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THE MUSIC BOX

JOURNAL OF
the MUSICAL BOX SOCIETY
OF GREAT BRITAIN



THE EDITOR WRITES:



Now that the upheaval and associate ballyhoo of the General Election is over and with it some of the resentment of those who have allegiances elsewhere, now that all this is behind us we can only hope that the Socialists will give more than just sympathetic consideration to the question of finance for the upkeep and growth of our museums as well as the establishment of new galleries and museums. Interest in by-gones, the growth and development of the environment we tend so to take for granted and that which is termed "our past heritage" does not wane. In a materialistic age when quill is replaced by computer, typist by dictogram and architecture by a conglomerate of synthetic materials and ill-chosen colours, it can be argued that public money spent on museums is not justified. Yet are they not a sanctuary - a haven of relief - for the man-made-fibre-dressed, plastics-environated, noise-exasperated mortal of today? And are they not likely to become more so? A museum survives to show life before this age when we still used our hands.

There are at present 876 museums and galleries in the British Isles whilst 35 years ago Miers reported to the Carnegie Trust some 530. This figure was a marked increase on the 1900 total of 200 whilst in 1850 there were just fifty. In 1800, only five museums were recorded. However, a museum incurs high running costs, demands space and necessitates moneys for the acquisition of new material and the upkeep of its exhibits.

No. 8 Christmas, 1964

Museums are invariably housed in buildings never intended for such use - only something like one in ten were ever built for the purpose. Apart from the Hobart Art Gallery and Museum at Coventry, there has been little new building since the war although at last the new Liverpool Museum has been sanctioned - although no starting date has been fixed.

Even the 'huge' British Museum is not without its severe problems for its collection far exceeds its capacity and only some 5% is on view to the public. The problem is basically one of finance - big finance.

At various times during and since the war, approaches have been made for Government help for provincial museums. The vast majority are rates-sponsored although some 204 Borough Councils spend less than a penny rate on them and only 14 more than 3d. The majority of County Councils seem only to support if their museums can be run as part of the school museum service. However, many smaller museums are governed by the Library Committee and, even more incredible, many by the Parks Committee! An instance of this is the Museum of Science and Engineering at Newcastle. These Committees invariably suffer the lowest priorities and the first cuts in the rates share-out.

The only Government assistance is an annual grant-in-aid to funds from which purchase grants are allocated by the Victoria & Albert Museum and Royal Scottish Museum. This grant amounts to £25,000 and is pitifully inadequate. The Standing Commission on Museums and Art Galleries recommended in 1963 that this should be raised to at least £200,000 a year for five years - and then reviewed annually as demands dictated.

It can be appreciated how small this sum really is when we bear in mind the cost of the much-vaunted Leonardo Cartoon, plus all the other art treasures which are offered for sale each year and are 'museum material'.

Private benefactors, charitable trusts - all are insufficient to offset financial inadequacy. Admission charges pose purely as a gesture as they could never meet anything like the requirements for even direct costs. Since many European museums receive National aid in one form or another, the observer can but infer that we have no respect for our institutions. A continuance of the present state of affairs can only lead to the dissolution of many of the smaller museums, the dispersal of many priceless treasures and the amalgamation of others. Can we look to the Socialists to take positive steps to save the situation? Action is needed - now.

SINKING TO LIGHTER DEPTHS.

For no apparent reason at all, I was amused to read an advert in my Sunday paper by a well-known domestic appliance maker. "Would you let your daughter marry a kitchen sink?" it asked. Well, after all, it does depend so much on how much he earns, doesn't it?

DICKENSIAN CHRISTMAS IN CLINK - (nearly!)

Fact of the matter is that I nearly ended up the wrong side of the beak at Bow Street the other day. Visions of dank cells and bread and water loomed before me, my knees inexplicably declined to sustain my person erect and altogether it gave me quite a turn. You see, I phoned up this antique shop in South London, having heard that they had a large musical box to sell. Yes, I could see it that afternoon said the female the other end. Fair enough - until I arrived at the place, for it was in one of those frightful zones mined with parking meters wherein roads are edged with ominous yellow lines. Nearest parking seemed to be in the next borough, too. Brightly deciding that I was a commercial vehicle loading and unloading (a confusing bit of Min. of Tran. terminology if ever there was one as I cannot see how you can do both in that order unless you are doing it purely for an exercise), I drew up outside the shop and climbed out of the celebrated O-H buggy. I detected a perceptible darkening of the scene as I locked the car. A snoop of traffic wardens, quietly murmuring together in a doorway, eyed me with the same look which, from a field of young bulls, inspires in me a sudden desire to be somewhere else. Howsomever, I would be safe for thirty minutes, I reckoned....

I bought the musical box. It must have taken longer to transact that I had intended. I emerged from the shop, excited and intent on getting the thing into the back of the car to find a skinny looking character swaying gently like a pensive penguin standing beside the car. I gave him a nervous wave and said something fatuous like 'nice day!'. He remained unmoved by my greeting, but advanced slowly. I opened the back of the car and beat a hasty retreat to the refuge of the antique shop again. Four minutes of concerted struggle with an assistant saw the thing safely into the car. Fred, the Warden, studied the flap of his shoulder bag the while, unmoving, having stationed himself by the nearside hub-cap. I thanked the assistant for his help and made to move off. The patient Fred then spoke. Thirty-eight minutes, he said, and looked ominously like writing on that awful pad of tickets. I gently argued, smiling, saying that I was on business. Fred didn't seem impressed but purposefully sucked hard at the business end of his ball-point. He must have been new to this game for his lips became a spectacular blue hue. Blissfully unaware of his new colour, he turned back the flap of his pad. I argued more seriously and looked for a get-away, only to be confronted by a purge of policemen, advancing methodically, menacingly, close-set with even, measured gait, obviously high helmets who had graduated from playing windmills in the cross-road maelstrom and darkly feeling High Street door-knobs at dead of night. They converged on Fred and me.

The Law decrees that Justice shall be done - slowly but thoroughly.

I was questioned, so was Fred. The Law sided with Fred. I was done for. One of the Peelers walked round the car, narrowly missing an early, if not at that moment welcome, demise beneath the enormous wheels of a passing heavy truck. He reached the back of the car and peered inside. His confederate was beginning to take an interest in practical caligraphy when Copper the First said "What's all this that there 'ere?" or whatever it is they are supposed to say. Exact words don't matter but all I know is that it stemmed the impending indictment against me.

Ever tried giving a factual explanation of something when the dice are loaded against you? I opened the car, raised the lid and set the box playing something squeaky by damperless Meyerbeer. Fred suddenly came to life with a flow of words, haltingly to begin with, effervescent to come. He remembered his old Mum had one when he was a kid. And so it went on. For fifty more yellow-lined minutes, the Peelers listened intently and interestedly. Then hand-shakes all round, smiles see-you-again's - and I was off and away. Even the Law waved! I sped (at 20 m.p.h.) from Check Point Fred for sanctuary.....

I'm not sure whether traffic wardens have gone up in my estimation as a result of this and I'm not intent on finding out. There are, however, parts of London where I no longer have the courage to hunt for musical boxes. Do you blame me? "Once bitten -" and all that stuff.

NEW PRODUCTION TECHNIQUE TO PRODUCE A BETTER JOURNAL

For a long while it has been apparent that the reproduction standard used for our Journal has left much to be desired. The cost of production by any other means is normally prohibitive. However, Mr. George Hampton of Data Sift Ltd. has very kindly agreed to produce the magazine on his offset litho machine from our masters. This is being done on a specially cut price and we are very grateful for his help. Furthermore, founder Member Mrs. Gilchrist of Cowes has offered with Mr. Gilchrist to provide the MUSIC BOX with eight photopages per issue printed from half-tone blocks on fine art paper free of all charge. Your Editor voices on behalf of the Society our sincere appreciation of this splendid gesture. Together, these two moves will vastly improve the appearance, value and therefore appreciation of your Journal.

THE HOT SEAT

This is our eighth issue of THE MUSIC BOX and I am more than a little astonished to find that, in two years and with this issue we have published some 256 pages. It is also time again for me to join with your President and Committee to wish you a second Happy Christmas and successful New Year - and may your dampers never ever squeak.

endless music

by

RALPH MOSS

Before reading this article, you are advised to read "The Step Which Was Never Taken" which was published in THE MUSIC BOX Issue No. 5, page 35.

●WE WERE SITTING IN THE DRAWING ROOM, all with minor headaches contracted from listening to a surfeit of musical boxes. The Editor was discussing his article "The Step Which Was Never Taken" but it was quite evident that he could not understand our lack of enthusiasm over what is obviously an exciting idea. At last the prisoner doth loose his chains! No more 'instant Hallelujah Chorus' or revivalist 'Amens'! Quel idee! Still no enthusiasm.

"You see", I explained, "I have one upstairs" with which Cad Moss fetched the Unikon. At first the Editor thought it was Thurber's Unicorn but after cups of strong coffee, all agreed that Great Minds Think Alike even if not always at the same time. For the ideas laid down in THE MUSIC BOX were totally independent of similar notions, the first of which was generated, as is often the case in musical box history, by Lecoultre in Geneva about 130 years ago.

