or refuse any of the foregoing.

Any contribution is accepted on the understanding that its author is solely responsible for the opinions expressed in it and the publication of such contributions does not necessarily imply that any such opinions therein are those of the Society or its Editor.

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### Front Cover

Our cover picture shows a rare Davrainville barrel organ (Serial No. 875) dating back from 1849. Made in Paris by Honore Davrainville this organ is one of a few instruments by this maker that has survived. More details of the organ and its maker in an article by Roy Ison on page 146.



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## Forthcoming Meetings

### Autumn Meeting

**- September 8th - 10th**

Venue: The Langston Hotel - Havant.

*Note: name change of hotel - previously called the Post House.*

Local organisers: Barry Wilson and Brian Chapman.

### Friday 8th September - Evening

Evening meal available at the Hotel, also a short walk to a waterside pub, 'The Ship'.

Lantern show to be given by Roz and Terry Longhurst, and also a film show by Barry Wilson.

### Saturday 9th September Registration

Scenic coach route to Royal Armouries for a guided tour; lunch available.

By coach to Barry Wilson's collection, to be followed by talks in the Village Hall (just next door). The talks to include one by Nigel O'Shaunessy on making an organette.

In the evening, at the Hotel, there will be a table top sale followed by the Society Dinner. The entertainment will be Peter and Joyce "A bicycle made for one or two". A raffle will be held; any prizes will be gratefully accepted.

*Any member who would like to give a short "Show and Tell" on one of their favourite pieces please bring it along.*

### Sunday 10th September

Various talks - to date to include: Peter Howard on Rebuilding and stencilling organettes.

Paul Bellamy on Musical Jugs, Ted Brown to give an interesting talk on something special.

This is going to be another exciting and interesting weekend; be sure to make a note of the date and book early. *Booking Form with this issue of Music Box.*

### Sussex Open Day - Saturday, 22nd July

Contact Ted Brown for details of this event. Tel: 01403 823533

# President's Message

It's a funny old world. Being a member of our sister society, the Musical Box Society International, as well as our own, and having close friends in both, it is interesting to see we have the same little problems with the supposed need for change. Change upsets some of us, as does lack of change. We need to go with modernisation and with the wishes of you, the member. I do not believe in fixing it when it is not broken, but we need to continue expanding our topics of information to interest you all. Whether your interest is very expensive musical boxes, modern novelties, videos or CD, we want to cater for your interest. To do this we need your input. What do you enjoy - reading, writing, meeting other members, collecting, buying, selling? Let me or the other committee members know if we are missing you out.

As you know, Kay and I organise the Chancetonbury Ring get-togethers every three months, and the Summer and Christmas Open Days at our house. These are nearly always fully booked very shortly after being advertised in the

Journal, and places are made for new members asking to attend. These meetings along with other meetings arranged by several members around the country are an ideal starting point for would-be collectors. With any mechanical musical instrument the main attraction must be its sound, then perhaps its rarity.

Many new members contact me asking for the name of the "best" sort of box to collect. I always suggest they should never make a decision on an instrument until they have heard it, and if you are wondering what to collect, listen to as many as possible before getting a cheque book out. It is at these meetings where you have an ideal opportunity to see and hear instruments and to seek advice from other members.

The hard bound 'Tune Sheet' book has sold out and the soft cover edition is selling well. So contact Richard Kerridge, our Treasurer, if you want a copy, and remember to make the cheque out to M.B.S.G.B. *Have you visited our web site yet?* - [www.mbsgb.org.uk](http://www.mbsgb.org.uk) ■

**Ted Brown**

## Meetings Reports

Maurice and Wendy Adams hosted an excellent meeting at their home on March 4th.

Twenty members came along and most brought at least one instrument, so the house was full of music for the whole day.

Especially admired was an Imhof barrel organ brought by Bob Minney. Maurice's player piano was given a good airing with some limited edition ragtime rolls played by Nicholas Simons who also entertained on his Tansbar roll playing accordion.

Sustained by an excellent lunch, the music went on well into the afternoon with a variety of organettes, cylinder boxes and a Triola. A feast in every sense of the word. (See picture, page 159).

Well done Maurice and Wendy.

## AGM & Auction

Just a reminder that the Society AGM and Auction will be held on Saturday, 3rd June, at Kettering.

Full details of the venue and programme can be found in the last issue of Music Box.

### Barrel Instrument Day - 4th June

*With regard to the meeting planned for the day after the AGM (Sunday) there is a correction to the information printed last time. The meeting is for Barrel Instruments not just barrel pianos. There may be a problem for pianos on carts as the access door is only 41.5 inches wide. If you need more information ring Dorothy Robinson on 91673 843000 or Kevin McElhone on 01536 523988.*

## Spring Meeting

For our Spring Meeting this year we went to Southwell in Nottinghamshire, an old town dominated by Southwell Minster.

Early arrivals on Friday had the opportunity of a guided tour of the Minster with its wealth of intricate stone carvings and beautiful stained glass. Some members used quiet moments in the busy weekend's programme to make further visits to the Minster as there was really too much to take in on a single visit.

As usual, Friday was an informal evening, and after dinner we had interesting presentations from Arthur Cunliffe, Roy Ison and Nicholas Simons.



Fig.1.

Arthur played the first two cylinder boxes to demonstrate the way the same tune can be rendered on different boxes (Fig.1). This un-named box played The Waltz to the Duc de Reichstag by Strauss (the elder). For comparison Roy Ison played his F. Nicole box with over twice the number of teeth on the comb. Even allowing for this difference, the smaller box put up a most creditable performance. ➤



Fig.2. Nicholas Simons with the Non-plus-ultra.

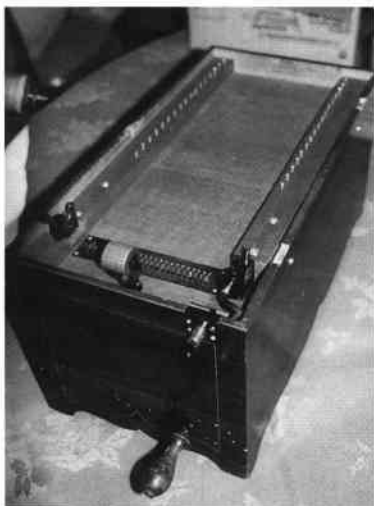


Fig.3.

Our second presentation was by Nicholas Simons of a Non-plus-ultra organette by Erhlich (Fig.2). This 20 note instrument plays an endless card band tensioned by a 'jockey' roller supported by a series of headed pins (nails?) (Fig.3) along the length of the cabinet. As yet without its lid, this unusual organette was, it seems, an early Erhlich experiment which finally led to the Ariston. Extremely compact, this instrument was very pleasant to the ear.

Saturday dawned bright and sunny (we seem to have a positive effect on the weather for our MBSGB meetings!) but we were inside to enjoy two quite different presentations.



Fig.4. Dorothy Robinson with her presentation on bells &amp; bell restoration.

Dorothy Robinson started the day on a subject close to her heart - Bells and Bell Ringing. Illustrated with a selection of bells from her own collection, she went on to



Fig.5. Alan Pell tunes his milk bottle organ.

describe some of the work which has been done to bring back to life some of the bells around the country which have remained silent for so long. She concluded with an interesting video showing restoration work and some of the bell towers she has visited around the world.

After coffee we were pleased to welcome well known organ builder Alan Pell. His name appears on organs throughout the world and it was most interesting to hear an expert talking on this complex subject (Fig.5). In a presentation lasting less than an hour even the most knowledgeable speaker can only cover a limited range of topics, but Alan managed to cover some of the theory of pipes, the voicing and differing tones obtained from different configurations, and to let us hear both traditional and microchip controlled organs (Fig.6). A fascinating talk that left us



Fig.6. Alan Pell with one of his 20 note organs.

wanting more - hopefully, we can persuade Alan to come and talk to use again very soon.

On Saturday afternoon we went to the cinema - but a cinema with a difference. This one is The Regal in Newark which seats just 75 and hides almost anonymously among houses. Brian Richardson, the co-founder, gave a little background to the cinema which houses the Compton cinema organ which was previously in The Savoy in Lincoln.

We were then treated to a concert on the organ by Charles McNicol, (Fig.7) recalling days gone by when the best seat in the house was 3/9d (about 37p) for which you got two films and a newsreel! Charles demonstrated his talents to the full when playing for a silent Charlie Chaplin film. Few people still have the skill to match music to action, and Charles proved he is still a master at this most difficult of playing skills.

The Regal uses its concerts to raise money for charity, and the Society presented a cheque to Brian Richardson for the Nottinghamshire Air Ambulance.

From there it was on to Ossington Church to hear a rare hand wound barrel organ still in regular use for Sunday hymn singing. As a bonus we were welcomed by the bells of the church in a short demonstration of bell ringing. A real delight.

Our traditional Society dinner was followed by another piece of delightful nostalgia - a Victorian magic lantern show by Juliet and David Shankland.

Using only early hand painted slides, Juliet and David (Fig.8) recreated the magic of a century ago when audiences marvelled at this latest technological wizardry. David's introduction painted a wonderful picture of early lanterns exploding through the use of oxygen and hydrogen for illumination but, though not quite so lethal, the show went with a bang, and was a fitting end to a varied and busy day.

Sunday was a real treat for anyone with an interest in clocks and watches which, to judge from the attendance, meant almost everyone at the weekend meeting. This visit was to the headquarters of The British Horological Institute ➤

at Upton Hall. As well as providing training in all aspects of horology, Upton Hall houses a magnificent collection of clocks and watches. All are fine examples of the art - many are of historical significance.

Waiting to greet us as we arrived was Keith Harding, well known in the MBSGB, but on this occasion acting in his role as Past President of the BHI. Together with Geoffrey Evans, Keith guided us around the

collection imparting a wealth of information on the way. We marvelled at the workmanship on everything from the small watch to turret clocks, and, through working models, understood a little more of the workings of escapements.

The collection covers everything from the earliest timepieces through to an atomic clock taking in the works of such masters as Tompion,

Graham and Harrison along the way. Two hours was much too short a time in which to take in everything on display, but our thanks go to Keith and Geoffrey, and the BHI for allowing us to share their wonderful display.

Another successful meeting, thanks to the efforts of Dorothy Robinson and Roy Ison. We now all wait eagerly for September and the Autumn meeting. ■



Fig.7. Charles McNicol at the Compton Cinema organ.



Fig.8. David & Juliet Shankland.

## Chantonbury Ring

The March gathering found Anthony Bulleid in fine form, following his most professional editing and launch of the Society's Tune Sheet Book. On this occasion Anthony demonstrated a late 12 air hymn box which, despite a most misleading auction catalogue description, turned out to be one of those unexpected gems we would all like to stumble across. Getting the cylinder of this so called 'inoperable' box to turn was merely a matter of straightening a bent governor blade but to reach the demonstrated standard of play had required much additional work. In addition to the restoration work we would normally expect, an embossed keyhole escutcheon had to be repaired by delicate silver soldering of broken sections.

