

# *The* **Music Box**

*An International Journal of Mechanical Music*



*'Between Art and  
Nature'*

*Figures in the Fourth  
Dimension Book Review*

*A Rare and Remarkable  
Musical Snuff Box*

*A Trip to the Continent*

*Longiano Organ  
Festival*

*Obituary -  
Johnny Verbeek*

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

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9 Engraved Bells by Bremond, c. 1865



Dancing Dolls & 3 Bells by Dawkins, c. 1890



8 Air by Nicole Freres, c. 1864



Polyphon  
19 5/8\"/>

Polyphon  
Palace  
c. 1898

Polyphon  
24 1/2\"/>

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Polyphon 22\"/>

Symphonion  
Musical Hall  
Clock, c. 1895

Polyphon  
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c. 1898

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'All musical snuff boxes have a keyhole in the bottom, don't they?'

Luuk  
Goldhoorn  
& Nico  
Wiegman  
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'We were introduced to some of the finest mechanical musical instruments to be seen, both in appearance and in quality of sound.' ...

Thomas  
Colin Cave  
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Michael Start reviews an important new book on automata by Ellen Rixford.

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Representatives of the European societies participating in the European Mechanical Music Project met in Italy for their annual meeting in September at the Longiano Organ Festival.

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Cover photo: Automaton clock 'Strauss und Bär' (Ostrich and Bear) See page 148.  
With kind permission of the Landesmuseum, Württemberg, Stuttgart.  
(Photo: P. Frankenstein; H. Zwietsch)

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## Editorial

In this Winter edition we have more than the usual amount of contributions about automata. The amazing Ostrich and Bear automaton pictured on the front cover, and which is later mentioned in a report on a visit by some members last May to the Musik & Instrumente Museum, (part of the Landesmuseum in Württemberg), must surely be one of the most remarkable. An important new book by Ellen Rickford about *Figures in the Fourth Dimension* is reviewed, and it should be read by enthusiasts of automata. Also in this edition, and this is a first, we preview some of the most intriguing objects in Auction Team Breker's forthcoming auction on 7<sup>th</sup> November, including many automata.

There is also plenty to read about musical boxes, including something on musical Christmas tree stands. So now is the time to prepare yourself with one for the Yuletide season which is rushing up on us. There is a detailed description with many accompanying pictures about a rare, beautiful and remarkable musical gold snuff box.

I hope you enjoy reading this edition and we look forward to receiving your news and contributions in 2016.

Richard Mendelsohn

**Please submit all material to the Editor for publication in the form of Word documents, JPEGs or PDF files, at richardmendelsohn@btinternet.com**  
**Material in the form of hard copy is equally acceptable, in which case please post it to me at my address at left.**

The Editor welcomes articles, letters and other contributions for publication in the Journal which relate to the study and appreciation of musical boxes and other mechanical musical instruments. The Editor reserves the right to amend or refuse any submissions. Any contribution is accepted for publication on the understanding that the author is solely responsible for the correctness of the facts stated therein, and also for any opinions expressed within. Its publication in the Journal does not necessarily imply that the Society, its officers or the Editor agree with those opinions. The Society, its officers and the Editor do not accept, and hereby disclaim any liability for the consequences of any inaccuracies, errors or omissions in contributions which are published in the Journal. The Music Box is published by the MBSGB quarterly.

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# A Rare and Remarkable Musical Snuff Box

by Luuk Goldhoorn & Niko Wiegman

*All musical snuff boxes have a keyhole in the bottom, don't they?*

*No, not all of them; at least one has a keyhole on the left-hand side.*

*And when you open this box, you don't see a curved plate protecting a cylinder working, or a flat plate covering a fan-type working.*

*Luuk and Niko tell us about a rare and unusual musical snuff box.*

The stacked comb type is called the *Barillet* type if the length of the cylinder is less than its diameter. That is because the word *barillet* is a French word for a very low barrel, and it is also used in horology to describe the spring-house in a watch.

The right half is the compartment for the snuff, and the left half is covered with a plate. Remove the plate and it reveals a stacked comb working, then count the number of teeth which is an astonishing 42. (Fig 1 below and Fig 2 overleaf).