Lecoultre was apparently the first to realise the inherent limitations of tune length in the musical box and his box playing tunes of different lengths by means of an ingenious stopwork has already been described in THE MUSIC BOX, issue number 2, page 14. The next attempt at tune length variation was clever but less effective inasmuch that it only gave two different playing times. This was the musical box which would play an overture on a complete revolution of the cylinder and an aria or air on half a revolution. The stopwork for this worked as follows:- two stop slots for the brake trail were cut in the large cylinder gearwheel, the extra one being drilled right through the wheel. A small rod attached to the cylinder passed into this hole to blank it off for the first tune or so but as the cylinder was moved away from the gearwheel by the tune-change cam, the rod was withdrawn from the hole thereby exposing the slot for the brake trail to fall into after half a revolution.

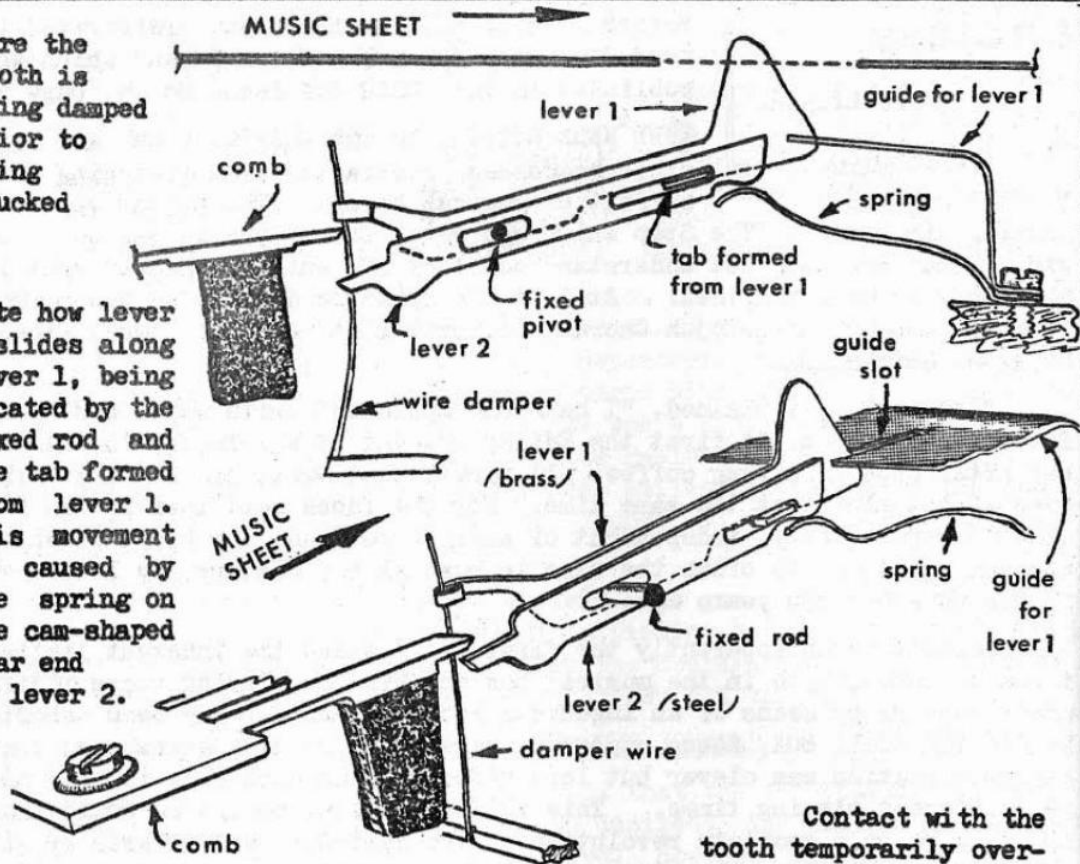
A subsequent cylinder musical box of relatively unrestricted tune length was the Helicoidale. As far as can be ascertained, the pins were set on a spiral and the cylinder moved along continuously at a very slow rate, this system being the same as that used in the barrel-operated orchestration organs. Thus the Helicoidale played for several revolutions of the cylinder without any unnecessary pauses but apart from the high cost, its performance was not altogether satisfactory.

The famous long-playing musical box is Albert Jeanrenoud's Plerodienne which was invented in 1878. Examples exist in the Guinness and

The famous long-playing musical box is Albert Jeanrenoud's Plerodienne which was invented in 1878. Examples exist in the Guinness and

Here the tooth is being damped prior to being plucked

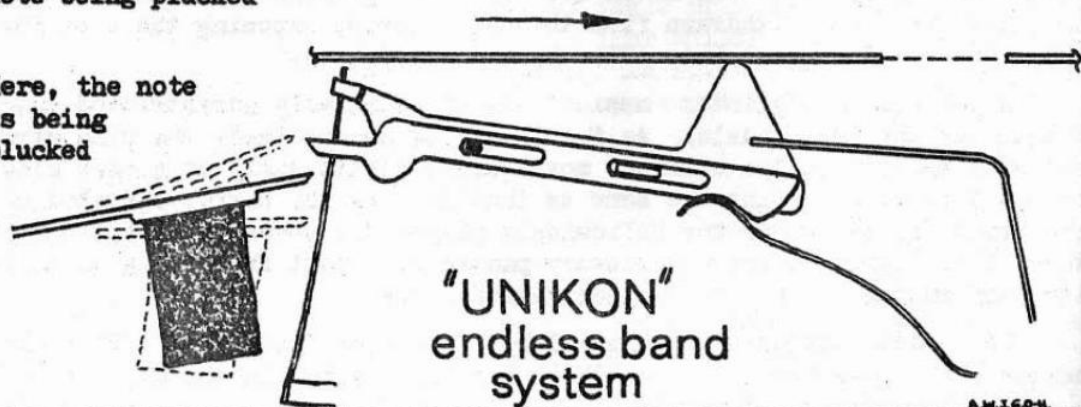
Note how lever 2 slides along lever 1, being located by the fixed rod and the tab formed from lever 1. This movement is caused by the spring on the cam-shaped rear end of lever 2.



has been plucked and the lever is then pulled away from the tooth, only returning to its outermost position when the assembly returns to the condition shown in the top illustration immediately prior to another note being plucked

Contact with the tooth temporarily overrides this control until it

Here, the note is being plucked



Horngacher collections, although the maker of the latter box evidently found the job a difficult one and left the movement to play 6 tunes of equal length with a stop between each. These are large boxes with a total cylinder length of over 20" and about 200 teeth on the two similar combs. The two cylinders of equal length are mounted on a common centre spindle, each with a cam which moves its cylinder towards the other in steps as the musical box plays. Hence the popular title of "telescopic" musical box which is applied to the Plerodieneique. After approximately one revolution, one cylinder stops playing and is moved along by its cam, after which it resumes playing. The second cylinder then ceases playing and is moved, after which it, too, resumes playing. The music stops after six revolutions.

However, none of these cylinder musical boxes is totally independent of any restriction in tune length but, after the introduction of the disc musical box, two inventors came up with different answers to the problem. Their results drew heavily on mechanical music systems already in use in their respective countries. In the United States where the pneumatic organette was produced, the Arno musical box was introduced.

In essence the pneumatic organette system was modified so that the small bellows, instead of opening the valves to the reed notes in the organette, were used to pluck the teeth on the comb. With little load on the controlling strip, paper rolls of any length could be used since the paper was thin. The case of the Arno was just over a foot square and an example exists in the Horngacher collection.

The German method of tackling the problem drew on the then current system used for operating fairground and other large organs. In these, and still often to be seen in Holland and Belgium, cardboard 'books' of music were used to operate the keys which in turn opened the valves to the pipes. These long strips were folded, concertina-fashion, to facilitate storage and carriage. The Unikon musical box, the caption for which was "Tunes of any length and number can be played" employed not cardboard, but thin zinc covered with printed paper. The majority of tunes were played by endless bands of different lengths which, owing to the inflexibility of zinc, were made of two strips jointed at their ends by hemp to form a hinge. The strip pressed the 41 spring-loaded brass keys down just as Stells or Harmonia discs hold the spring-loaded star wheels down. When a slit allowed a key to lift, a lever pressed down in front of the tooth and the wire damper acted on the front of the tip of the tooth. When the key was again depressed, the lever was tilted up and plucked the comb.

The selection of music with the Author's Unikon is of a drawing room nature and suggests a date of circa 1890. There is, in addition, to the

endless bands, one book of music over 12 feet long, which plays Lumbye's Dream Picture Fantasy. The highest number on any band is 116, indicating a limited production. In fact, Jaccard stated "...a steel ribbon used in place of the disc. Tunes of unlimited length could be played. This experiment was short-lived and few, if any, of the pieces reached the market. Emile Cuendot and Andre Junod were the originators of this device".

Why, then, was the experiment short-lived? Both the Arno and the Unikon are very rare pieces all over the world and certainly neither enjoyed a popularity even remotely comparable to that of the disc musical box. Possibly the main disadvantage lay in their apparent advantage. Popular songs have always been of similar length and even in these days of long-playing records and tape recordings, popular songs are still reproduced on records with a two-and-a-half minute playing time.