Roland Fisher, whose grandfather on his mother's side was one of the Junods, entertained us with the background stories of two cylinder boxes from his collection. The first, a two air box with 41 teeth, had been

given to him, new, in 1934. The interest created by its rendition of Radetzky March had set Roland on the collecting path. The next box, found by an eagle-eyed Council dustman, just missed becoming a land-fill subject. Dated about 1840, the key-wound four-air movement housed in plain fruit wood case, required a re-pin and one replacement tooth. As we listened to the wealth of musical decoration surrounding the one unknown and three Handel pieces, we wondered what other musical gems must have been lost forever, in the back of a refuse cart!

To think constantly of new themes for meetings is a daunting task. It was inspirational that the March subject should be 'Jigs, Reels and Hornpipes'. The lively nature of this type of music acted as a very effective antidote to a any possibility of drowsiness from the British Summer Time loss of sleep the previous night. More than twenty mechanical music instruments were used by way of illustration, the

most prolific piece being 'The Sailors Hornpipe'.

The popularity of Chantonbury is well deserved but this does bring its own problems. Despite the generous amount of space available and the hospitality of our hosts, there is a limit to the number of guests who can be accommodated. Requests at attend meetings have to be treated on a 'first come - first served' basis. To avoid disappointment, it is essential to make an early application.

The subject for the meeting on 28th May is 'All things Royal and Regal' so, if this takes your fancy, get on the telephone now! ■

*The next Chantonbury Ring is on Sunday, 28th May, and the following one on Sunday, 20th August. Contact Ted Brown for details - Tel: 01403 823533*

**A Date for your Diary**  
*Christmas Meeting - Saturday 2nd December at St. Mary's Church Hall, Horbury, nr Wakefield. Hosted by John and Joyce Turner, Tel: 01924 272418.*

*Mechanical  
music picture  
gallery*

## Website News...

**www.mbsgb.org.uk**

**The Society web site has now been up and running for several months and would appear to be a success with in excess of 200 visitors each week.**

The aims of the site are:

- To stimulate interest in mechanical music
- To pass on information about the Society
- To attract new members
- To give news and information to members
- To point people in the right direction who wish to find out where to buy musical boxes, have them repaired or visit collections

The last item may also create business for our professional members.

Our web site (for those who have not yet visited it) has two versions - one which is designed for quick easy access and a second which requires a special plug-in for your browser called flash to make it work; if you do not have this plug-in it can be quickly downloaded, free of charge, via a link on our web site.

This second version contains movement and some musical box tunes which you can listen to provided you have speakers attached to your computer.

### What's New

We now have a notice board on the site. The idea is that if anyone (member or not) would like an answer to a musical box related question, it may be typed onto the notice board and anyone with relevant knowledge may reply to the enquiry via the web site. We have already been able to help several people during the first few weeks of starting the notice board section.

We also now have a gallery (and here we need your help). The idea is that if you would like to send me a picture of any instrument in your collection with a brief description, it will be placed in the gallery. For security reasons this will be done anonymously unless you would like to have your name added.

I am hoping to build up a library of several hundred photographs on the site over a period of time. This could then become a very useful on-line reference library.

If you have any other ideas or suggestions for our web site please let me know. One idea is to have a stolen mechanical music section, but we would need a willing helper to run this and to supply information to us.

### Links

We are arranging several links to other useful web sites and always ask that we have a return link to us. If you have a web site please e-mail us so that we may include your site address on a reciprocal basis.

Particular interest would be with suppliers, collections, auction houses and related organisations (our e-mail address for this is [links@webtechnic.co.uk](mailto:links@webtechnic.co.uk))

*The address for photographs for the gallery is Bob Ducat Brown, Acorn House, 24 Birch Grove, Oaklands, Welwyn, Herts AL6 0QP*



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## Auction Report

By Christopher Proudfoot

The sale at Christie's, South Kensington, on April 6th reflected continuing interest in good musical boxes, especially unrestored ones.

Top price was £8,812 for a Paillard slotted cylinder interchangeable box on table. As the cylinders were only 9 inches long, and the mechanical curiosity of the slotted system means a wide gap between tunes, this price was much more than expected - but the piece was in lovely 'untouched' condition.

A Reymond Nicole box playing six airs (a rare feature for this maker) made £3,055 - this also looked pretty much untouched apart from a re-pinned cylinder.

As rare, if only for its maker's name, was a four-overture box by Humbert Broliet. The case had been titivated, but the movement was as found, and a re-pin will make it a very fine box indeed. It still managed to bring £3,760.

Small, rare and delightful was a four-air musical box that was halfway between being a 'cartel' and 'snuff'. Its 5 inch cylinder played four jolly dances exquisitely, it had a side-wind spring like a cartel but front control buttons like a snuff, and also deep lid sides like a snuff box. It changed hands at £1,762.

Another oddity was a mandolin Bremond, in a glass lidded carved case of a type associated by Ord-Hume with Heller - and a prominent Nicole Frères zither attachment and transfer. £2,232 bought this.

Needing some damper work, but nothing major, was a sublime harmony tremolo with a 17 inch cylinder. It was one of the 'busiest' sounding boxes I have heard for a long time, and seemed reasonable at £1,762.

Of more recent origin was a Bacigalupo barrel organ from the 1970s (it played the 'River Kwai March', making it definitely post-1957) which sold for £5,287.

Finally, the old favourite, a 19½" polyphon, made £4,465, suggesting that these are beginning to edge their way up again.

*Editor's Note: Prices quoted are inclusive of Buyers Premium @ 17½%. ■*

## Archive Corner - Two

**I**n this second article in the series I would like to discuss Reprint booklets.

These fall into three types, Commercially produced, Society produced or Photocopies of originals.

The most important thing to remember about our hobby is that NOBODY knows everything there is to know about this complex subject of automatic mechanical musical instruments or even, indeed, everything about a small area of the hobby such as player pianos or cylinder musical boxes.

This therefore means that it is VITAL that we share the information that we have with other people. I have always thought it very selfish when people have original printings of old tune lists or instrument catalogues but

simply keep the information to themselves.

If you want to recoup the vast sums of money (?) you paid for this literature then why don't you have, say, 10 copies of it photocopied and bound so that you may (1) recoup some of your outlay; (2) distribute the information to others; (3) in effect you are also making sure that if your house is burnt to the ground the information still survives and you might even be able to get a copy back from someone! (4) you will also make good friends who will often copy items in their own collection to exchange with you.

I am happy to copy any booklet held in the Archives for exchange for other literature that we do not already have. If you have something please send me a copy of the front cover and

details of how many pages and I will try to find something to suit you in exchange.

The main sources of reprinted information has been Vestal Press and A.M.R. in the USA and the G.F.F.S.M German Society who regularly issue facsimile copies of rare old original booklets.

The MBSGB often did this in the 1970s as part of the normal magazine, so do consult your index (available from John Powell) to find out which back issues you should buy.

The old catalogues give details of many instruments which have not survived and also help to identify something you have in your collection as far as model number or perhaps date of production goes.

So now you know how useful the Archives are please write to me enclosing a S.A.E. for a list of reprint booklets currently available to be copied. ■ **Kevin McElhone**



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# Hick of a Problem

*A restoration project by Paul Bellamy - Part 2*

## The Worm Drive

The worm was so badly worn that it needed excessive pressure to drive the also badly worn worm wheel (Fig.6). The first turn of the worm had never been in engagement and was therefore not worn. The worm shaft was set up in the lathe and the worn section reduced to a parallel bar. The worm shaft was then cut in the middle of the turned section. A piece of brass was then turned to about 10% longer, bored to the reduced diameter with the outside diameter slightly larger than the worm o/d. This piece was then soldered onto a mandrel (Fig.7). The worm had 2.5 turns per inch and had a 90° V thread. Few lathes have gear trains capable of less than four turns per inch. The photographs show how step milling in the lathe can achieve a satisfactory result. With the mandrel clamped in the lathe between 3-jaw chuck and a rotating centre, a square ended mill was set at 45 degrees on the cross slide. Each milling step was made for  $\frac{1}{40}$  turn of the chuck and 0.025 inches traverse of the lead screw, which equates to 2.5 turns per inch. (A strip of paper with 40 divisions wrapped around the chuck is a simple alternative to a dividing head). The job took about an hour plus another half hour to smooth the thread profile with the lathe turning at its slowest speed. The new thread was then machined to the length of reduced part of the original worm. The ends were then covered in solder paste and fitted into the brass spool. The assembly was clamped in the lathe between chuck and centre ensuring that the new and old parts of the screw formed a continuous spiral (Fig.8). Using a dial gauge the assembly was rotated and checked for alignment before sweating up with solder and rechecked for alignment. Allow room for expansion by easing off the tail stock clamp.

Both the worm shaft bearings were worn, these were turned down and sleeved in a similar manner.

The outer bearing sleeve was made from brass bar split in half and soldered together before boring to size with its o/d slightly over size (Fig.8). The two halves were then unsoldered, re-soldered in position and turned down to size. The worm has a pitch of two and half inches. The completed shaft is shown in Fig.9.

## The Barrel

The original barrel was a disappointment. There had been 10 tunes of considerable complexity, starting with the Sailor's Hornpipe. The drive end was very worn and saturated with grease. The remote end was riddled with wood worm. Over the years, pins had been replaced with different sizes of

brass wire. With 10 tunes there was little space between pins. For most of its life the barrel had been used out of alignment with the tails causing the tips to wear L-shaped. Pins had even been removed and replaced upside down, and these were also worn in the same way. Most pins were loose due to the wood having dried out and, when played, became displaced. Painstaking attempts to replace worn pins with new ones caused the barrel joints to split. This was fixed by using chipboard screws, placed so as to avoid pinned areas at two per panel at both ends, countersunk and filled with wood filler. It seemed that, towards the end, only one or two tunes were eventually used because these had some pins

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*Few lathes have gear trains capable of less than four turns per inch.*

---



Fig.6. The worn worm. Setting the end mill for alignment.

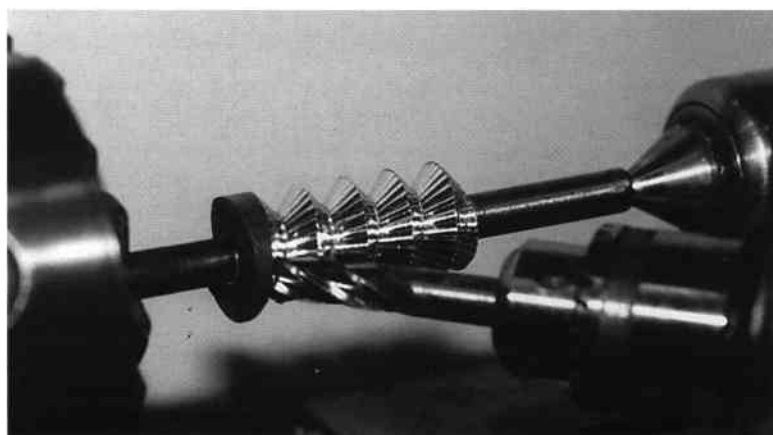


Fig.7. Step milling the new worm.

that were so thick they covered more than one tune track. Many original pin holes were so distorted that it was not easy to decide which tune track the pin was supposed to play. Thus, trying to realign pins to play their original and mostly incomprehensible tunes was a nightmare both musically and technically. The good thing about this wear was that the Hicks had earned its keep during its long life. The bad part was that it needed a new barrel for street use. A new barrel was needed urgently. This was done in the same manner as described in John Young's article. I am fortunate enough to have a milling machine and dividing head so was able to mill the 48 toothed drive cog. Also, I decided that eight tunes would be easier to pin than 10. Original pins were flat brass wire 0.040ins wide by 0.020ins thick. The new pins made out of brass wire rolled to give 0.040ins. The thickness is not critical.