As already known, stacked combs were mainly used in seals, but the number of teeth in such items was seldom greater than eight. Dated seals are unknown, but the period in which they were made lies between 1818 and 1820. In fact this particular example is a revival. The stacked comb had its heyday around 1810, but lost the battle with the cylinder working type.

dated, plays one melody. The seals were a revival of the use of the stacked comb, not the reverse. The seals were in vogue around 1820, and the stacked comb started around 1810 and ended around 1815.



Fig 5 The box

The work in this snuff box also has 42 teeth, not in two rows but in one large stack. Moreover it plays two melodies, each on a full revolution of the cylinder. (See Fig 3 and Fig 4). Sadly the maker of the working did not put his name on it. Also the spring is not dated. Only the fine enamelled gold case (See Fig 5 above) bears the mark of Henri Neisser, around 1810.

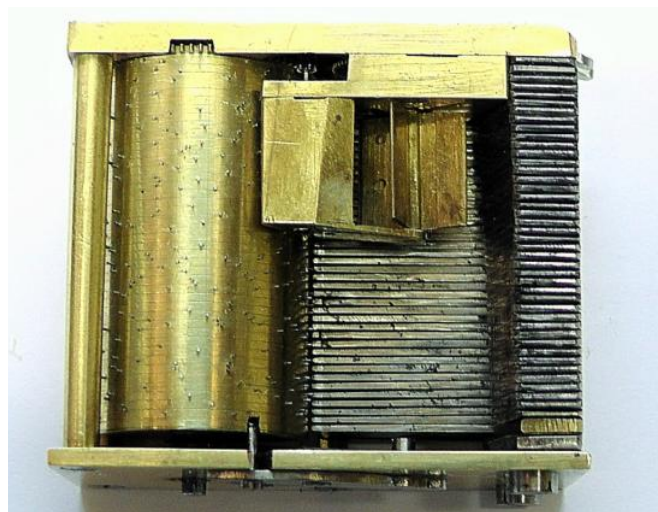


Fig 1 The work

In Arthur Ord Hume's *The Musical Box*, 1995 edition, a stacked comb working is described as having two rows of 21 teeth each, also a total of 42. This working, which is not

The box comes with a key, which is most probably the original one. With such an expensive box one expects a golden key, but in vain here. It is nice but it is brass.

Workings over 200 years old need a thorough cleaning, especially because the old oil dries and hardens. And of course repairs are almost certainly necessary. One tooth was broken so a new one had to be made. Looking at its shape one is flabbergasted that with the tools of the day such complicated shapes could be made. And not just one, but all 42,



Fig 3 The cylinder

different in tone but all equal in length with all the tips in the same place. Inconceivable! The shapes of the teeth differ, but that has nothing to do with the tone they produce. Even neighbouring teeth have different shapes. (Fig 6).

The teeth in the form of plates have two locating holes, and the diameters of these holes differ for each plate, so with the two conical-shaped pillars on the ground plate each tooth can get its proper place. The diameter of the holes in the lowest bass tooth is 0.6 mm smaller than those of the first treble one. When all the teeth were put in place the maker scratched a line over the back of the teeth. In this case, as can be seen in Fig 7, some trouble occurred in the higher treble teeth, and he had to make corrections with the result that the line is no longer straight. Four notes/pins were overseen in one of the tunes, therefore an extra tooth (no 42) was added at the bottom of the stack,

but tuned lower than the highest treble tooth (no 41). This resulted in more problems since the four pins for this tooth interfere with the pinion which runs in the great wheel when the movement plays the other tune. Removing half the girth of the pin makes it just possible for it to work trouble free.

The box has two slides. The one on the left (See Fig 8) activates a lever (See Fig 9). It is engraved with an S and an M. These letters stand for *Silence* and *Musique*. Left above this slide is a small and hardly recognisable pin which activates a plate which in turn covers the winding hole.