The Arno and Unikon musical boxes, each with a tonal range and quality which was inadequate for a serious approach to music, form a parallel with records of popular songs. Whilst the Helicoidale and Plerodieneique appealed to the connoisseur as would a long-playing record of classical music, the Arno and Unikon reached beyond the bounds of their inherent limitations and were received with as much enthusiasm as Edison's long-play Amberol recordings of classical pieces played by brass bands in 1912.

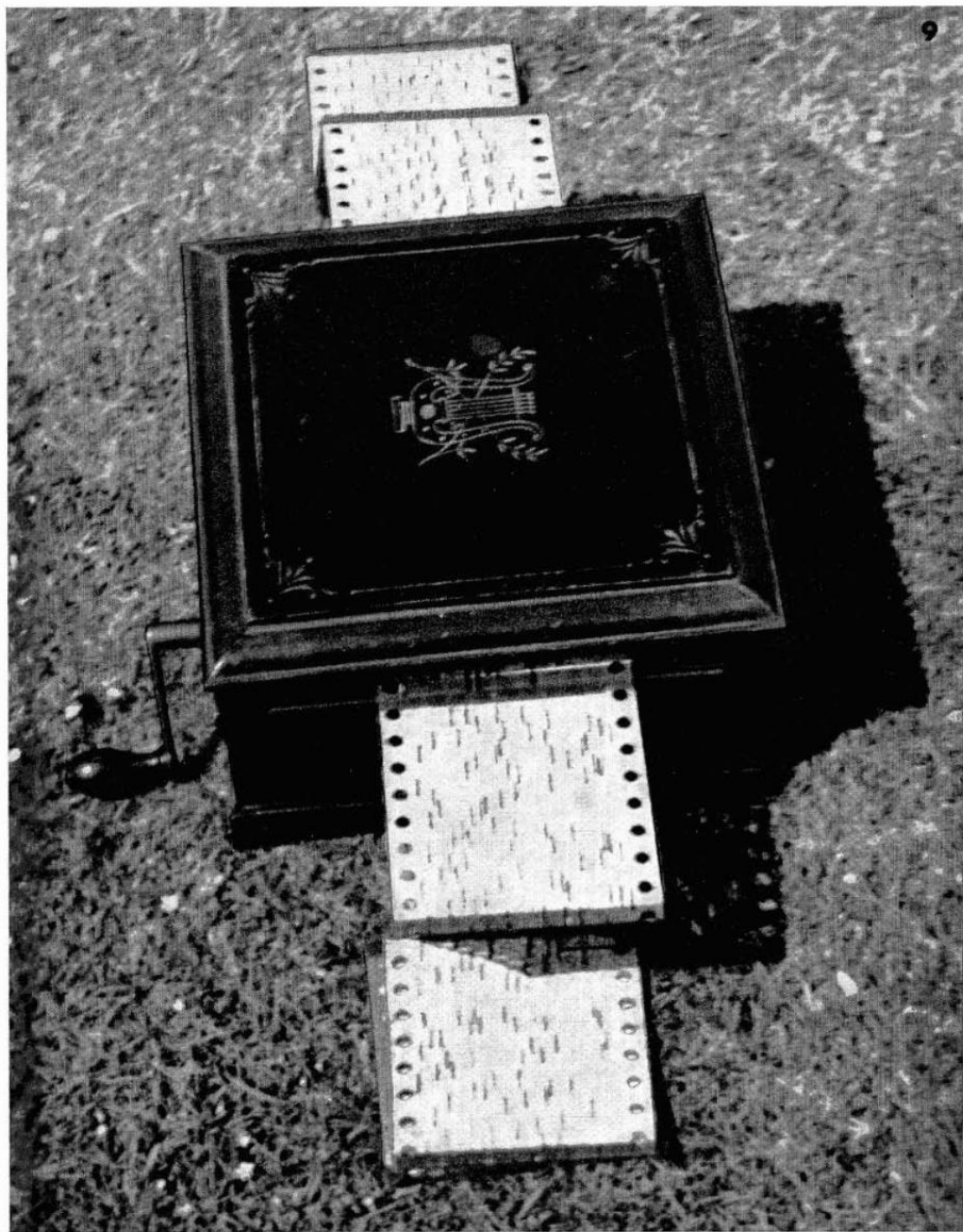
So the ideal is still there! Its fulfilment would be the Editor's metallic strip musical box with the tone and musical arrangement of an Overture box. If you could afford it, of course.....

The Unikon measures $9\frac{3}{4}$ " square x $6\frac{1}{2}$ " high, the comb bears 41 playing teeth and the music strip is $4.5/16$ " wide. Tonally, the instrument resembles a small Symphonion. The dampers are very efficient but the main shortcoming of the instrument is the durability of the tune strips. The zinc and paper hinged panels in each strip very quickly wear, for the operation of the comb plucking linkage imposes considerable strain on the slots. To play, the instrument is wound with an exterior detachable handle. There is no speed control and an instant 'stop-start' control is provided again on the case exterior.

In appearance, the Unikon is in a fairly plain ebonised case with an impressed outline on the top of the lid showing a lyre. Inside the lid is a coloured picture of a lady of generous proportions wearing a coronet and playing a lute. The box is illustrated on Pages 9 and 10.

Quite obviously a "rare piece", one must put up with the fact that, due to the condition of the tune strips with mine, I prefer to preserve it by not playing it often and not playing a tune right through!

The Unikon is illustrated on Pages 9 and 10





THE FOURTH
MEETING OF
THE MUSICAL
BOX SOCIETY

Our fourth meeting was held at the Londoner Hotel in Welbeck Street, London W.1. on Saturday, November 7th. By popular choice, the location was the same as that of our previous meeting and we had available a large room which was divided into two sections, one section as a display room and the other for our meeting.

Beginning with coffee at 10.30 a.m., the early part of the morning was spent, as ever, in welcoming fellow Members and assisting them in carrying in their treasures for display. Our Society badges, now available, were on sale at the door and a brisk trade was reported. Among early Members to arrive was our Secretary, Mr. de Vere Green, together with a handsome Bremond complete with flutina, drum, bells and castenet. Mr. Green also showed a small Lecoultre, number 1429, a very unusual and interesting key-wind Metert piano-forte box playing overtures and a three-air Alibert. For comparison, he also displayed a Cuendot made in Geneva last year and the final product of a craftsman who has only just died.

Also arriving early was your Editor, Mr. Arthur Ord-Hume, together with a T. C. Bates 10-air church barrel organ, a spirited P.V.F. 8-air "Fortissimo", an unusually handsome 15¹/₂" vertical Polyphon and a snuff box by H. Kapt playing two airs from Rossini's 'Thieving Magpie'. Mr. David Tallis of Pinner brought along a Forte-Piano Mandoline box believed to be by Lecoultre and numbered 11258, together with another Lecoultre number 11885. Your Treasurer, Mr. Frank Greenacre, showed a Cabinet Roller Organette, a small Kalliope and - a very new acquisition - a fine Nicole overture box (number 35455) wound externally with a ratchet handle. Mr. Hill of Banstead showed a well-restored 11" Polyphon whilst Mr. Tooley displayed an unusual 6-tune free reed barrel organ of the portable type and most probably of German origin. A Lecoultre No. 32163 was Mr. Tooley's second item.

Mr. Graham Webb rolled back the carpet and set his piece - a charming automata in the form of a dancing couple - on the floor to whirl and twirl to its musical movement. Mr. Entwistle showed a key-wind Nicole number 16295, a Seraphone organette and a very small barrel organ playing 8 tunes as well as the mechanism of a Dawkins cylinder box movement he is restoring which features a singing bird which whistles an accompaniment on 14 reeds to the tunes played on the combs.

Mr. Sherriff showed a DuCommin number 4374 with laminated comb containing groups of four teeth in a fine case, also an unknown key-winder numbered 5864 and bearing the letter 'g' on the comb and 'S. J. Fils' on the bottom.

Most worthy of special mention was an unusual box displayed by our Member who travelled farthest to reach the meeting, Mr. Atkinson of Alloa, Scotland. Mr. Atkinson booked a return trip to London on the night train and arrived armed with a "Freres Nicole" circa 1820. This box - a medium-sized key-winder - sported a very fine comb having 202 teeth playing a nine-inch cylinder. The comb is made in two pieces and the tune played is the overture Die Freischutz performed in toto in three revolutions of the cylinder, normal finger-and-snail-cam advancing the cylinder at each turn. The plain oak case, control levers protruding at the left (there being no end-flap) features a plain glass sheet lid and the bottom of the box is wafer-thin oak secured with screws through the sides. The movement bears the number 5595 and is removed through the bottom of the case. In place of the usual cast iron comb base, the steel comb - over $\frac{1}{4}$ " thick at the root - is supported on a number of thin brass strips built up to the right height. The Society would like to express its appreciation at the enthusiasm of Mr. Atkinson in coming so far to attend his first meeting with us in London - we hope he may come again.