Standard 1mm wire gives good results but 0.8mm gives more or less the original dimensions when rolled. The lathe makes a simple rolling mill by clamping a piece of, say, one inch bar between chuck and rotating centre. A ball race clamped in the cross slide and parallel to the bar is wound to produce a gap just less than the thickness of the wire. With the lathe on back-gear speed, a length of wire is fed into the gap. A micrometer and adjustment of the gap does the rest. Hey presto!

### And finally

The hammer tails are protected against reverse rotation by means of the screw thread which attaches the drive handle with the worm shaft (Fig.1). A tight fit would cause untold damage since the key frame was so weak. A steel ratchet wheel was made about 1/4 inch at the periphery. It was hollowed on one side to leave 1/16 inch. Two small



Fig.11. Hicky in action. Not the author in drag but his wife playing Mabel, Christie's young friend.

screws attach it to the worm. A small beech ratchet was made which is encased in a thin brass bracket and attached to the front panel with one screw. The ratchet is gravity operated by a 3/4 inch hole filled with lead to engage when the handle is unwound. I can now let both children (and adults) 'have a go'. It is surprising how often they turn the handle anti-clockwise even when shown.

Hicky got his or her first airing at the Waldkirch Festival in Germany, 1999. Since then there have been many other showings at the school, village fetes and a BOGA event. The excitement for me is the surprising amount of interest shown in this little instrument despite its current limitation of only eight tunes. The Waldkirch local paper did a short article and an amateur radio club has done a video interview for its members. The story of young Christie makes the eight tunes last a long time. "Would you build one for me?" or "where can I get one?" has set me thinking. Perhaps Hicky will one day have some siblings.

*"Would you  
build one  
for me?"...*



Fig.8. Worm soldered up. Outer bearing ready to solder and turn to size.



Fig.9. The finished shaft.

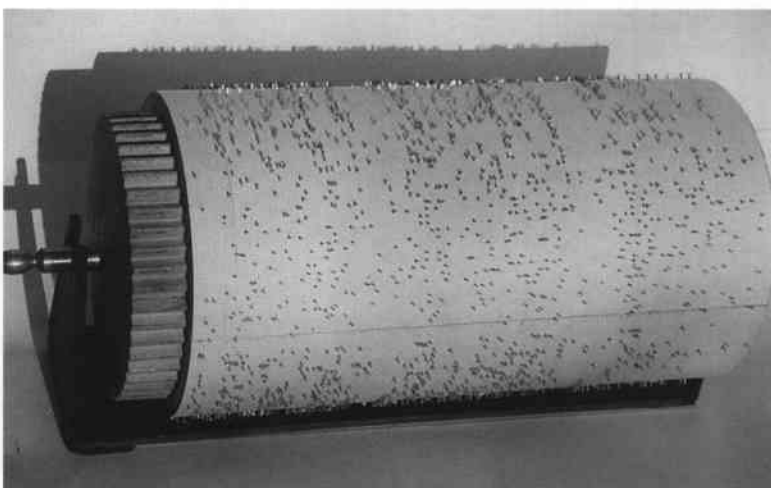


Fig.10. The new drum.

### Post Script

*Can anyone tell me about Hicks piano no.296? Any details about previous ownership, use and age would be most welcome. Also, any article or information whatsoever on the Hicks family.*

*Anyone having any information please contact Paul on 01634 252079. ■*

# Jean-Honore Davrainville

- A fine 19th century French Organ Builder  
by Roy Ison

**J**ean-Honore Davrainville was a French organ builder working in Versailles in about 1777. In 1784 he had a son, also called Jean-Honore, and he seemed to have inherited his father's skills as an organ builder. By the time he was 13 years old he had built his first serinette, and at the age of 15 his father sent him to have instruction on musical arrangement with the organist grandson of Francois Couperin.

In the early 19th century the organ building business was moved to Paris where Jean-Honore junior gained a reputation as a leading organ builder. In 1806 he built his first 26 key table organ which was exhibited in the Louvre.

The son carried on building mechanical barrel organs until about 1840 when it is thought that he passed the business on to his foreman P. Kelsen who, unfortunately, died soon afterwards around 1842, leaving his eldest son to carry on the work. Davrainville realised that the young boy was not old enough to carry on the business, so he returned and once again built

barrel organs until Kelsen's son could take over the work, this was between 1850-1852.

There is still a lot of research to be done on the life of Honore Davrainville; although it is recorded when he was born, it is not known when or where he died or where he is buried.

The barrel organ shown in the photograph (fig.1) is an organ built by Honore Davrainville. Davrainville always recorded his name, date of manufacture and serial number, usually on the motor mounting plate. The organ illustrated has DAVRAINVILLE PARIS 1849 SERIAL 875 on the motor plate. From the information so far gathered about this maker it would appear that this may well be one of the last organs which he made. The organ has 32 wooden pipes (see fig.2), it has 8 spiral pinned barrels and the mechanism is driven by a large fusee motor (see fig.3). The organ is built into the top of a walnut cabinet, the bottom of the case is used for storage of the barrels (see fig.4).

Each barrel measures 40cm in length and 11.4cm in diameter, 8 revolutions are made for each musical arrangement, giving a

playing time of 5 minutes. The barrels are pinned to play overtures and operatic airs, the arrangements are very lively. The resulting music, typical for Davrainville, is very soft but still gives the impression of an orchestra playing even though the pipes are made of wood and the organ has no stops. A copy of the tune list is shown on page 147.

Other known organs by Davrainville are as follows:

A 32 key organ was sold at Christie's in June 1996 with serial number 603 and dated 1836, together with 5 barrels.

A 26 key contained in a French Empire style clock sold at Christie's in June 1986 with serial number 582 and dated 1836, together with 5 barrels.

A 26 key contained in a French Empire style clock base with 3 barrels sold at Watlington Place, Maidstone, Kent in a sale held by Christie's in June 1978. No details of either serial number or date.

Utrecht Museum catalogues 4 Davrainville organs, 3 fusee driven and 1 hand operated, the later may have been built by the father. The larger organ has serial number 290 and is dated 1824, the smaller one

*By the time he was 13 years old he had built his first serinette...*



Fig.1.

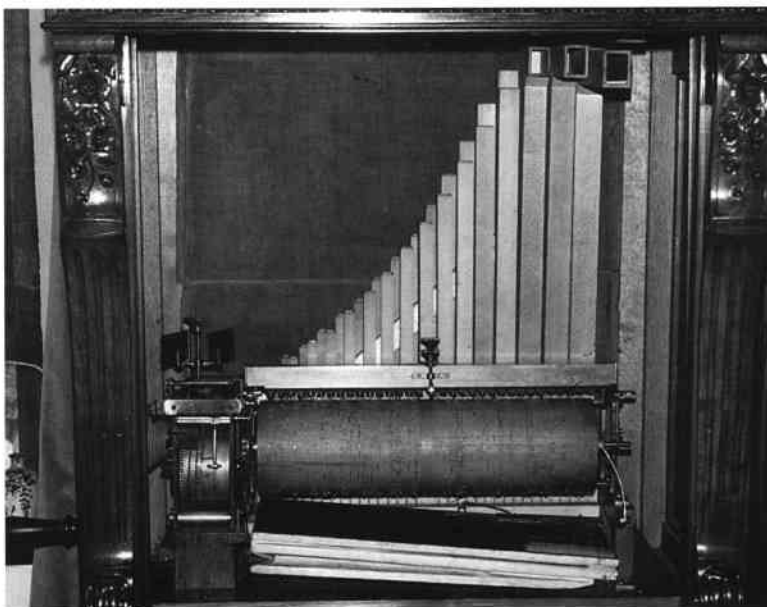


Fig.2.



No.1	Overture	The Barber of Seville	Rossini 1816
No.2	Overture	Semiramie	Rossini 1823
No.3	Overture	The White Lady	Boyeldieu 1825
No.4	Vittraviso	From Somnambula	Bellini 1831
	Son Virgin	Solacca from I Puritani	Bellini 1835
No.5	La Marseillaise		
	E Scatto	From The Somnambula	Bellini 1831
<hr/>			
	Fermez la Paupiere		Donezetti
No.6	Cantalon	Les Mousquetairos	Auber
	Summer	de la Reine	
	Pastoral		Halevy 1846
	Finale		
No.7	The Soupier Suite of Valses		Labitzky
No.8	Marienka		
	Sarir		
	Soupier de Suite of Polka		Strauss

has serial number 387 and is dated 1827; details of the other organs are not recorded in the catalogue.

The Hermitage Museum has one organ, serial number 402, but no further details available.

A 16 key organ with 2 barrels and fusee driven, together with a 10 note serinette playing 9 airs, are both in the Musee de la Musique in Paris.

Although it is known that the serial numbers go up to about 890, very few of the organs by this maker have been recorded. One can assume that about 900 musical instruments were made including bird organs, serinettes, clock base organs and larger barrel organs. So far only about 18 organs are known and recorded. Can any members contact me if they know of the

whereabouts of further examples, so that more information can be recorded on this fine 19th century French organ builder.

*Ref.*

*Bernhard Pin*

*Musical Clocks by A.W.J.G.*

*Ord-Hume* ■

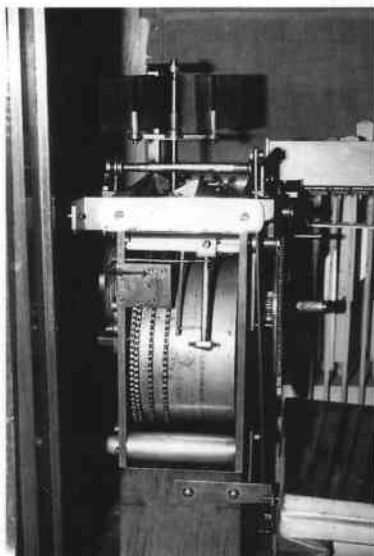


Fig.3.



Fig.4.