The other slide (See Fig 10) at the back activates a lever (See Fig 11). It also has two letters, an A and an

S. Before I heard the music I had not the faintest idea what these letters stood for. But as the music was activated the first tune was the well-known *Ranz des Vaches* and the other *Rule Britannia*. But what is the connection between an A and an S? Thinking a bit deeper I am convinced that the S stands for *Suisse* and the A for *Anglais*, so a Swiss and an English tune. A prototype of the tune card perhaps? As we know the tune *Ranz des Vaches* is the most common tune on early snuff boxes, but as far as I know *Rule Britannia* is very rare on them, maybe even the first time on this one, and it might be unique.

The combination of a Swiss and an English tune on a snuff box, which on its lid has the text 'Souvenir d'amitié et de reconnaissance' (*Souvenir of friendship and recognition*) invites speculation. What is the relationship between donor and receiver whose initials are LB or the reverse BL? (See Fig 5). The word *reconnaissance* is an old spelling of modern *reconnaissance*.

Changing the tunes in this box is a nail-breaking affair because the complete cylinder (with great and ratchet wheel) has to be shifted in the drive train under the load of the main spring and against a strong cylinder return spring. When changing to the other tune, and with the main spring fully wound, the return spring is no longer strong enough to overcome the friction in the drive train to push the cylinder fully back. In playing it returns slowly to its correct position.

Conclusion: an exceptional work in an expensive gold case, given with great gratitude to someone in around 1810.

Case: 81 x 51 x 21mm.

Movement: 38 x 32 x 18mm.

Number of tunes: 2

Length of tune: 37 sec.

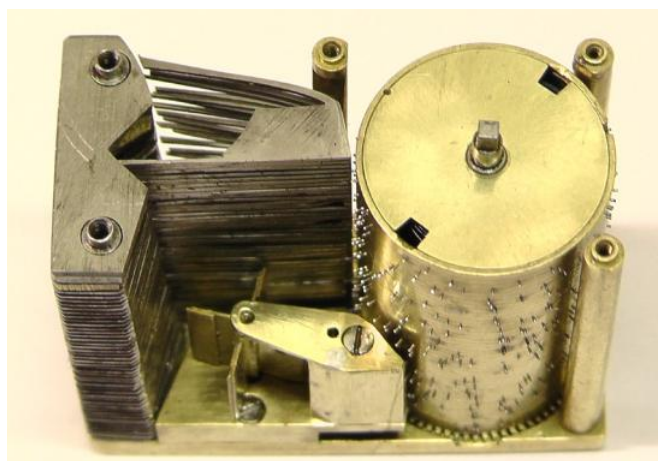
Cylinder length 27.6mm, dia<sup>r</sup> 17mm.

Pin: height 0.32mm.

Step between tunes: 0.30mm.



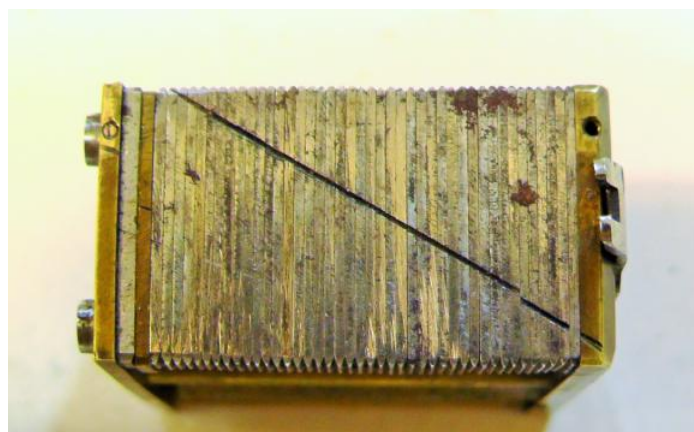
Fig 4 The cylinder with its ratchet wheel



*Fig 2 The work from another angle*



*Fig 6 Teeth with different shapes*



*Fig 7 The back of the teeth with a broken line*



*Fig 8 The start/stop slide*



*Fig 9 The start/stop lever*



*Figure 10 The tune-change slide*



*Fig 11 The tune-change lever*

# Between Art and Nature

## A preview of some important musical automata and musical pictures depicting nature offered at auction on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2015

Auction Team Breker of Cologne, Germany, was invited to submit details of some of the more unusual items appearing in their forthcoming sale. We are grateful to Auction Team Breker for this material and wish to make clear that MBSGB received no payment for its inclusion. For further information on these items and the sale, please refer to the links provided and/or the advertisement on the outside back cover.