After morning coffee, the days events begun with a showing of the Pailliard film made in Geneva and previously shown to some Members who were the guests of Mr. Guinness at the Savoy last year. A thirty-five minute colour film set in the colourful scenery of snowey Switzerland, it depicted much of the wizardry of the construction and repair of mechanical musical instruments although there was a tendency towards a more 'popular' approach to the subject heightened by a disjointed and often travellogue-ish content. However, it is still the best film available on the subject and, in spite of un-matched and incorrect sound dubbing, a melange of children's faces and dancing dolls, the film was well worth seeing. The shots of the Violina Virtuosa performing were both fascinating as well as filmically excellent.

The lunch interval saw the getting together of Members to discuss pins, teeth, projections and stop-work, tune-sheets and dampers to the accompaniment of hot food and good wine. During this period also, the B.B.C., ever anxious to report on the more unusual interests of its wide audience, despatched reporters from its 'Eye Witness' and 'Today' teams. Your Editor was called upon to play some music and also talk on the aims and interests of the Society and these recorded interviews were subsequently broadcast on Sunday morning and the following Monday.

After lunch, Members and their guests took their seats in the large room to listen to and try to identify recordings of musical box tunes. Mr. Bruce Angrave had spent many hours editing and re-recording an hour of the many Member's tapes sent in and the efforts of Mr. Angrave were greatly appreciated. Of some forty-eight recordings played, Members

were able to name over twenty. The standard of recordings ranged from the near-professional to one which Bruce succinctly suggested might have been made at the side of the M.1! Isn't it a peculiar thing how well we know a tune - popular or from the opera - but, when it comes to naming it, all we can do is snap our fingers, say "Of course I know it!" and blow a crude toneless copy through our front teeth! An interesting comment was made by our three guest musical experts - Dr. John Hawkins, Dr. Massey-Gawkins and Mr. Golding of the Royal Academy of Music. These experts referred to the fact that listening to and appreciating a tune on a musical box often required a tonal skill and art not necessarily present in the musical box novice. This is something which others have said over the years and surely there are times when we ourselves have been baffled to pick out a tune. Some musical box renditions were so flamboyantly endowed with grace notes, arpeggios and trills that a tune becomes easily lost. On that score, perhaps we are more the experts at hearing a tune!

The tape session over, Members returned to viewing, hearing and discussing the exhibits until 5.30 p.m. when the room was vacated and everyone headed towards 11, Devonshire Place. As has become the custom with previous meetings, Members and their guests were once more invited to be the guests of Mr. and Mrs. de Vere Green for a cocktail party. An air of expectancy prevailed amongst our newer Members and 'first-timers' to our meetings, having heard of the de Vere Green collection, just couldn't wait to feast their eyes and ears on the treasures off Wimpole Street.

It is no secret that Mr. Green is a dental surgeon of great repute and some idea of the enormous amount of preparation which Mr. & Mrs. de Vere Green had tackled can be appreciated when it is realised that both Mr. Green's large surgeries, his office and, indeed, whole house had been cleared, shifted around and converted into one large display of mechanical musical instruments. Such fearsome furnishings as dental chair, nerve-teasing drills and soul-searching lights were screened off and only serene, soothing musical boxes sat and played. A small street piano on donkey cart, Spanish, modern and brightly painted, attracted much attention and could be heard performing 'pop' music at odd times throughout the evening. The usual awe-filled clique of discophiles were to be found standing quietly around the 24¹/₂" Polyphon - this has subtly been fitted with a fluorescent light tube concealed in the top front which enhances the appearance greatly. A similar gathering could be found speculating and disagreeing with each other over the identity of several unknown breeds of boxes. All were quietly and unobtrusively lubricated with liquid stimulant and filled with tasty sandwiches - the humans, not the boxes!

Thus ended our fourth meeting, and again we offer our sincere thanks to Mr. & Mrs. de Vere Green for their superb hospitality.

AN APOLOGY - AN EXPLANATION or SECRETS OF "MUSIC BOX" PRODUCTION....

The last issue of THE MUSIC BOX faced an eleventh-hour crisis when double-sided paper for the production of our Photopages could not be obtained in time. We agreed that our processers should use single-sided paper. An explanation for this action was inserted - literally at the last moment - on Page 10. The page was printed; our processers phoned to the effect that in an endeavour not to let us down they had sent a messenger to scour the country for double-sided paper, had found some - and printed the pages Are you with me? 'Tis an ill wind that blows somebody else's reed....

★ After deliberation, we consider the first eight issues of THE MUSIC BOX to complete our first Volume. Starting with our next issue, we begin Volume 2 and pages will be numbered consecutively through each issue to facilitate reference. Coupled with our new-style production, you will now have a much better Journal - we hope!

★ The rush of producing THE MUSIC BOX over, collating and publication day is now a cheerful routine conducted in the Planus residence at Blackheath. Dorothy (maker of very fine tea and cakes), Brenda and Ken Simes, Betty Richards and I work hard whilst Gerry 'supervises' (as he calls it) from the controls of his new Aeolian Orchestrelle, interjecting with the occasional "Phew! Hot work!" - or just a grunt. Funny fellow, Gerry. The local postman is now wise to us now and unlocks the pillar-box from behind. Too firmly imprinted upon his memory is the recollection of the incident recorded in Number 6 of THE MUSIC BOX!

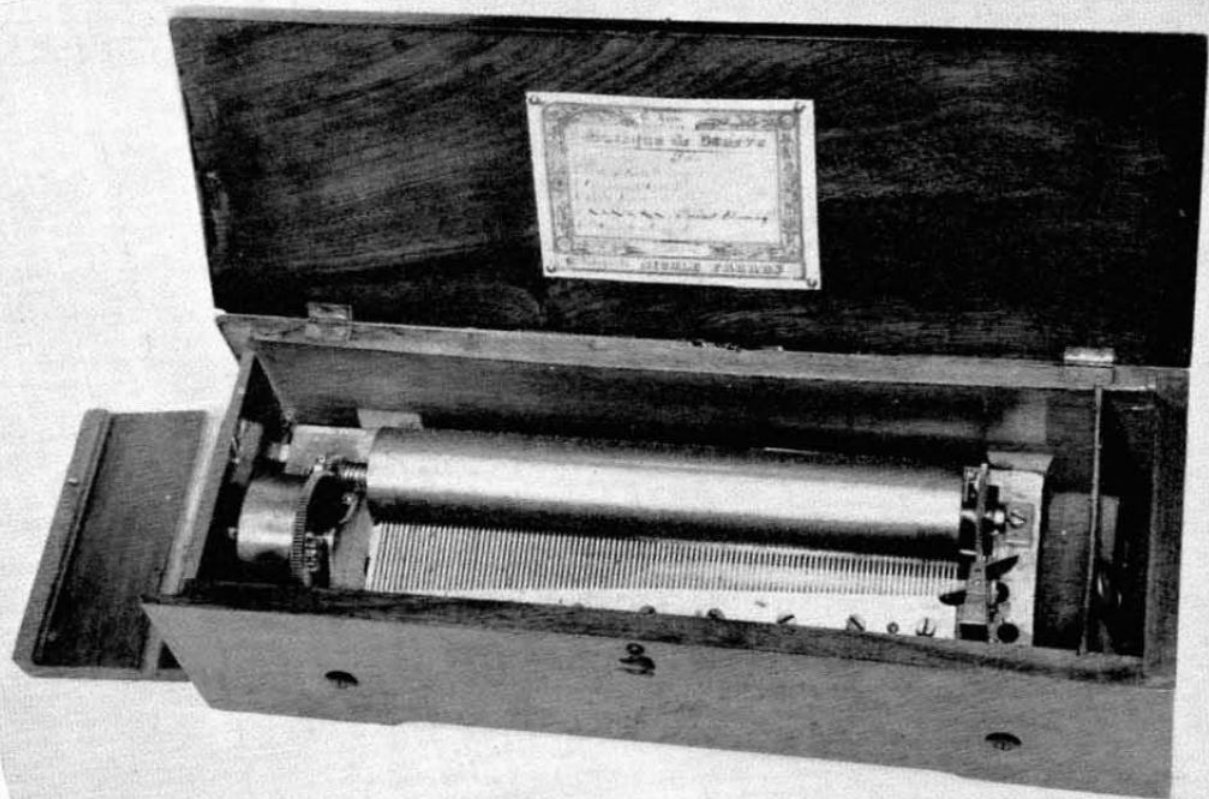
★ Whilst talking generally, we would remind Members that the majority of subscriptions fall due in January. As all the work of the Society is of a 'spare-time' nature, we would like to enlist your co-operation to reduce paperwork and ask you to pay your dues promptly. This really does make a difference. Also, without your support, we cannot continue to publish THE MUSIC BOX.