*...very few of the  
organs by this  
maker have  
been recorded.*

# English Operetta & the Polyphon

*Top of the Pops - 1900 style by Robin Timms*

**O**ne hundred years ago today, as I write - that is to say on 21st October 1899 - the first performance of *San Toy* was given. It is unlikely that the name 'San Toy' is unfamiliar to Polyphon enthusiasts as no fewer than 12 tunes from this work were arranged and, judging by the frequency with which 'San Toy' discs turn up, they were very popular. I am not aware of any English Operetta from which more tunes were arranged by Polyphon or any of their rivals. If you have evidence to the contrary I would be interested. Now there's a challenge!

To backtrack for a moment to 1896: this was the year that saw the first performance of 'The Geisha'. This quickly became immensely popular - probably the most popular English operetta of the late Victorian and Edwardian era excluding Gilbert and Sullivan. Its appearance happily coincided with the heyday of the Polyphon and, I think, it was the first time that a whole group of tunes from a particular work was issued. In a batch of 20 discs you have a good chance of finding something from this work.

After 'The Geisha' came 'The Circus Girl' (1897), 'A Greek Slave' (1898), 'A Runaway Girl' (1898), *San Toy* (1899 and *Florodora* (1899). Perhaps collectors have tended to underrate discs from these works, but I believe that they were deservedly popular for a number of reasons. The music is attractive and tuneful with an innocent charm and simplicity undiminished by the passage of time; it is ideally suited to the Polyphon; and the arrangements were invariably delightful and imaginative. It is said that Mahler was impressed by a performance of 'The Geisha' during a visit to London. Ronald Corp who conducts a recently

released CD of 'The Geisha' with the New London Orchestra, soloists and chorus, said in an interview on Radio 3 that he would rate some of the music of these operettas more highly than G & S. Certainly 'Star of my Soul' from 'The Geisha' is a superb piece by any standards. Or what could be more charming than 'The Amorous Goldfish'?

All the discs from these works that I have heard are a delight. Look out for them, listen to them, and see if you agree. But to return to 'San Toy'. It seems to me that whereas some works achieve popularity with a couple of particularly memorable tunes, in 'San Toy' we are presented with one musical gem after another. When I looked through the score of 'The Geisha' to see if there were any tunes I might arrange for my 11 inch Polyphon, in addition to the six I already had, I picked out just two: the superb 'Star of my Soul' and the big waltz theme, 'Love' love'. But when I looked through the score of 'San Toy' I felt the urge to add to the seven Polyphon arrangements I had a further 19 items. Now I can enjoy 26 'San Toy' pieces. What a feast! And as today is the centenary of the first performance I think I'll go and play them all when I have finished typing this article. Or perhaps I'll play through the entire score on the piano. Or perhaps I'll just have a rest - my laborious one finger typing is quite tiring! (I know I'm getting tired when I have difficulty locating E on the typewriter keyboard!).

'The Geisha' clearly did Polyphon a lot of good. they even named one of their models 'The Geisha Polyphon', and up to the turn of the century items from English operetta were among the most popular discs. But by 1900 the heyday was coming to an end. No English operetta after 'San Toy' and 'Florodora, as far as the evidence I have suggests, received



11 inch Polyphon no. 95499 with disc 2743 - *San Toy*: Rhoda and her Pagoda

nearly as much attention as these earlier works. Five tunes from Leslie Stuart's 'The Silver Slipper' (1901) were arranged, of which disc 2771 (see below) is a superb example of the arranger's art, but these are less commonly encountered. No doubt there are other examples from English operetta that I have not come across, especially in this later period. Perhaps you can add to the appended listing, or perhaps you would care to do a listing for other sizes or makes.

The main purpose of this article has been to pay tribute to the composers and Polyphon arrangers of so much delightful music and, if necessary, to reinstate these discs in the collector's estimation.

In the following lists numbers beginning with 1 are 15½" Polyphon arrangements; numbers beginning with 2 are 11" Polyphon arrangements; numbers beginning with 6 are 12¼" Regina (peripheral drive) arrangements which, in centre drive format are interchangeable with 11" Polyphon; numbers beginning with 9 are my own arrangements for 11" Polyphon (or 11" & 12¼" Regina). ■

- probably the most popular English operetta of the late Victorian and Edwardian era excluding Gilbert and Sullivan.

**The items are listed in the order in which they appear in the work where known.**

**The Geisha (1896)**

1659	Happy Japan	Sidney Jones
1662	2469 Jack's the Boy	Lionel Monckton
1770	2470 The Amorous Goldfish	Sidney Jones
1796	Kissing Duet	Sidney Jones
1758	2471 If you will come to tea	Sidney Jones
1869	2504 A Geisha's Life	Sidney Jones
1656	Chon Kina	Sidney Jones
	9058 Star of my Soul	Sidney Jones
	6181 Chin Chin Chinaman	Sidney Jones
1658	9059 Love, love	Sidney Jones
1657	The Interfering Parrot	Sidney Jones
1769	2472 The Jewel of Asia	James Philp

**The Circus Girl (1897)**

1661	A Simple Little String	Lionel Monckton
1727	2479 Waltz	Ivan Caryll

**A Greek Slave (1898)**

1984	Confidential	Sidney Jones
10011	2533 Waltz	Sidney Jones
1985	I should rather like to try	Lionel Monckton
10086	The Girl of my Heart	Sidney Jones
1986	2521 I want to be popular	Lionel Monckton
1987	I'm a Naughty Girl	Lionel Monckton

**Dorothy**

10009	2530 Be wise in time	Albert Cellier
10008	2529 You swear to be good and true	Albert Cellier
10010	2531 Queen of my Heart	Albert Cellier

**A Runaway Girl (1898)**

10016	The Sly Cigarette	Lionel Monckton
10017	2541 Sea-girl land of my home	Ivan Caryll
10018	2542 Not the Sort of Girl	Lionel Monckton
10019	2543 The Singing Girl	Ivan Caryll
	6298 No-one in the World like You	Alfred Cammeyer
10020	2544 Follow the man from Cook's	Lionel Monckton
10021	2545 Far away o'er the sea	Ivan Caryll
10022	2546 Soldiers in the Park	Lionel Monckton
10023	2547 Beautiful Venice	Ivan Caryll
10024	6291 The Boy Guessed Right	Lionel Monckton
	6293 The Piccaninies	Ivan Caryll
	6292 Society	Lionel Monckton

**San Toy (1899)**

	9072 We'll keep the feast	Sidney Jones
	9060 The Mandarin	Sidney Jones
10237	2737 The Lady's Maid	Lionel Monckton
10238	9052 A Posy from over the Sea	Sidney Jones
	9053 Six Little Wives	Sidney Jones
10239	2738 The Petals of the Plum Tree	Sidney Jones
	9029 A B C	Sidney Jones
10240	2739 The Moon	Sidney Jones
	9061 Pynka Pong	Sidney Jones
10241	2740 Love has come from Lotus Land	Sidney Jones
	9073 When you are wed to me	Sidney Jones
10242	9051 Samee Gamee	Sidney Jones
	9062 Seaward the Breeze is Blowing	Sidney Jones

10243	9071 Farewell to my Quiet Garden	Sidney Jones
	9065 Courtly Creatures	Sidney Jones
	9066 Little China Ladies	Sidney Jones
10244	2743 Rhoda and her pagoda	Lionel Monckton
	9064 The Emperor's Own	Sidney Jones
	9074 Entrance of English Visitors	Sidney Jones
	9063 The Whole Story	Sidney Jones
10245	9050 The Little China Maid	Sidney Jones
	9081 Sometimes Y	Sidney Jones
	9082 Back to London	Lionel Monckton
10246	9049 The One in the World	Sidney Jones
10247	2741 The Butterfly	Sidney Jones
10248	2742 Chinee Soge-man	Lionel Monckton

**Florodora (1899)**

10250	2709 The Silver Star of Love	Leslie Stuart
10251	2710 When I leave town	Leslie Stuart
10252	2711 The Fellow who might	Leslie Stuart
10253	2712 Phrenology	Leslie Stuart
	2735 The Shade of the Palm	Leslie Stuart
10254	2713 Tact	Leslie Stuart
10255	2714 The Millionaire	Leslie Stuart
	2736 Tell me, Pretty Maiden	Leslie Stuart
10256	2715 Whistling	Paul Rubens

**The Silver Slipper (1901)**

10342	2771 Come, little girl, and tell me truly	Leslie Stuart
10343	2772 Two Eyes of Blue	Leslie Stuart
10344	2773 Danse Parisienne	Leslie Stuart
10345	2774 Four and twenty little men	Leslie Stuart
10346	2775 Class	Leslie Stuart

**The Toreador (1901)**

10437	When I marry Amelia	Lionel Monckton
9041	Keep off the Grass	Lionel Monckton

**A Country Girl (1902)**

	9042 Yo ho, Little Girls	Lionel Monckton
10440	Under the Deodar	Lionel Monckton
	9047 The Pink Hungarian Band	Lionel Monckton
	9046 My own little girl	Lionel Monckton
10434	Peace, peace	Lionel Monckton

**The Schoolgirl (1903)**

10432	My Little Canoe	Leslie Stuart
-------	-----------------	---------------

**The Arcadians (1909)**

	9031 The Pipes of Pan	Lionel Monckton
	9032 The Girl with a Brogue	Lionel Monckton
	9030 Arcady is ever young	Lionel Monckton
	9033 Somewhere	Lionel Monckton
	9034 Charming Weather	Lionel Monckton
	9048 Half past two	Howard Talbot
	9038 All down Piccadilly	Lionel Monckton
	9039 Come back to Arcady	Lionel Monckton

**The Quaker Girl (1910)**

	9044 A Quaker Girl	Lionel Monckton
	9045 Come to the Ball	Lionel Monckton

*Incidentally, after finishing this article I did not play through the piano score; but I did finish the day with ten San Toy discs!*

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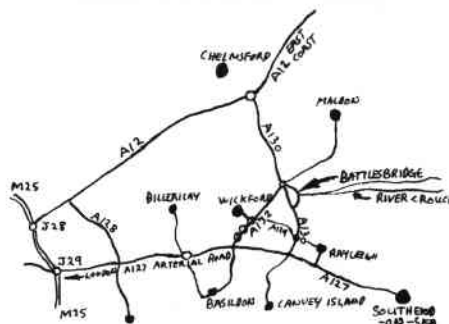
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# SOTHEBY'S

**Founded 1744**

**M**ost musical box comb bases have some form of scribed or even stamped markings to indicate the changes of pitch. These markings are all the more interesting when on a box of known make. Nicole serial 38013, made in 1853, is one of their typical 13" (33cm) 8-air key-wind boxes with a programme of 4 polkas, 3 waltzes and a galop... listed in Fig. 1.

Its gamme no. is 1389, which originated about the same year as its serial no. and suggests that the box may have been made to special order: the uncredited first tune is unusual. It is strange to see and hear Hippo and Firefly polkas together, specially as their tunes are rather similar.

The comb base was cast by Jean Billon, whose foundry mark can be seen in Fig. 2. He ran the Geneva blank making Company from about 1845 until October 1862 when it

merged with Isaac to become S. B. I.