Many *Music Box* readers will be familiar with Georges Méliès' 1902 film *Voyage dans la Lune* (*Trip to the Moon*) in which a group of six astronomers decide to travel to the moon. They build a bullet-shaped rocket and launch it from a huge canon with the help of female marines in bathing suits. The rocket approaches the moon and hits it in

but also a stage magician, creator of mechanical illusions and owner of the Theatre Robert Houdin on the Boulevard des Italiens in Paris. Little wonder, then, that the inspiration for his iconic image of the full moon as a human face may have come from an automaton, an example of which, *Lune fin de Siècle* by Gustav Vichy, features in

gained a reputation for his imitation of life, capturing as he did many typically human gestures. His rare smoking automaton, *Lune Fin de Siècle*, was one of the most iconic and surreal musical toys of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. *Lune Fin de Siècle* was described by Léo Claretie in his account of the French toy industry *Les Jouets, Histoire-Fabrication*, written in around 1894, as 'a young man whose head is a full moon, bright and shining, balancing in clouds of smoke'. The automaton depicts the moon as a dandy, leaning against a pillar (Fig 2).

He rolls his eyes, twirls his cane



Fig 1 "*Lune Fin de Siècle*" by Vichy, circa 1891. Estimate: €38,000-45,000

the eye (Fig 1). This film contains elements of a dystopian vision but is directed with such charm that its vivid colour scheme of hand-applied anodine dyes and mechanical card sets make it seem like a dream. Méliès was not only one of the first film-makers to use trick photography for special effects,

Auction Team Breker's sale on 7 November 2015.

Gustave Vichy was born into a family renowned for the making of clocks and mechanical toys and so it is not surprising that he became one of the foremost Paris manufacturers of automata. He



Fig 2

and smokes a cigarette. Unusually for a smoking automaton, smoke is actually inhaled through the mouth and exhaled through the nose, enhancing his natural manner. Vichy's German retailer Gustave Uhlig of Halle presented the piece in his 1894 catalogue as a romantic image, 'a man in love', yet the automaton's title and the artfully crumbling pillar seem intended to imply a weariness with decadence and dandyism as the century wound to a close.

Another automaton in the auction is more remarkable still. The *St. Francis* automaton clock of circa 1840 is a complex creation

suggesting a special commission for a patron with a taste for the Gothic. Mystery, spirits and supernatural terrors experienced in a landscape characterised as awful, melancholy and grand were the ingredients of Gothic fiction at the height of its popularity in Britain from around 1790–1830. Gothic novels, such as *The Mysteries of Udolpho* by Ann Radcliffe (1794) and *The Monk* by Matthew Lewis (1796), influenced the reading public's perception of landscape.

The clock has three separate motors, for the time, the figure and the music. A four-gear train with rack and pinion concealed in the rocky

landscape enables the saint to rise from a seated to a standing position and then fall to his knees before the crucifix as he performs his *mea culpa* with a series of complex gestures. The actions are accompanied by the sound of gongs signalling the matins and a fine six-air key-wind musical movement.

Both the figure and scenery bear a strong resemblance to the portraits of *St Francis Kneeling in Meditation* by El Greco (Doménikos Theotokópoulos: 1541-1614) painted from 1585-1590.

In the paintings the hermetic saint is shown kneeling before a crucifix which stands beside a skull and a devotional book on a rock altar

(Fig 4).

In the *St. Francis* clock the posture



Fig 4

of the saint, crucifix, book, grotto and the earthy palette of the painting are all replicated.

The representation of landscape and nature also played a role in the world of mechanical music, from the urban landscape of the water-powered Mechanical Theatre of Hellbrunn (1748-1752) to the musical picture clocks produced a century later in Paris and Vienna. An example of the latter is a musical picture clock with two-air movement signed 'Olbrich in Wien', c. 1850. Oil on metal, it depicts a landscape with castle, tower and harpist (Fig 5).