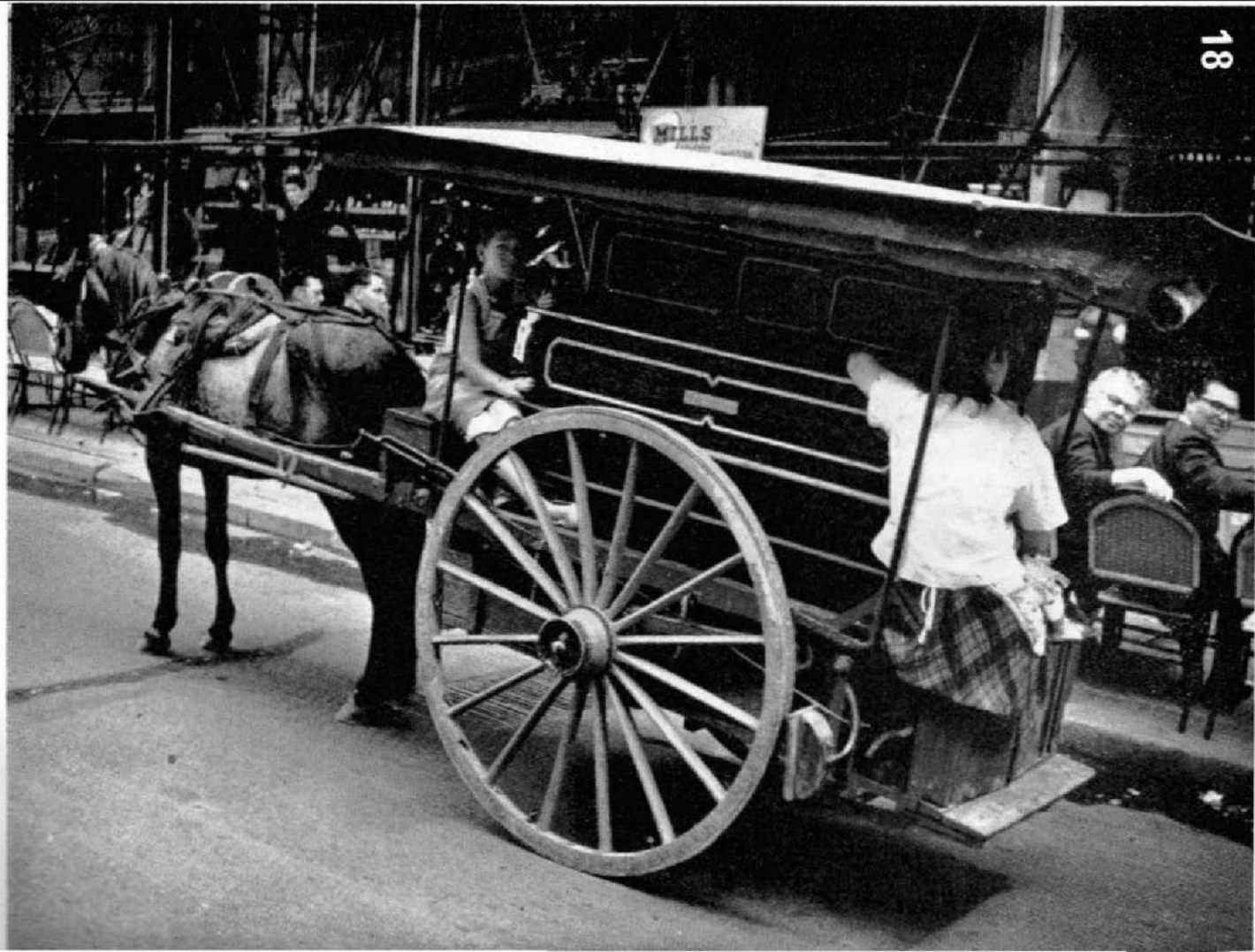
★ Society Badges are now on sale, price 5/- each, plus postage, from our Treasurer, Mr. F.S. Greenacre, 164 Lowestoft Road, Gorleston-on-Sea, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk. When ordering, please state if button-hole or safety-pin fastening is required.

Member Henry A. J. Lawrence of Leamington Spa is seen here with some of the items in his large collection which includes a hot-air piano! On Page 16 we see Mr. Lloyd Kelly of Massachusetts repairing a Regina bell-and-comb disc machine. Picture is by Janet Wilder of PATRIOT LEDGER. (See article on p.38 Summer, 1964 issue). Page 17 shows an unusual box in the de Vere Green collection. 10 $\frac{3}{8}$ " cylinder, brass bedplate, small brass comb washers, no. 4878. Case is converted from end-flap key-winder type.









The Spanish Piano Organ

by
Jackson Fritz

In the heart of Madrid's Old Town, just a few minutes walk from the teeming Rastro or 'Flea Market' is hidden a modest shop kept by Antonio Apruzzese. With the practical skill and concentration of one who truly loves his work, Mr. Apruzzese dedicates himself to the preservation of an ever-dwindling number of piano organs or "organillos" in Madrid. His job necessitates the application of talents which are becoming increasingly rare in the world of today.

Whilst the organillo is frequently referred to in England and America as the Spanish Piano organ, this is perhaps a misnomer for the instrument actually had its beginnings in Italy. When these instruments were introduced to Spain in the middle of the 19th Century, their characteristics proved highly adaptable to the richly complex and colourful popular music of the country and in a short time they became firmly entrenched in the Spanish culture. The pioneer of their manufacture in Spain was Luis Casali, an Italian who settled in Barcelona. Construction of movements for Casali was supervised by Pombia whilst composition of music for the instruments and the scoring of the huge wooden cylinders was accomplished by Subirands. As far as can be ascertained, these three formed the nucleus of a prospering firm which eventually earned gold medals during expositions of 1886 and 1895 in Spain and Brussels. The firm operated under the name of Luis Casali and at different times held addresses at Torres Amati 1, and Poniente 88 in Barcelona. Many instruments were made by the firm over a long period and many which bear the Casali label may be seen and heard in Madrid today.

The Apruzzese family begun building organillos in Salamanca around 1883 and in 1885 migrated Eastwards to Madrid. The present Mr. Apruzzese was born in Madrid in 1906 and is the last of the family to carry on the craft. In addition to restoring the instruments, he has for many years been composing for and pinning the huge wooden cylinders.

Ho obliged the Author by performing several of his compositions on one of the large instruments in his shop. He turned the handle with an interesting rhythm of the wrist and the music which issued forth was thoroughly entertaining. In size, this instrument was roughly comparable to an upright piano (which, in fact, it was!), however, there were minor differences in outward appearance, namely the absence of keyboard, shorter in height to accommodate the strong iron frame.

Cases of the older instruments were stoutly built of birch and when completed most were stained in dark mahogany and varnished while some were merely ebonised. The fronts and sides of the instruments were frequently

engraved with lines which paralleled the edges and the central areas were engraved with a design. Very seldom was this work of fine order. Since organillos were very frequently used in the streets, rough treatment was almost assured, so stout and stark cabinetry became the order of the day. Few are to be seen which display delicacy or any form of inlay work. Most organillos were made with perforations of the front sound box panel to aid in the projection of the music. They were usually covered in linen cloth which was embroidered in delicate designs.

The tune sheet or programme card was nearly always mounted in a small glass frame on the left end of the instrument just above and behind the tune change device. The ends of the cabinets were frequently mounted with ornate brass handles to aid in moving them about. A popular design for these handles was a dog's head with a ring in its mouth - all in brass.

Later, Mr. Apruzzese lifted out the two panels in the front of the instrument to show the huge 40" x 14" cylinder which spans the full width of the case. Poised above it were 56 walnut hammers and in a small area at the upper left, just in front of the iron frame, could be seen five brass bells, horizontally attached to a brass gantry. Next to these was a hollow castagnette block. The bass strings were to the left and their 28 hammers were leather-covered. The remaining 28 for the higher notes were uncovered. No dampers were fitted. The organillo was usually made with 60, 45, 40, 35 or 30 hammers, the last number being for the smaller instruments. Many earlier examples used hammers made of felt but this was discontinued when it was realised wooden hammers gave a more brilliant tone.

A smaller instrument measured 37" x 18" x 42" high and the cylinder was 30" long and 10" in diameter. 16 leather-covered brass hammers and 14 uncovered treble ones were used and it included five brass bells.

There seems to be many variations in the percussion components of the older instruments. While many of the larger ones contained up to five bells, they often lacked a castagnette. At times, a triangle was used in place of the bells and in others all percussion elements were omitted. Size of the instruments was not a determining factor since many small ones were equipped with both bells (or triangle) and castagnettes. Percussion has always played an integral role in the performance of the colourful and turbulent popular Spanish music so it is not at all surprising that components for its execution should be built into these mechanical instruments. The combined effect is in most cases exhilarating to the listener.

Construction characteristics of the organillo permit songs to be scored on the cylinder equivalent to a performance of three pianists. This often results in a rendition far more exciting than if performed by a single pianist - or even two!

Organillos form a rich preserve of the late 19th Century and 20th Century Spanish music. At least one pasadoble or double step appears on many programmes. An integral part of Spanish music, the pasadoble is normally played by the band at the beginning of a bullfight as marching music for the cuadrillos or bullfighter teams as they process into the ring. This form of music is magnificently adaptable to the organillo. A small instrument in the collection of the Author was formerly the property of Senorita Amparito Roca, a famous Flamenco singer of some 50 years ago. Among the six airs on the cylinder is the pasadoble "Amparito Roca" - a composition especially for her. This organillo was made in 1917 by Vincente Llinares who had formerly worked with Casali.