The 97-tooth comb has the usual Nicole Freres stamp. The teeth tuned closest to a 440Hz are nos. 31 and 32 from the bass end. Every pitch change is marked on the comb base, and every pitch is scribed with the *mi fa sol* notation, as can be seen in Fig. 3. The note *fa* is the equivalent of a 440Hz, but on this comb it is distinctly lower in pitch; it is probably tuned to about 425Hz, similar to the tuning of Nicole 32459. That comb was given a detailed investigation, and the pitch of each tooth measured, by Keith Harding in 1973. The findings are reported in Vol. 6 page 34.

The performance of this box is well up to the usual high Nicole standard. The piccolo end, though sparingly used, is very brilliant. It does well for the Firefly. If there is any disappointment, it is with the bass end. Nearly one third of

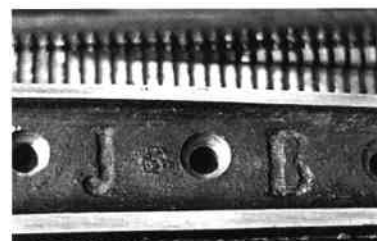


Fig. 2. Cast initials JB for Jean Billon on the comb base of serial 30813. After 1862, at about serial 38000, the marking was SBI.

the comb teeth are tuned below 440Hz, yet there is never any powerful bass display. Not fair to the Hippo.

Serial 30813 has a wood-grip winding key, shown in Fig. 4. It is a snug fit in the key partition, and I am sure it is the original key. Of course it is a delight to use compared with the usual iron edges, but you have to get the box to the end of the table with the end flap hanging right down before you can rotate it! With the end flap just lying on the table the key can only be turned three clicks a time. Annoying in the middle of a tune. It takes 18 clicks for one complete turn of the spring arbor.

### Casualties

Another badly injured casualty turned up recently, accompanied by the hard-to-answer question: Is it worth restoring?

The case did not inspire, and the mechanism was truly sad. The 9 inch (23 cm) cylinder needed a repin, all its bass end pins were flattened. The 88-tooth comb had lost nine teeth and a further five tips. The great wheel had a gap of three teeth, the female Geneva stop had disappeared and the governor was totally unserviceable.

Everything else was OK. Miraculously, the tune sheet was in good condition, and being unusual it is shown in Fig. 5. The latest tune is from *Madame Angot*, 1872. Tune 1 is on the cylinder dots so it is almost certainly by a Ste. Croix region maker, probably about 1874. It may well be by one of the many smaller makers, with its low serial number, 91. The tune sheet records number 90, which must be the neighbouring box in a small batch!!



Fig. 1. This is one of the less common border designs on Nicole tune sheets in the 1850s.



Fig. 3. Part of the comb base, - the treble end is at the left of the picture. The small groups of teeth scribed below the serial number 30813 are 3 *fa*, 3 *sol*, and 2 *fa*. Between each group there is one tooth tuned to the semitone and marked with a pair of short sloping lines.

...the  
mechanism  
was truly sad

So, the opening question, is it worth restoring? Here I think the answer must be Yes, because it has a good comb (on SBI base) which is about 85% undamaged, a cylinder which will be like new when repinned and raked, its original tune sheet and a very good selection of perennially popular tunes. And, of course, a gimmick. It was sold by agent Langer in Palermo, Sicily.

## Cylinderpins

Short historical introduction... When I first entered the musical box arena, in 1972, I heard frequent discussions about raked cylinder pins. It was generally accepted that the pins were always raked by the leading makers, and discussion centred on the reason for this raking and the resulting advantages.

It was also generally accepted that raking achieves a cleaner release of the lifted tooth, which is a simple geometric fact, and helps the purity of sound. But it was also argued that the advantage diminishes as tooth and pin edges get rounded by wear. It was also claimed by many, including some restorers, that the admitted advantage was only marginal and made no noticeable difference to

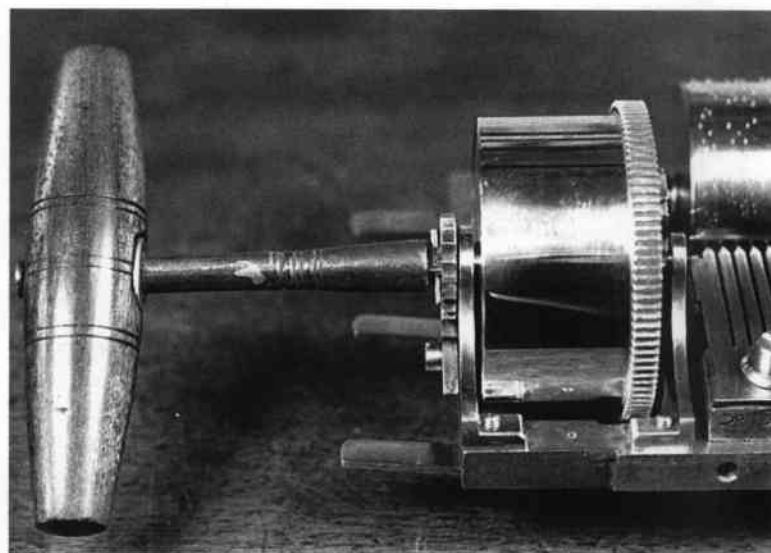


Fig.4. The winding key of Nicole 30813. The length of the wood is 105mm, a bit over 4 inches.

the quality of the music. Restorers therefore offered raking as an optional extra after re-pinning; and some restorers did not even offer the raking option.

The discussions were widened by memoir recollections of raking done during manufacture to ensure accuracy of playing, particularly for notes in a chord; and some writers vaguely recalled how they set every pin; but they never gave examples of bending pins sideways to correct for holes

drilled out of line with their true track which is the most common of the rare pinning errors.

When I got into these discussions I was quite pleased to work out the geometry which proves the cleaner release and shows that the advantage increases in proportion to pin diameter, decreases with increased cylinder speed, and persists after moderate wear. But it certainly is a minuscule advantage!

There has been a lull in these

...I was pleased to work out the geometry which proves the cleaner release...



Fig. 5. This design layout is the same as the P.V.F. "curved damper panels," the main changes being musical cherubs (?! ) placed above and below the side columns and the damper panels altered to reverse curves. Also the six composers each side have been reduced to five by eliminating Bellini and Verdi - retaining all the others. Serial no. is 91. The printer is S. Picard of Geneva.

discussions recently, and I have been re-worrying about why the makers all bothered to do it. Was there some compelling motive? I really doubt whether the pioneers bothered about clean release. They had plenty of other early days problems; and besides, what could give a cleaner release than a wire pin head of diameter a mere 10 thous of an inch...?

Ah, but hang on a moment - are we sure those pins are man enough to lift those heavier bass teeth without getting bent - even if we keep them not longer than 1mm?

Arguments would have followed, some saying OK if pins kept short, but others pointing out that if the pins did bend the precision of the music would be upset.

In those early days, when it took much effort to achieve and maintain the essential accuracy in pricking and drilling, the idea of that effort being nullified by bending pins was hard to stomach. Cylinders were running at .08" per second so if a pin got bent backwards by .004" - 4 thous - the note would sound one twentieth of a second late, - a definite audible defect.

The obvious way to lessen this risk was to incline the pins towards the teeth. Then when a tooth is lifted the force tending to bend the pin is reduced; for example, reduced by 13% with pins raked 30 degrees.

Pins raked to about 30 degrees are illustrated in all the few diagrams of cylinders I have seen so far. One was by Grosclaude in 1880, and others were by Paillard and by Jacot about 1890.

After pinning a cylinder the pins were reduced to uniform length by filing (with an ultra-fine Swiss file!). The file was moved along two flats set at the appropriate height while the cylinder was rotated between them. It was only too easy to bend the pins in this process, and the bending may well have been intentional, as has been suggested. This bending of pins is distinguished from raking because the pin tips remain parallel to the cylinder circumference. But it is not easily spotted because the circular end of a 12 thou diameter pin becomes only a 12 by 14 thou oval.

Of course this filing could have been done in the opposite direction, leaving pins bent slightly backward, but it wasn't. That would have weakened the pins against bending while providing a very clean release.

Once the filing process was completed and the pins all slightly bent, raking could have been done very precisely with a flat bar replacing the file.

All the makers must have been truly thankful that controlled raking was available when *rechange* cylinders came

into fashion - several cylinders delivered *with* a box - so all cylinders had to engage accurately with the comb. Only with the later advent of precision grinding could interchangeable cylinders be more cheaply produced and equally accurate, without raking.

In compiling these notes I have been greatly assisted by Patrick McCrossan and Niko Wiegman. They are not to blame if I have made them too long or boring.

### Another nice 6-bellbox by Junod

It arrived unexpectedly and it played very erratically, with only an occasional *ding* or *dong* from the bells, - after a run and a radial re-pinning done years ago. The bell pins had got badly mauled again and they had to be re-pinned. Also about half the other pins were slightly bent in all directions - sideways as well as both back and forward. Many must have been playing at least a tenth of a second late or early.

I straightened them all to as nearly radial as I could, and I then raked them all about 25 degrees. I am sure the pin tips were then as accurately set as the original drilling allowed; they certainly performed admirably and the box was transformed.

A 6-bell Junod box serial 1650 was described on pages 75 & 76 of Vol. 16, - Autumn

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...only an occasional ding or dong from the bells,...

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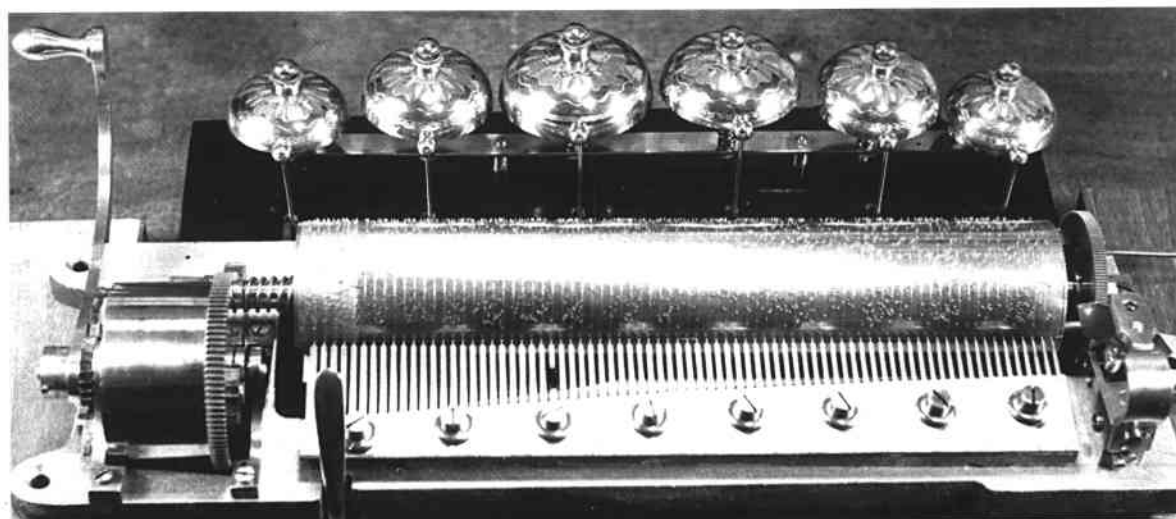


Fig.6. Junod 14944 with marked a tooth 440Hz. It has the usual on/off lever for the bells, by lifting the six bass end teeth clear of the cylinder pins.