A description of Pierre Jaquet-



Fig 5



Fig 3 *St. Francis utomaton clock, circa 1840. Estimate: €15,000-20,000*

depicting a praying figure in a papier-mâché grotto (Fig 3). The devotional subject is highly unusual for a 19<sup>th</sup> century automaton,

Droz's lost automaton *The Grotto* mentions 'a contrast between art and nature, an arrangement of rocks and gardens, of huts and pieces of architecture'. Landscape could be as wild and mysterious as in the St. Francis clock or as cultivated and placid as the view of Baden found on the inner lid of a fine 18-carat gold vinaigrette with sur-plateau movement by Moulinié, Bautte et Moynier, of Geneva, 1815-20 (Fig 6).

The natural motifs of the interior



Fig 6 18-Carat gold musical snuff box with sur-plateau movement by Moulinié, Bautte et Moynier, Geneva, c. 1815-20. Estimate: €20,000-30,000

are continued on the lid's exterior, decorated with repoussé buds, leaves and a relief of turquoises. The same firm produced a series of musical vinaigrettes with enamelled landscapes depicting European cities such as Geneva, Chamonix and Sèvres. The miniature views would have provided wealthy

patrons a reassuring image of the pastoral and urban worlds harmoniously joined, yet clearly defined, at a time when the industrial revolution had already started to erase the border between town and country.

Even before the invention of



Fig 7

Daguerreotype photography in 1839, developments in the production of optics led to a new interest in perspective. In Britain fashionable landscape gardeners or improvers such as Humphry Repton were reshaping great estates to create pleasing perspectives of woodland, ornamental lakes and decorative neoclassical buildings. This artificial landscape, designed to appear natural, was often separated from the pasture beyond by a ha-ha, a trench or sunken fence that provided a boundary without interrupting the view.

In continental Europe, peep boxes for studying vues d'optique (paper perspective views) through a lens became a fashionable novelty. Smaller examples such as the *Polyorama Panoptique* peep box for perspective views and surprising effects were sold as toys in France during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The piece shown here, dating from around 1850, is a good example of its type (Fig 7).

The Parisian maker Xavier Tharin used layered landscapes of hand-coloured lithographed paper for his mechanical picture clocks. Making use of fore, middle and background, Tharin created a sense of movement

in several planes. An example of a musical automaton picture clock of an Italian village by Tharin, c. 1860, in the forthcoming auction has ten movements, including a friar reading in a tower room, boats bobbing on the harbour, a locomotive crossing a bridge and a watchtower flag fluttering in the breeze. The key-wind cylinder musical movement plays operatic airs by Verdi and Meyerbeer (Fig 8). Tharin combined a stock of lithographed images to create

Silber & Fleming. The architecture of the cavernous room and the sunlit street may be purposely romantic, recalling a pre-industrial era, but the modern dress of the rider places the scene firmly within the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

[Editor's note: an almost identical clock



Fig 9 Musical Automaton Picture Clock of a Blacksmith's Shop by Xavier Tharin, c.1880. Estimate: €8,000-12,000

to Jaquet-Droz's *Grotto* and the Claretie article. Additional material supplied by the MBSGB archive.

For further information and additional highlights from the sale, please see Auction Team Breker's advert on the back outside cover or visit [www.breker.com](http://www.breker.com). Videos are available at [www.youtube.com/auctionteambreker](http://www.youtube.com/auctionteambreker). The online version of the catalogue is available at [www.liveauctioneers.com](http://www.liveauctioneers.com).

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Léo Claretie, *Les Jouets, Histoire-Fabrication*, publ. in *The Musical Box Society International*, Winter 1976, p29,

Tony Grant, *A Visit to the Sotherton Estate in Jane Austen's Mansfield Park*, <http://janeausteninvermont.wordpress.com>,

Mary Hillier, *Automata and Mechanical Toys*, p114

D Perrot, *The Grotto, Musical Box Journal*, Volume 2, Journal 4, p141.