Whilst Spanish music predominates on most organillo programmes, airs of other lands were frequently added for extra spice, so songs of Poland, Austria, Italy and Scotland may also occasionally be heard. The Blue Danube Waltz on the programme of the Author's instrument does not seem to be as skillfully pinned as are the Spanish selections which accompany it. Recently, Mr. Apruzzese shipped an instrument to the United States which played "The Stars and Stripes Forever". Most of the larger organillos were pinned to perform ten airs while the smaller ones presented a more modest programme of six. Here are two such programmes:

- | | | | |
|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------|
| 1. Amparito Roca | 2. Danubio Azul | 3. Camino Verde | 4. Madrid |
| 5. Bajon de Ana | 6. La Delores | | |

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Davina Gloria (Waltz) | 2. Amor Pueviene (Contando Pasadoble) |
| 3. Campanora (Pasadoble) | 4. El Manquillo (Tanquillo) |
| 5. Capote Cani (Pasadoble) | 6. Un Amor Pasio (Fox Twis) |
| 7. Un Suspiro Castino (Schotz) | 8. Mi Bella Olga |
| 9. Adios Panchita | 10. Madroista del Pilar (jota) |

Changing of airs on the organillo is accomplished in the same manner as on the earlier English street pianos, with the blade or knife locking into the appropriate slot in the brass cylinder spindle. When the knife is lifted free of the slot, the air can be changed either by tapping or pulling on the spindle end to achieve a new lateral position of the cylinder and a new slot. When selected, the knife is lowered into the slot and the brass lever which re-engages the hammers is re-set. In the larger organillos, the worm which engaged the cylinder cog was usually of brass, in the smaller ones it was most often of hardwood. When servicing an instrument, Mr. Apruzzese always lubricates the worm with what he terms 'cow grease'.

One may ask if the piano organs still play a significant role in the present-day culture of Spain. During a recent visit to Madrid, the Author was rewarded with the sight and sound of two organillos, each being accid-

entally discovered on the street in different sectors of the city. Both instruments were rather large and were mounted on small covered two-wheel carts which were drawn by donkeys. In one instance, the cart was swarming with several children who took turns at the crank whilst another passed the cup amongst the bystanders. The music had a wonderful quality in the open air of the Puerte del Sol, one of Madrid's busiest streets.

Organillos are frequently rented for parties and fiestas where their gay music is in such demand for dancing. Sometimes at large gatherings, two or three are toted out to provide a more varied programme.

One wonders just how long the organillo will remain on the Spanish scene. Few, if any, of the larger instruments are now being made and the smaller ones which are being sold new in Madrid and Barcelona do not seem to measure up to the earlier standards in sound or construction.

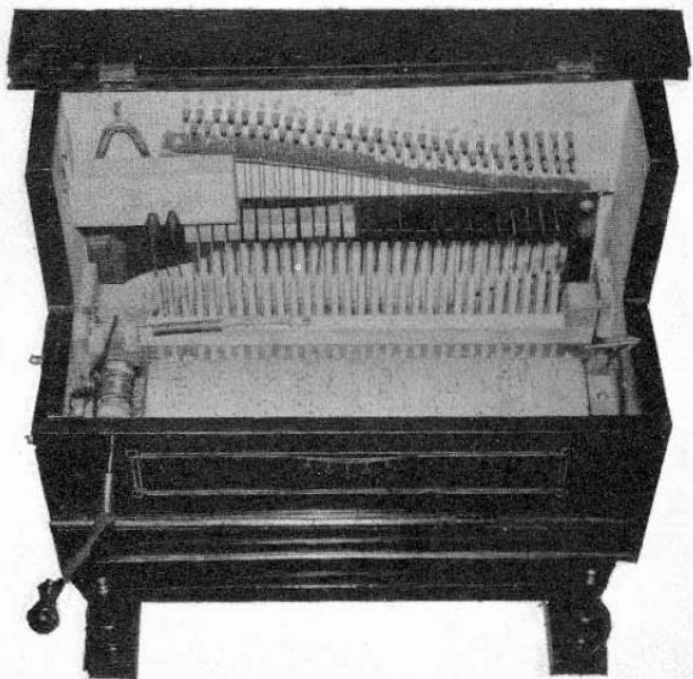
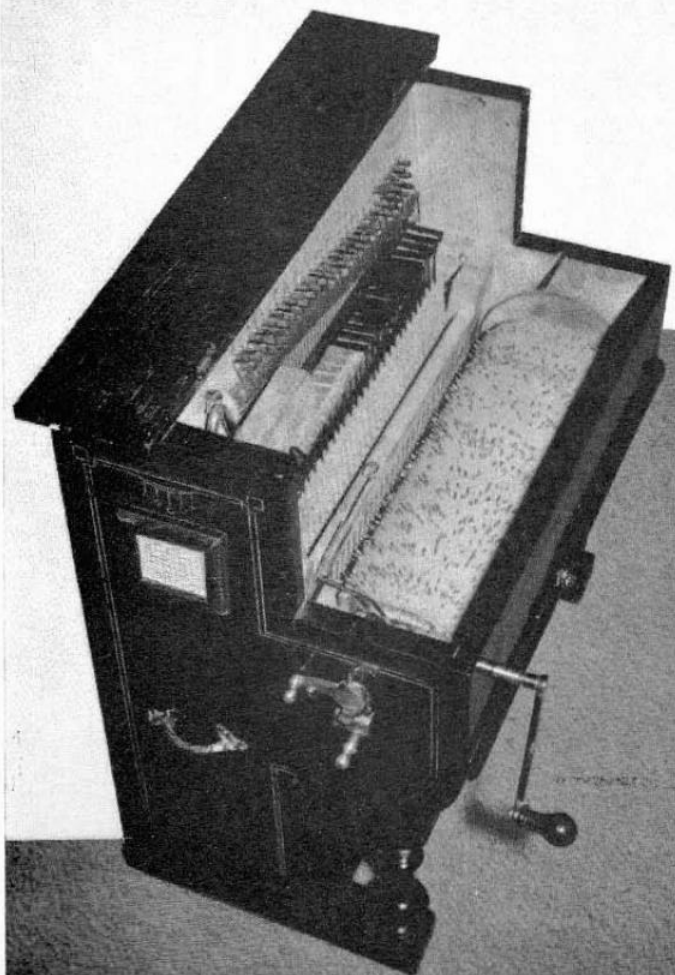
True, there are men in Spain who still care for the older instruments but they are few in number and they, too, are growing old.

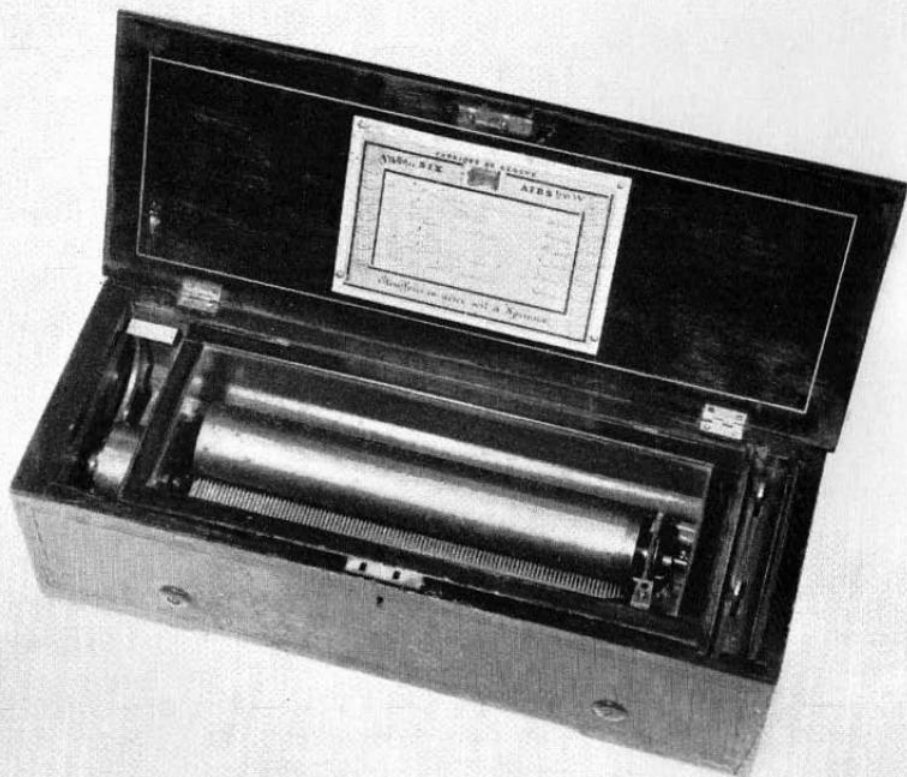


Jackson W. Fritz, who holds the rank of Lt.Col. in the United States Air Force, is a dental surgeon and has served for the past few years at the U.S. Air Base at Royal Air Force Station Alconbury, Huntingdonshire. A most enthusiastic Member, Mr. Fritz has not missed one Society meeting and we are all sad indeed to have to bid him farewell, for, his tour of duty completed, he has now returned to the United States. There seems little doubt, however, that we will be hearing regularly from him from 'over there' across The Puddle. During his stay in England, he amassed an impressive collection of mechanical musical instruments. Knowing the sincere enthusiasm he has softened the blow at seeing this fine collection shipped off to the States! We cannot say how true are rumours that a schooner manned with Society Members who were all wearing masks and who sailed under the Jolly Roger, attempted to intercept, board and pirate the Queen Mary on the High Seas....