1993. This one, serial 14944, now deserves comment on two counts: it is distinctly different and it highlights the Junod dating problems. Its "waving shepherd" tune sheet is featured in the Junod sales catalogue, and it is recorded on eighteen boxes from serial 1194 to 23439. Their cylinders range from 15 to 35 cms, they play from 6 to 12 airs, and a large proportion have three or six bells - a few with drums. They all have the one comb, with teeth for percussion at the bass end, as with serial 14944 shown in Fig. 6. Their latest tunes range only from 1883 to 1887 and I think they were all made between 1885 and 1891. That means over

3000 a year so one is driven to the conclusion that at least one other maker was involved... probably (uncle) Cuendet. There is no pattern between the serial numbers and their latest tunes. Hence no useful clues to a Junod dating chart.

Both these two boxes have 11" (28cm) cylinders but 1650 plays 10 airs on 62 teeth with plain bells, latest tune 1885, while 14944 has 8 airs, 77 teeth, engraved bells and latest tune 1883. Both have bulky cases about 23 inches by 11 by 11 high (58 by 28 by 28 cm) so they have spare room at each end and a 3½" (9 cm) void under the bedplate where 1½" (4 cm) would

be ample to clear the bell mechanism, as can be visualized from Fig. 7. I think that was just an economical way of adding impressive bulk; but it seems to help the bass - and incidentally you get a very good ring from the top treble bell if you leave the glass lid open.

The bell mechanism has its six operating rods in one line, as opposed to the two-banks-of-three arrangement more commonly noted. That keeps it nearer to the bedplate and makes re-assembly easier. Fig. 8 provides a closer look at the mechanism; it shows the six brass bars on the bell teeth pushed away from the felt pad. The iron bracket holding this felt pad is secured by one screw as shown, and it must be adjusted so that when teeth are released their brass bars fall firmly back against the felt. Otherwise the bell striker will bounce back again causing a horrid noise. The travel of the on/off bell lever is stopped at the correct engagement with the brass bars by the adjusting screw. When the lever is pushed in for the bells to play, its business end simply rises clear of the brass bars.

There is usually a coil spring fitted over the adjusting screw and against the bedplate, to hold the lever firmly when the bells are on; but here instead of that spring the pivot of the lever has been tightened and a washer added each side of the pivot screw. I expect that is a modification, possibly due to losing the spring.

The performance of this box is first class, and the bells are well used, not over-used. The 77 teeth allow many finely decorated passages in most of the tunes and they are played very precisely. So I couldn't help thinking again about re-pinning, and how can you be sure that after deepthing the pins they are all exactly radial? Some must be a fragment off line, for any one of several reasons. So the clear way to gather them all together and park the pin tips exactly where the cylinder driller located them is by raking. ■

*Otherwise the bell striker will bounce back again causing a horrid noise.*

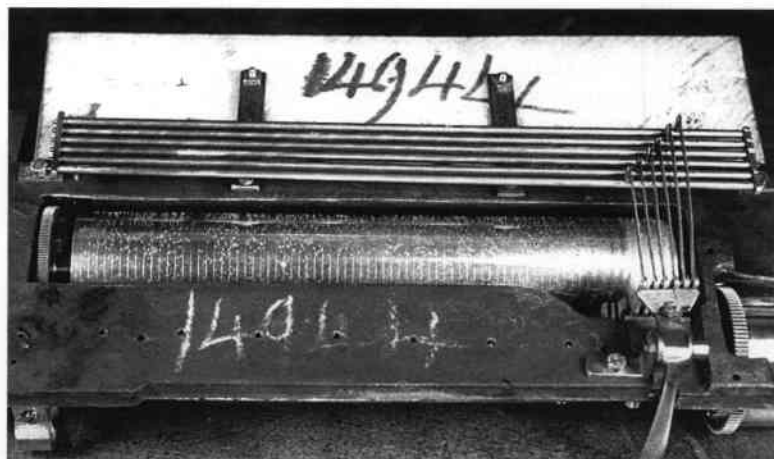


Fig.7. Typical maker's marking of serial number under the bedplate and the bells platform. The square nuts at the top of the picture fix the bell gantry and the wooden platform to the two straps screwed under the bedplate.

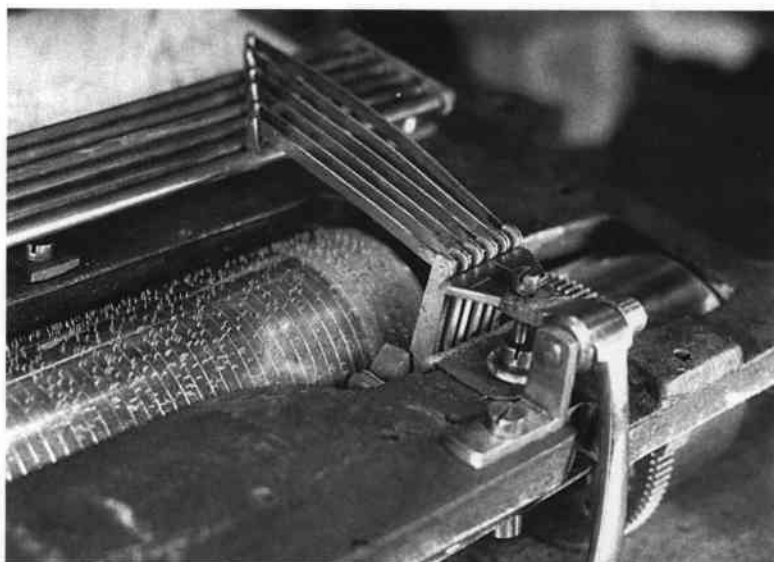


Fig.8. The business end of the on/off lever engages the slots near the ends of the brass bars soldered to the six bell teeth. The screw head holding the felt pad acts as the stop for the adjusting screw.

# Landscape Picture Automata

- *An Exercise in Restoration & Concealment* by A. G. Sidebotham

**T**he opportunity to acquire and restore landscape automata of the more conventional type, i.e. examples housed under a glass dome, are not uncommon and occasionally one turns up at auction or antique fair. However, to have the opportunity to restore a landscape automaton, housed in an ornate gilt picture frame, is not an everyday occurrence. Scenically, the two types have much in common with centre stage, a rocking ship or steamer, and behind it, the endless journey made by a period locomotive and train or a procession moving across a

bridge or viaduct. Again, on either side, cardboard structures depict houses, mills or castles balanced by perhaps a waterfall. The whole tableau is set up in front of a romantic backdrop of sea and sky. The net effect is theatrical and remarkably satisfying to the observer. These novelties, we are told, were produced in the late 19th century by impoverished Parisian workers and were exported in their thousands to satisfy an eager Victorian market.

Restoring a picture framed landscape automaton does present a challenge especially if it is

incomplete as the example I tackled. If we draw comparisons between the domed model and the picture frame variety, the basic difference is the accommodation of the power unit - the musical box, and the need to conceal it from view. In the domed model the box sits in the base interior of the D-ended wooden case and all linkages, cord drives and pulleys will not be visible when covered under a sea of crepe paper. With the picture framed model the box is mounted in the base of the frame and remains exposed. Thus, some means of concealing the drives must be devised and a solution to the problem will be discussed later.

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*...and were  
exported in their  
thousands to  
satisfy an eager  
Victorian  
market*

---



Fig.1 The unrestored automaton with only the glass rod 'waterfall' in place.



Fig.2 Close-up of the rolling ship, train and musical box drive arrangement.



Fig.3 The final framed result showing how a cardboard harbour wall was used to conceal the mechanisms.

## Restoration

The example I tackled was complete as regards structures. On the left, as viewed, was a classical harbourside dwelling with rocky pathways etc., and on the right an arbour which included a glass rod waterfall with drive pulley attached. The gilt picture frame was glazed, hinged at the top and of sufficient depth to accommodate a timber bridge frame to carry a moving train and, in front of it, a rocking sailing ship. The ship had survived and was easily restored but only the frame remained of the railway scene. Needless to say, there was no musical box, only the remains of its mounting.

The box had to power the train and waterfall and the first task was to acquire a two-tune, drum-wound, cylinder box with a cylinder spindle extension long enough to drive a sleeve for mounting wooden pulleys. The size of the pulleys was governed by the height of the box on its original mounting and in addition to v-grooves the outer pulley carries a pin to operate the linkage to the ship. The ship itself is mounted on a wooden pad with a pivoted link to the pulley and a stabilising arm to prevent the ship falling out of line with its vertical rocking motion.

Fortunately, the drive to the inclined spiral glass rod was complete and it was merely a

matter of arranging a cord drive to the box without fouling the ship linkages or scenery.

## Restoration Stage Two - The Moving Train

It was assumed that the original tableau included a moving train (and I am a train lover!) but it could have been a procession of figures or carriages. Suffice to say, restoration of a moving train did present a series of problems, not least obtaining a visual of a period locomotive and carriages capable of photo reduction to the desired scale. My source was the old style printers' workshop at Blists Hill (Ironbridge Gorge Museum) where, amongst their handbills, run off from wooden line blocks, was just the 1860's railway stock scene needed.

Before creating the train the bridge structure had to be restored. Each end is fitted with a flat belt pulley and the whole is supported on two upright posts fastened to the base of the picture frame. One of the belt pulleys also carries a v-pulley to take a cord drive from the box. A length of coloured ribbon (blue or green) of flat pulley width forms an endless belt on which the train, when prepared, can be mounted.

This preparation work is absorbing and time consuming. First, the handbill illustration referred to, has to be reduced by photocopying to the correct proportion compatible with the landscape as a whole. Secondly, it has to be established at this stage which direction the train will move across the tableau. This is done by noting the rotation of the musical box pulley and relating this to the direction of the flat belt drive pulley when the cord drive is connected. For instance, the cord drive should be open and not crossed to avoid unnecessary friction. Crossing the cord drive might rectify the direction of the train but is better avoided if possible.

This brings us back to the illustration and it may be necessary to reverse the image photographically to ensure the train is not travelling backwards! The correct image is then pasted

*...to ensure the  
train is not  
travelling  
backwards!*

down on stiff card, suitably coloured and varnished. Depending on one's skill and patience, the loco, tender and coach underframes, windows etc should be pierced and also the trail of smoke from the loco chimney. This will give far more realism to the train when mounted. Each unit is cut out leaving a foot tab, bent at right angles, to be cemented to the ribbon. In effect the train units stand up when passing over the bridge and hang down out of sight when returning, rather like the teeth of a chain saw.