Dr J J Haspels, *From Musical Clock to Street Organ*, National Museum Utrecht, 1994, p143



Fig 8 Musical Automaton Picture Clock of an Italian Village by Xavier Tharin, c. 1860. Estimate: €8,000-12,000

different scenes. His animated blacksmith's shop, c. 1880 (Fig 9) was described in Silber & Fleming's catalogue of 1884: 'Very effective Mechanical Piece, representing a Smith's Forge, with decorated cardboard figures. Two men making horseshoes, one man shoeing horse, one man blowing bellows, which work in a very natural manner ...'. This example plays two unnamed airs and would have cost £6 -15 shillings from

by Tharin, dated c 1870, appears in the 1994 catalogue of the Dutch Speelklok Museum in Utrecht. It plays *The Harmonious Blacksmith* on a Swiss comb-playing movement. The differences are so slight they would merit a 'spot the difference' puzzle!]

Material, including photographs, supplied by Auction Team Breker. Special thanks to MBSGB member Bill Sargent for providing references

# Register News No 88

By Arthur Cunliffe

The Musical Box Register is designed to add to our knowledge about cylinder musical boxes, and also to benefit those who choose to become and remain members of the Society.

With this in mind, I would like to remind you of the security aspect of the Register and enhance the idea by formally upgrading the *Neighbourhood Watch* system where we could all keep a look out for stolen items. I know the Register has already helped three people recover their stolen boxes, and I feel that now is the time for the system to be improved.

To start the new project I seek a number of members who would agree to become *lookout* personnel for stolen boxes. People who repair boxes, attend auctions, trawl the internet and generally know what is going on in the world of mechanical music would be the ideal people to help.

I would keep a confidential list of all helpers, and would send out a round robin email giving details of any theft, including digital photographs if they are available, to all of these helpers should the occasion arise. The only obligations required of a helper would be to inform me as registrar and then inform the police if appropriate should you locate a stolen or suspicious item.

I would strongly advise against taking direct action against anyone suspected of offering a stolen box. Make discreet enquiries by all means and gather as much information as possible, but do nothing else except report your

findings as soon as possible to the police and to me as registrar. It is the duty of the police to investigate. To those unfortunate enough to have a box stolen, please inform the police first and obtain a crime reference number along with details of the investigating officer. Obviously your insurance company will need to be informed.

The next move would be to inform me by email so that I can set the *lookout* system into action. This would be done by sending a confidential email to all the people who have volunteered to be part of the *Neighbourhood Watch*.

We can only give this idea a try, and it will require a certain amount of effort from participating members. I believe this is a forward step to take, so if you would be willing to help, please email me at [adcunliffe@bt.internet.com](mailto:adcunliffe@bt.internet.com) heading your message *Register Volunteer*.

As mentioned earlier, the Register has been useful already in helping recover stolen boxes. One stolen in Dorset was recovered from a London street market. Another stolen box had its tune sheet removed in an attempt to hide its identity. The Register entry was useful in this case as the tunes had been listed and the original type of tune sheet as itemized in the Tune Sheet Book had been noted. The box was restored as near as possible to original with an accurate reproduction tune sheet fitted with the tunes properly reproduced. Alas not back to original but far better than becoming a box with no tune sheet.

Changing the subject, the name

Mercadante (1796–1870) may not mean much to some of you, but he was a recognised Italian composer who, in his time, composed in a pleasing style of his period. In Register News No 87 I mentioned that the composer Denza was greatly influenced by Mercadante as his tutor. Rossini, Bellini, Weber and Donizetti also knew Mercadante and respected him greatly. Works by Mercadante feature on only 14 boxes to date with twelve of them being Nicoles. The other two were made by Langdorff.

Examining Nicole gamme numbers 0735, 0746, 0965 and 1207, we find the following compositions by Mercadante:-

Regina di Spagna: Composed in 1826 and featured on Nicole serial numbers 23792 and others up to S/No: 37389.

Eliza Claudio: Composed in 1821 and featured on only one box serial number 25958.