CAPTIONS TO ILLUSTRATIONS: The organillo mounted on a donkey cart and referred to in the above article is shown in the illustration on Page 18. The two pictures on Page 19 (facing) show the mechanics of the hand-cranked Spanish street piano or organillo. It is interesting to compare this with the illustrations accompanying the article on Page 27 of THE MUSIC BOX, Summer, 1964.

MUSIBOX COLLECTY CHATTLE The discs for the Stella musical box have no projections and can be played either side. Tip of the month is to play the 'flip sides' and describe them as Polish Airs. It works, too!





Mrs. Anita Brown, 54, Hall Street, Soham, Cambs. writes:

I was very grateful for the sure method of killing wood-worm (last issue) but would be even more grateful if in the next issue you could tell us the best method of getting them out of the holes in order to hit with a hammer....

Post Bag

Editor: Very easy. First select two attractive-looking girl worms, tie a firm silk thread round their necks and walk them over the infected timber. When the boy worms come up for a look, clout them. For details on sexing wood-worms, try a powerful magnifying glass.

Frank Greenacre, 164, Lowestoft Road, Gorleston-on-Sea, Norfolk, writes:

In the coin box of a Polyphon I purchased recently I discovered a stamped brass disc the size of a penny. Having a milled edge, the disc proclaimed "The Liverpool Musical Box Depot, 50 & 52 Church Street. Agent E. Gerard". Obviously intended as a 'test' or demonstration accessory, I wonder how many of these can still be in existence? Perhaps some Liverpool Member might care to report on what takes place at the Church Street address these days!

Cyril de Vere Green, 11, Devonshire Place, London, W.1 writes:

I own a musical box of indeterminate make and enclose two pictures illustrating it (reproduced on facing page). An interesting feature is that the tune sheet depicts a device rather like a crude piano. Also in my collection is another 'unknown make' (pictured on Page 17) with one or two unusual features. The $10\frac{1}{2}$ " x 2" cylinder has unusually long arbors and the one-piece comb has small brass washers to the screws. The winding lever is cranked over the motor-barrel and is made from two pieces of brass. The number stamped on the brass bedplate is 4878 and the case is converted from an end-flap key-winder type. Can any Member shed any light as to the likely makers of these two undoubtedly good quality boxes?

Editor: The first box Mr. de Vere Green mentions most likely bears on the tune-sheet a carillon key-board rather than a piano. This is suggested by the large keys, curved keyboard and general style. It is significant that Antoine Favre's patent referred to a 'carillon without hammers' and thus a carillon keyboard would have been an apt trade-mark. However, the box depicted is 1855 style - some 60 or so years after the then aged Favre's patent. Members comments welcome.

ADVERTISEMENTS - FOR SALE

Interchangeable cylinder box on matching table. Ormolu Empire musical mantle clock, musical picture clock (oil on canvas mounted in gilt frame) Early 19th century flute pipe barrel organ. All perfect condition - sole reason for sale - space problems. Prices and full details from: Bruce A. Moss, 109, London Road, Luton, Bedfordshire. (5)

MAY, 1964

Evensong to ...

BARREL ORGAN

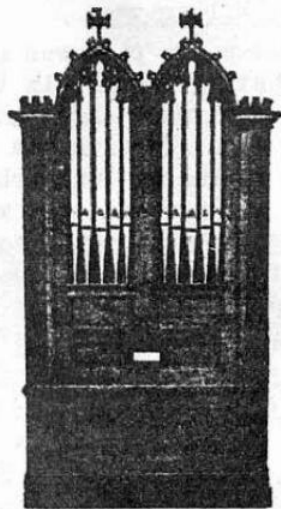
By WARD SMITH

A RECENT article in *Home Words* concerning barrel organs in churches has provoked much interesting correspondence.

Not all our readers seem clear as to what constitutes a barrel organ—some confuse it with hand blowers—but it is an ancient device whereby, instead of a keyboard, tunes are pricked out with pins or staples, usually from paper rolls, by means of a revolving cylinder turned by hand.

However, there are several extant up and down the country, and a few still usable.

One of these is at the little church of St. Botolph at Wardley, Rutland, illustrated here. The Rector, the



Rev. Walter Noy, is proposing to utilise it for Evensong at 7.30 on May 21 (early summer is favoured because the church has no artificial lighting).

There are three rolls or 'barrels' of music, each containing ten pieces. The first roll includes 'Old Hundredth' and 'O Come all ye Faithful'; the second a suitable chant for Te Deum; and the third a set of chants—four double, four single—a Kyrie Eleison, and 'Thanks be to God' (for Holy Communion).

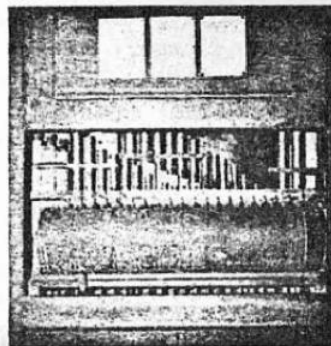
At first sight the instrument, built by T. C. Bates, of Ludgate Hill, E.C. looks like a small pipe-organ, but there is no keyboard and the pipes

are dummies. The picture below shows the barrel or record in position, and the three white panels at the top of the case are in fact music lists, handwritten and very discoloured with the passing of time but still legible.

"Barrel and bellows are both worked by one handle," writes Mr. Noy, "but the gearing is very low, and so it is very hard work to get the music going at sufficient pace to lead the singing."

"The church belongs to probably the smallest parish in the diocese of Peterborough—Wardley has only 27 people—and many years ago the building was closed as unsafe, but has now been restored and is in weekly use."

Mr. Stanley Goodman, of St. Anne's Crescent, Lewes, writes that a barrel organ is in regular use at Shelland Church, near Stowmarket, Suffolk, made by Bryceson of Long Acre. It has six stops of 31 notes and the Bishop of St. Edmundsbury and Ipswich recently ground-out a tune on it.



Mr. Wallis de Russett, of Honiton, Devon, recalls that around 1850 a barrel organ in a Sussex village church declined to cease playing after the hymn 'A few more Years shall Roll' because the stopping mechanism had failed, and a number of embarrassed sidesmen had to carry the machine out into the churchyard!

Another reader, T. Waters, of Eastanton Manor, Andover, records that an 18th century barrel organ at St. Michael's Church, Steeple, was worked by a cylinder revolving from back to front, one revolution providing each tune.

MAY 21

Wardley, Rutland

7.30 p.m.

Eleven-year-old Janet Penn, of Kirkdale Vicarage, Nawton, York, tells us that Nenthead Church in Cumberland, in the highest village in England, possessed a converted barrel organ dating from 1852 which was rebuilt by a refugee during World War I. It now has a keyboard but still contains its original list of ten tunes.

Mr. R. Percy Aggett, a Southwark diocesan reader, of Wallington, Surrey, mentions that a somewhat similar conversion has been carried out to an ancient instrument at Woodrising, Norfolk. It now has three stops and 70 speaking pipes.

This article has been sent in by Mrs. Anita Brown of Soham. It is interesting to note that some enthusiastic art editor has carefully touched out the most vital part of the picture on the left. Where has that winding handle gone?

LAST WORD

OVERHEARD in the Portobello Road (middle-aged American woman to male companion): "I don't know a thing about Art Nouveau, but he sure was prolific."

THIS
MAY
NOT
BE
YOUR
CUP OF TEA



.. BUT ..

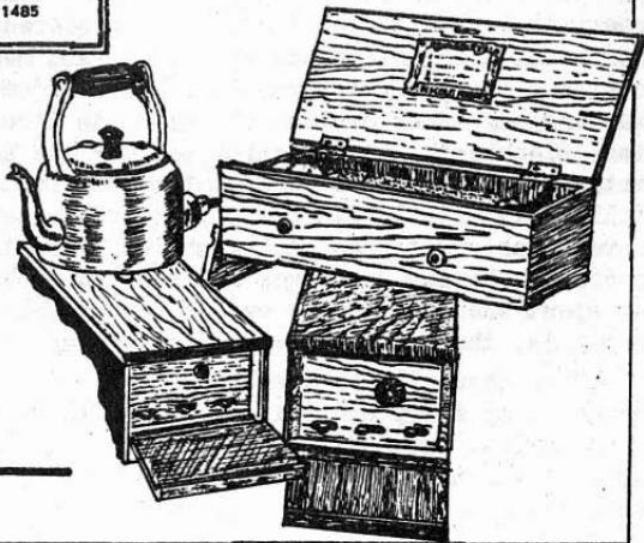
Graham Webb

Musical Boxes Automata
Antiques

93 PORTOBELLO ROAD
LONDON, W.11

TELEPHONE PARK 1485

.... THE
KETTLE
IS
ALWAYS
ON



● Member Gerry Planus entertained us in our second issue with an account of the formation of his fabulous collection of empty musical boxes..... Blear-eyed and grinning, he thrust the following article at your Editor recently. As it is Christmas and in spite of popular demand, here it is!