### Restoration - Stage Three - Final Assembly

The musical box, with its winding drum, is installed using ring screws to guide the pull cord inside the frame to prevent fouling. The cord passes through a hole in the side of the frame and a glass bead or similar is attached. Similarly, a pull wire for the time change is guided through the frame and a brass button fitted. Finally, the drive cords to the train and waterfall using the existing idler pulleys are fitted to maintain cord tension.

The backdrop paintings of these picture frame automata are usually nicely executed, so it is important that the anchorage of the painted paper sheet is correctly installed in a gentle curve above the scenery at the top of the frame descending to the back of the tableau at the bottom for pinning.

The problem of the in-fill of paper sea around the rolling ship and its support at the front of the scene remains. As mentioned, not a difficulty with the domed model automata with the well of the wooden case for support. With the landscape picture automata the solution offered is to create an in-fill of painted harbour wall at the front of the frame which will (a) support the paper sea and (b) hide the mechanisms from view. Providing one has modest skills in miniature scenery painting, the desired result can be achieved. The wall is made of stout card flanged at the sides to blend with the existing card scenery and anchored with small screws inside

the frame. As an added feature for realism, the top of the wall was given cardboard 'coping stones' to support the paper sea, and arched culverts painted on to break up the large area of painted brickwork.

The author acknowledges that considerable licence has been taken to create the right type of scenic display in keeping with a Victorian tableau but, faced with practicalities of restoring an

otherwise dormant scene, it was felt worth the risk.

Pictorial references are scarce but some fine examples of landscape automata are shown in Chapuis & Droz's authoritative study of 'Automata'. Other photographic sources might be obtained from the principal auction houses and their catalogues, but in each case they are unlikely to show the mechanisms. ■

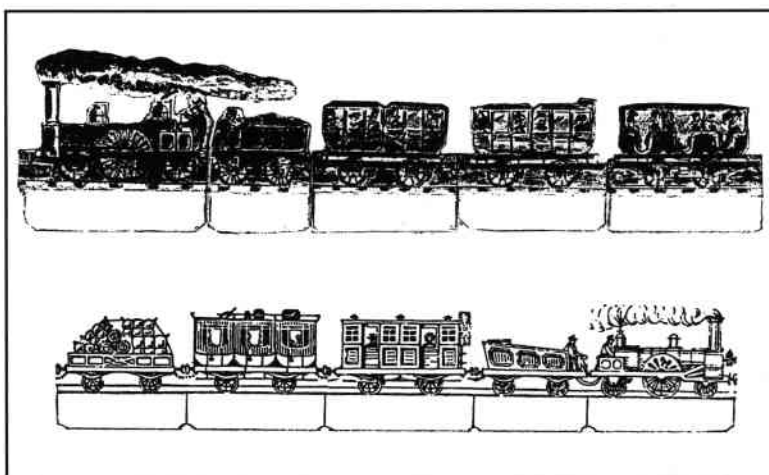


Fig.4 Two examples of period trains with a choice of direction.

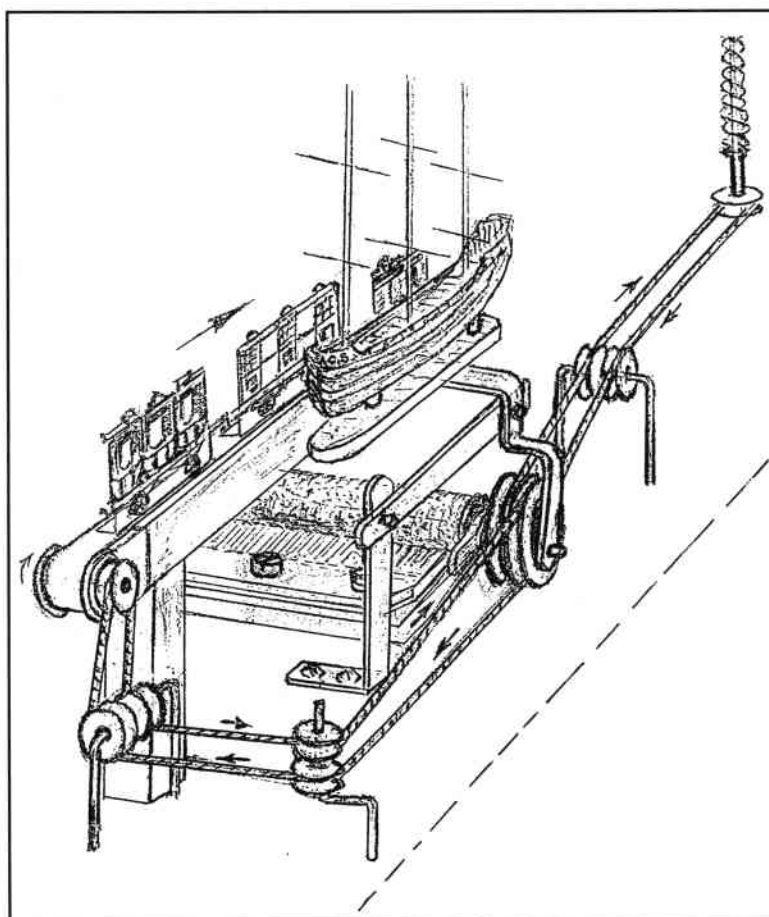


Fig.5 Isometric drawing showing the layout of drives for the ships, train and 'waterfall'.

*...and hang  
down out out  
of sight when  
returning,  
rather like the  
teeth of a  
chain saw.*





Bob Minney plays his Imhof organ for Ted Brown. (See Meetings Reports)

## New Members

We welcome the following new members to our Society:-

- 2725 Kirk Cylus, USA
- 2726 Peter Dobbs, Devon
- 2727 Pamela Young, USA
- 2728 Cyril Birket, Lancs
- 2729 David Parriss, Northants
- 2730 William Edwards, Gwent
- 2731 Steve Rollason, Lancs
- 2732 Peter Trodd, Hants
- 2733 B. S. Coulbeck, Lincs
- 2734 L. J. Newman, Worcs
- 2735 Kenneth Clark, MA, USA
- 2736 Frank Heaney, NY, USA
- 2737 N. Jackson, N. Ireland
- 2738 H P. Bailey,  
Newcastle-upon-Tyne

## Phonofair 2000

The City of London Phonograph and Gramophone Society is holding its 11th Annual Northampton Phonofair.

On Saturday, 24th June, at Cliftonville Middle School, Northampton, 10.00 am to 4.00 pm. Free parking. Refreshments.

More details on:

Tel: 01604 405184 or

e-mail: [gram.needletins@btinternet.com](mailto:gram.needletins@btinternet.com)

## Rare Lochmann Erioca

A rare Lochmann triple disc Erioca is being offered for sale at Sotherby's on 24th May.

The three 35cm discs each play on two combs arranged in sublime harmonie and are activated by a Lenzkitch clock movement. It comes with 22 sets of three discs and is being sold by the grandson of Paul Lochmann the maker.

This Erioca was made for the World exhibition in New York in 1893 and the Sydney exhibition also in 1893, both commemorating the 400th anniversary of Columbus's discovery of America.

More details can be obtained from Catherine Southon at Sotherby's on 0171 293 5209.



The  
Lochmann  
Erioca

# An Ambitious Organ Building Project

**From Bill Kromer Jr. in the USA comes information on an organ build project that defies all but the most dedicated enthusiast.**

Built in the style of a Marengi of the early 1900s, Fig.1. all the functional parts are copied from WurliTzer, and if one did not know that it was a new organ they would think it to be an antique. It has a leather suction and leather pressure bellows driven by a crankshaft and

four wooden shafts to move the pumps up and down. The rollframe is of aluminium and not cast iron, copied from the WurliTzer. Also the friction drive is aluminium and copied from the WurliTzer. It plays a style 125 recut WurliTzer music roll.

The finished organ (Fig.2) is almost 2.5m high and if it plays as good as it looks it must sound wonderful. Bill goes on to explain "This is the fourth organ I have

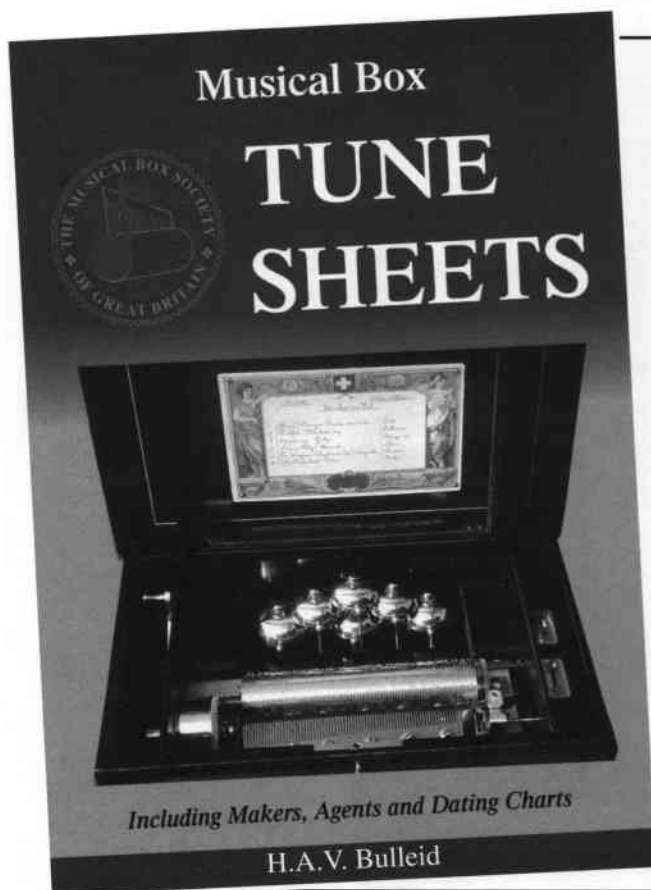
made completely, two with brass horns and two with wooden horns. The brass organs have 13 brass piccolo pipes, and the wood trumpet ones have 13 Octave Violins. ALL piping is copied from my 100 year old DeKleist brass organ." ■



Fig.1.



Fig.2. The finished organ



## MBSGB Millennium Project Tune Sheet Book

"Tune sheets are the only documents spanning the long lives of musical boxes. They are, so to speak, birth certificates . ." So writes Anthony Bulleid in his introduction to this fascinating book. Produced by the dedicated efforts of Anthony together with Registrar Arthur Cunliffe and other members of the Society, it brings together over 200 tune sheets, some in full colour, together with detailed descriptions and dating charts. A must for every cylinder box collector.

A5 size - over 200 pages.

The hardback edition is sold out, but there is a plentiful supply of the soft cover edition.

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## letters to the editor

## Switzerland Visit

Kay and I were chauffeured over to Switzerland in January by two of our members and their spouses, and I felt you might like to hear about our trip. Going through the Tunnel to France was a first-time experience that dispelled the necessity for sea sickness tablets. Our first overnight stop was Troyes, because I had contacted a small museum nearby that we could visit. The next morning we met the museum owner's wife, Mme Marcu, at our hotel and we followed her and her husband Michel in their car to Musée Atelier des Automates in Lusigny sur Barse. They were an extremely pleasant couple. Madame Marcu spoke very good English and Michel Marcu, who is an extremely accomplished automata maker, took us on a tour of his workshop and Museum. Every piece worked perfectly, despite the cold weather, and all our questions were answered along with a constant smile from someone who obviously loves his work and his automata.

We then journeyed on to L'Auberson in Switzerland to the Baud Museum and stayed with Arlett Restichelli and Michel Bourgoz at Arlett's house for two days. We visited their museum and workshops where we were given information about everything we saw and heard. We also made a trip to the C.I.M.A. museum at the old Paillard building in St. Croix. They will provide a private tour with an English guide for a group of 10 or more if you inform them beforehand, and it is well worth a visit.

*We were amazed to hear the Bacorolle from The Tales of Hoffman played by the accordion, drums and piano...*



(Musée Atelier) Michel Marcu with two partially assembled automata.



Herr Gerber playing the Honor Organa.

We then went on to Oberhoven, near Thun, and visited the Museum Fur Uhren und Mechanischemusikinstrumente. Here we met Herr Gerber with a knowledge of colloquial English, second only to Dr. Jan Jap Haspels of the Utrecht Museum. Herr Gerber had us all fascinated in 600 years of watches and clocks. He then gave us a tour of the basement where we saw a wonderful selection of organs, organettes and musical boxes, all playing beautifully. From here we went back into France and were met at the border by a French customs officer who, although not apparent, had a sense of humour as he wanted to know if anyone of us had more than 50,000 francs on us, and could not understand why we had not brought any souvenirs back.

We continued on and stopped just outside Lyons in an area called Haubourdin. Here in rue Vanderhaegen is a well laid out collection belonging to Patrick Desnoublez. The instruments vary from a Steck player piano and 116 Aeolian Organ to Verbeek and Mortier Organs. These are all fully restored by the owner. Mme Desnoublez speaks English, so she was able to help out when my mental English-French phrase book would not supply the right words. Here I heard the one sound that put the finishing touch to what had been a superb long weekend. Patrick played a roll on a Seebold jazz piano which played extremely well. Having seen that we enjoyed it, he put on another roll and had us totally spellbound. We were amazed to hear the Bacorolle from The Tales of Hoffman played by the accordion, drums and piano, a mixture I could not have imagined, but which sounded

superb. This was celebrated with Champagne and biscuits supplied by our hosts. We then took them for a meal in a local restaurant before we had to head back to England.

Here, Kay and I must thank Daphne and Malcolm and Clive and Joyce, our fellow travellers, for such a marvellous time with ample stops.

I list the museums we visited below, but do contact them beforehand for opening times etc. ■ Ted Brown



Details of the front of Patrik Desnonlez's Mortier organ.

**Musée Atelier des Automates,** Lusigny sur Barse, (15 Km from Troyes on N19) Tel: 3332541 5551

**Musée Baud,** CH-1454 L'Auberson. Tel: 024454 2484

**C.I.M.A.,** 2 rue de L'Industrie, 1450 Ste. Croix. Tel: 41244 54447.

**Museum Fur Uhren und Mechanischemusikinstrumente,** CH 3653 Oberhofen am Thunersee. Tel: 033 243 4377

**Patrick Desnoublez,** 53 rue Vanderhaegen, 59320 Haubourdin. Tel: 3303205 00304



### Piano or Organ?

I was interested in the opening paragraph of Paul Bellamy's article (Hick of a Problem) in the Spring edition of The Music Box, in which he refers to Mrs. O F Walton's 'Christie's Old Organ'. Of course, he says, "it was not an organ but a small barrel piano, almost certainly made by Hicks of either London or Bristol". Why "of course"? I have two editions of the original book, and also a set of Victorian magic lantern slides of the story. The earlier book, a hard-cover first edition published by A L Burt Company of New York, illustrates what is certainly not a Hicks barrel piano! (Illustration 1). The lantern slides, probably by Bamforth and dating from the 1890s, also show a barrel organ (Illustration 2). However, a later paperback edition of the book, published by The Bible

Institute Colportage Association of North Wells Street, Chicago, does illustrate a barrel piano (Illustration 3).

The weight of evidence, then, is that Mrs Walton was writing about a barrel organ, not a piano, and it was only in the later editions that ignorant illustrators made the mistake of showing a piano of Hicks type.

David M W Evans, Hampshire

### Movement Identified

The small 30 note miniature musical box movement pictured on page 135, Vol.19, No.5, Spring 2000, is a Thorens. I have just one Thorens movement with a star on the comb. The star simply indicates a particular movement shown in a c.1940 Thorens catalogue. Hope this is a help to Paul Bellamy.

Phyllis Van Marters, USA.

### Tomasso - A mystery solved

In our last issue, in the feature on Tomasso (p.119) we reproduced parts of an article by

Ronald Searle with a note "where it first appeared remains a mystery".

I am grateful to Roger Booty who rang to say that this article first appeared in November 1951 in the News Chronicle - a newspaper title which has itself become history.

I never cease to be amazed at the depth of knowledge of our membership. Two more queries raised in our last issue are answered here on the "Letters" page.

Editor



OLD TREFFY PLAYS A TUNE.



Illustration 2.

Your forum for news and views



A little crowd of children gathered around old Treffy as he played the organ. Christie's Old Organ.

Illustration 3.

Illustration 1.



## classified advertisements

## CLASSIFIED SALES

**13½" Symphonion**, grandfather-clock style (gallery instead of clock), Type 30St. (Bowers, page 224). Excellent order - about 14 discs. Contact Peter Whitehead 01964 550863.

**Discs** - all in good condition

15½" Stella - no projections	4
12" Mira .....	20
11¾" Britannia .....	21
91/8" Britannia .....	10
8¾" Gloria .....	7
7½" Symphonion .....	6
4½" Symphonion .....	1
19½" gold colour? .....	1

Phone 01777 818544 (Doncaster-Retford area).

**Gem & Concert Cob Organ**, Ariosia Single and Twin Reed, Ariston, 2 rank folding Harmonium. Music and spools for Celestina Seraphone, Mignon, Cobs. Discs for Thorens, Polyphon,

**Amorette**, Intona. Book music Gavioli piano, Aeolian Orchestrelle. Parts, rolls, reeds. What are you looking for? I will try and find it. kevin.mcelhone@hotmail.com or phone 01536 523988.

**Steck Pianola (88 note)**. Very large instrument, beautiful tone. Piano in good condition, pianola not working. Will deliver (if fuel costs reimbursed). £400 o.n.o. Tel: 01630 656797 (Shropshire).

**Aeolian Orchestrelle**.

Haag piano fitted 'Stradola' 65n player; Parlour type two manual reed organs by Bell: Doherty: Dominion. Mason & Hamlin (early) with cylinder fall, 7 stops. Alexander Harmonium 16 stops, percussion. 'Pianista' (rare) full action 26 rolls. All items need TLC. Robin W Clark Tel. 01789 731 455

## CLASSIFIED WANTS

**GrandFormat and Overture Boxes** playing four songs. Working or not working. Also, upright disc boxes with bells or clocks. Please call or write - Reynold London, 3 Rowntree Road, Suite no. 901, Etobicoke, Ontario, Canada M0V 5G8. E-mail Londonantiques@email.msn.com Tel: 010-1-416-746-3885.

## Wanted

**Disc Box 11½" any model considered;**

Gem cobs, any metal or card discs, empty organette cases, incomplete mechanisms. Also want larger organettes and those with added bells, drums and twin reeds.

**Contact Kevin McElhone, Archivist, on 01536 523988.**

## URGENTLY WANTED

The following red Welte-rolls composed and played by Max Reger:

Roll No.	
1010	Silhouette, D-dur (D-major) Op.53, No.2.
1012	Aus meinem Tagebuch (Out of my diary) Op.82, No.3
1014	Aus meinem Tagebuch Op.82, No.6
1015	Aus meinem Tagebuch Op.82, No.10
1016	Aus meinem Tagebuch Op.82, No.11
1019	Intermezzo, G-moll (G-minor) Op.45, No.5
4041	Menuett a.d. Sonatine d-dur (D-major) Op.89, No.5

composed by Max Reger, but played by Vera Schapira

If you have any one of these rolls please let me know. I swap or pay - or borrow. Willk Dennl Stettinerstr.11, D-61348 Bad Homburg v.d.H. Tel: 06172/36199. Fax: 01672/789644.

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Closing date for the next issue is  
**1<sup>st</sup> July 2000.**

## Deadline dates for Display Advertising Copy

1st April; 1st July;  
1st October; 1st February  
Editorial copy **must** be submitted at least 8 days prior to above dates

## Posting of magazine:

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

## CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

LAST DATE FOR RECEIPT OF ADVERTISEMENTS FOR INCLUSION IN NEXT ISSUE: 15th February

Minimum cost each advertisement £5.

Members: 16p per word (bold type 8p per word extra)

Minimum cost each advertisement £9.50

Non-members 32p per word

(bold type 16p per word extra)

## CASH WITH ORDER PLEASE TO:

Advertising Secretary Ted Brown,  
The Old School, Guildford Road, Bucks Green,  
Horsham, West Sussex RH12 3JPTel: 01403 823533

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Full page £150; Half Page £86; Quarter Page £54; Eighth Page £36. 5cm box in classified, area £32, 3cm box in classified area £22

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Full page 10½"x7½" (270mm x 180mm, Half page 10½"x3½" (270mm x 88mm) or 7½"x5½" (180mm x 135mm),

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Orchestron  
»Mando Liszt«,  
approx. 1900



Extremely rare telephone  
»L.M. Ericsson«,  
approx. 1897



Automatic  
Rotating Gramophone  
»Triumph«, approx. 1910  
Superb & rare.



Polyphon No. 104, 1895  
Rare upright musical box for 50 cm  
(19 5/8 in.) metal discs.



Fairground Organ  
»Frati & Co., Berlin«, 1890



Rare Swiss Musical Box with  
2 Dancing Ballerinas,  
approx. 1890



Boxer's gambling machine  
»The Knockout«, 1930



Singing Bird Cage, 1950  
By Karl Griesbaum



Musical Automata »La Bicycliste«  
By »Leopold Lambert«,  
approx. 1890  
Giant rarity!



Large  
Tin Toy Carroussel  
with musical box, approx. 1910



The Ultimate »Märklin« Tin Toy:  
»Hexenhäuschen  
(Kaleidoscope)«, 1909  
(»Gingerbread House«)  
with in-built magic mirror (Kaleidoscope)  
The one and only known worldwide!



»The ENIGMA«, 1940  
Legendary Cipher Machine of WWII



Grandfather  
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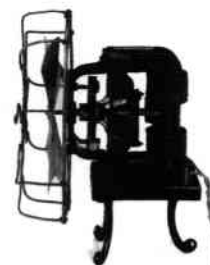
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