There are fairies at the bottom of our garden. This, I believe, was said by some famous poet or other. Whether it was said as a joke or not I have no idea. I only know that I can now say it in all seriousness and I repeat - there are fairies at the bottom of our garden.....

Some of you will be thinking "What's that clot up to now!" Others who know me better will be thinking "He doesn't believe in those there creatures - the man's a blasted materialist. What's caused such a change in his point of view?" Others again who know me very well will say "Well, if he says so, there's only a 90% chance that he is wrong!". But perhaps I had better try to explain to you what it was that changed my views.

Ours is a smallish garden, the back boundary of which is a brick wall. Over the wall is a wilderness which used to be the formal garden belonging to an old house built in the sixteen-hundreds. In the corner of our garden stands a very old, large, gnarled, twisted and blasted oak and if only this old oak could speak, what strange tales could it not tell, for our house is only a hundred yards from Blackheath itself and also Greenwich Park, a spot that has a chequered past indeed. It is well-known that Queen Elizabeth the First and Henry the Eighth both used the area as a 'snogger' (translated as a place where necking, petting and skulduggery takes or took place). As I've just said, just up the road lies 'Blackheath' itself which was used as a mass burial place for the victims of the black plague that struck London in times of yore. Earlier still, Blackheath was the place where, depending on one's direction of travel, one spent one's last night before entering the then walled town of London or, having done one's business in London, it was the spot at which one spent the first night out of town. This was a favourite spot for the foot-pads, thugs and highwaymen to waylay the unfortunate travellers.

This then, is the atmosphere - centuries of it - that forms the back ground to my story and this is where the start of my belief in fairies of all types, good and evil, started. So, now, let's get down to the facts of which I am a great believer in (forgive me, my former English teacher.....)

A *****
☆ MODERN
faireytale..
by
GERRY PLANUS

Now as I was saying before, there stands in the bottom left-hand corner of our garden this very old large, gnarled, twisted and blasted oak. Its girth measures eighteen feet which I'm told means that it is about seven hundred years old. Now this is really very old and naturally the blasted oak does not look a bit the worse for wear but (and this is the point) "such a tree is famed as being the host and the home of all types of the Wee People as they are sometimes called".

One evening a short time ago when the sun had set and the ground mist was just started to rise and wreath itself up the bushes and shrubs, the lovely old owl with his great big eyes who lives in the oak gave a warning hoot and then glided silently away from his perch. Wondering what had made him nip off so smartly, I sank quietly on to the grass and waited.

Then, very faintly, I thought I heard the sound of bells and as I cocked my ears up the bells gradually became louder but they sounded so delicate and wonderful that I sat as if spellbound. Perhaps I was spellbound and being spellbound was the reason for the bell-like music - it was weaving a spell around me and as the music pealed softly into my ears I relaxed gracefully full length on to the soft grass. As I lay on the grass, the mist and the music drifted around me weaving its lovely spell so that it seemed I was in another world. My senses appeared to be abnormally acute and then suddenly tiny twinkling lights appeared at the base of the large, gnarled, twisted and blasted oak where its grubby old roots grubbed the earth. The lights started to move in a rhythmic way and as they did so they grew stronger so that I could see the wing-ed damsels who carried them. "I've always loved damsels", I mused and these were little beauties and naturally I lost my heart to them immediately. They darted and twisted around the trunk of the dear old large, gnarled, twisted and blasted oak forming lovely patterns against its dark wrinkled old skin and all the time I lay there enchanted and bemused, lapping it up like a kitten at its first saucer of cream. Then suddenly a change came in the rhythm of the music and subtly it altered its tone. The fairies waved as if to say farewell to the large, gnarled, twisted and blasted oak and flew gracefully up to the top of the wall. There they rested, gently swaying in time to the music which gradually grew more majestic, the bell tones grew stronger and stronger as the music grew in volume. There gradually appeared over the wall an organ-like structure covered with more wing-ed damsels who also waved their twinkling lights in time to the majestic tones that now poured forth from the glistening structure. This grew also in size and proportion to the music that came from it, the bells sounded louder and louder and the fairies seemed to go into an ecstasy of motion, flashing in lines around and round the massive organ-like structure that now towered over the wall.

The music had now reached really tremendous proportions so that the ground I lay on throbbed and vibrated as the terrific base notes pounded out their accompaniment.

Suddenly, everything stopped, the lights disappeared as if by magic and the only things that remained were the lovely overtones still hanging in the air. The oak was there and I was there.

I staggered to my feet, shaking the dew-soaked clothes that clung to me and I stumbled through the darkness into the kitchen and sat down by the cheery red stove and sucked up its welcome warmth.

"Where have you been?" my wife asked. "I've been out in the garden and I must have fallen asleep" I replied "and I did have a funny dream". "Well, dear" said my wife, "it's time you were in bed so off you go" and so off to bed I went.

But now comes the peculiar part of it. In the morning I got up and as is my wont I went to have a wash and a shave. Now our sink faces out on to the garden and as I peered through my half-open eyes I spotted it. Standing there beside the large gnarled and twisted blasted oak, a majestic-looking organ-like structure in beautiful oak veneer.

I tore out of the kitchen, pelted down the garden and pulled up with a screech of burning slippers in front of

A nine-foot high, four-foot wide, 27 $\frac{1}{2}$ " Symphonion with twelve tuned bells and painted on the door was the magic formula SYMPHONION ORCHESTRION. Under this was a slip of paper wedged to the woodwork with two little wands. On the paper, written in fairey lipstick; were the words "To Gerry Planus with our Love".

So now you know why I believe there are fairies at the bottom of our garden

Mr. Entwistle sends this extract from THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS dated February 7th, 1857 - and wonders what happened to the items described:-

SALE by Mr. Dew - Caernarvonshire - North Wales. Great and Attractive SALE of the magnificent assemblage of PROPERTY at BROOM HALL, accumulated during the last sixty years within this abode of taste and virtue the whole selected at an enormous expense and with great judgement by the late Rowland Jones, Esq., deceased. (the items including:)

.....ormolu Parisian chiming and musical timepieces; self-acting Organ and piano..... an extraordinary collection of musical boxes the whole of which will be fully enumerated in descriptive catalogues....."

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made to order



quotations on
sight of
broken parts



Most of us, when we think of disc machines, tend to consider the Polyphon or the Symphonion as the prime examples, but the existence of less well-known makes has been brought to mind lately by the appearance in Portobello Road, London, of the majestic Komet. Let us hope that, unlike Halley's Comet which turns up once every 76 years, this will be the precursor of a lot more astounding (and beautiful) pieces of machinery.

GIANT KOMET APPEARS

reports

★ GRAHAM WEBB ★

The Komet, with its impressive disc span of no less than $33\frac{5}{8}$ ", is at present owned by friend and colleague A.E. Barham who has a shop a few doors away from mine. A few more details of the Komet may not come amiss. It has a total of 14 bells, 198 teeth set on 8 combs (four each side), while there are two further combs for the operation of the bells. These two combs are set at the base. The bells are split into two arrangements - seven either side, and are struck with butterflies.

(Continued overleaf)



"She keeps missing at eight hundred quavers per minute, you say...."

(Inspired by a cartoon in "PUNCH" with grateful acknowledgement)

GIANT KOMET APPEARS - continued from previous page

The huge disc - the largest most of us have ever come across - is, of course, peripherally-driven with slightly oval drive holes. The huge motor is wound from the inside and the cabinet is quite deep to enable the handle to be turned. What struck me as rather strange is that there is no guard for the star wheels, as there are to be seen on the many other upright disc machines I have come across over the last few years.

With the machine, there are only seven discs which all have the inimitable charm of the music of the period and are emblazoned with (dare one say?) almost inscrutable Teutonic script of the turn of the century. Although the cabinet is rebuilt (none of the original woodwork remaining) I found it to be well done although not quite accurate to the period.

No one interested in disc machines should miss at least having a look at the Komet at present residing in Portobello Road. Mr. Barham (who is a Member and whose brother, incidentally, was at the last meeting), is not anxious to rid himself of it, but I think he could be persuaded to let it go if he was convinced it was going to a good home!

Editor's Note: Photographs of THE KOMET together with reproduction of the interesting trade mark will appear in a subsequent issue.

LIST OF MEMBERS

- 106. Sven Forssell, Valhallav 159, Stockholm, Sweden
- 107. Roland Jacobsson, Kvarngathn 8b, Stockholm, Sweden
- 108. Irving Twomey, 267 Porter Street, Manchester, Connecticut, U.S.A.
- 109. Derek Taylor, 94, Queen Elizabeth Way, Colchester, Essex
- 110. J. Foster, c/o Visitors Mail Room, Bank of New Zealand, 1, Queen Victoria Street, London, E.C.4
- 111. A.S. Lawrence, 43, The Beeches, Carshalton Beeches, Carshalton, Surrey
- 112. A. Wing, 59, Addison Road, Kensington, London, W.12

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

- 44. Jackson W. Fritz, 368 Leland Drive, ShrevePort, Louisiana 71105, U.S.A.

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THE MUSIC BOX is published four times each year by The Musical Box Society of Great Britain at 11, Devonshire Place, Wimpole Street, London, W.1. Christmas, 1964

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