Emilvia Vestale: Composed in 1841 (I believe) and featured on S/No 279935 up to S/No 33521.

All these boxes match the dating chart for Nicoles in the Tune Sheet Book.

Regarding the two boxes made by Langdorff, S/No 2293 is attributed to Lion Freres and is dated 1848. The Langdorff S/No 12565 does not have dating details listed; however, I am sure everything is correct and shows that Mercadante's melodies were never the latest on any box. This is hardly surprising in that he was a little too early for the golden era of musical box production.

Changing the subject yet again,



Fig 1



Fig 2

four illustrations of two differing types of musical box conclude this Register News. They are equally important to a historian and illustrate just how important it is to record such boxes for future generations. We all enjoy different

types of musical boxes and there never can be a best or a worst. A late Victorian musical box playing traditional tunes may be more appealing to one collector but not another. Thank goodness we all differ and enjoy different things.

Figs 1 and 2 show a manivelle made by Thorens, whilst Figs 3 and 4 show a Nicole Overture box. To a child I would suspect that the Thorens box would be the most interesting.



Fig 3



Fig 4

# *Restoration Matters!*

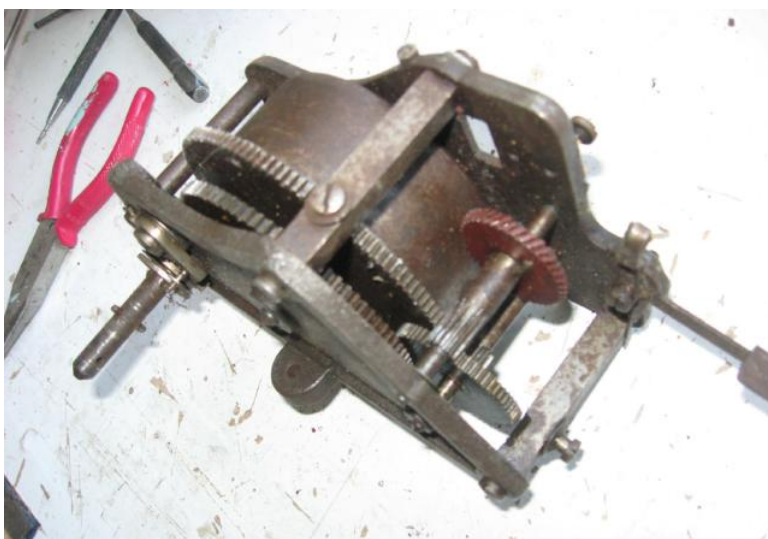
## *19 – Restoring an Edelweiss Musical Box*

by Robert Ducat-Brown

Some time ago one of our members telephoned me to say that he had a spare movement for an Edelweiss twelve-inch Swiss disc musical box. It required restoration, and he wondered if I might like to buy it from him. I went to see the movement, and it obviously required extensive restoration to put it into good working order. He had apparently bought it with a very badly damaged box which was not worth keeping. Fortunately he came across another example with its box in reasonable condition containing the movement I had gone to see.

The box had been created from the two good components and was quite impressive and made a pleasant sound, so I was quite interested in the spare movement. Closer examination showed it was in a very bad state and several parts were missing. The comb was badly rusted and required several new teeth, but we agreed a price and I drove away with my purchase.

I decided to start on the motor, as without the rotating disc I would not get anywhere. It was the type used in wind-up gramophones (Fig 1), having a governor with an endless screw which caused weights, mounted on pieces of spring steel, to fly outwards the faster it went. This rotation is arrested by a round plate which rises as the speed increases, and touches a leather



*Fig 1 The motor in its original state*

brake pad, which slows it down. This brake can be adjusted by a speed control, but it was missing.

The drive wheel to the endless mechanism was made from some type of fibre or composite material. This was badly broken (Fig 2) as it had been touching the rivet holding the spring to the inside of the barrel which had come loose. The only option was to make a new endless drive wheel as I did not have any material like the original. I decided to use leaded clock-brass. The work required 40 slots to be cut diagonally around the rim, which was reasonably easy to do using a



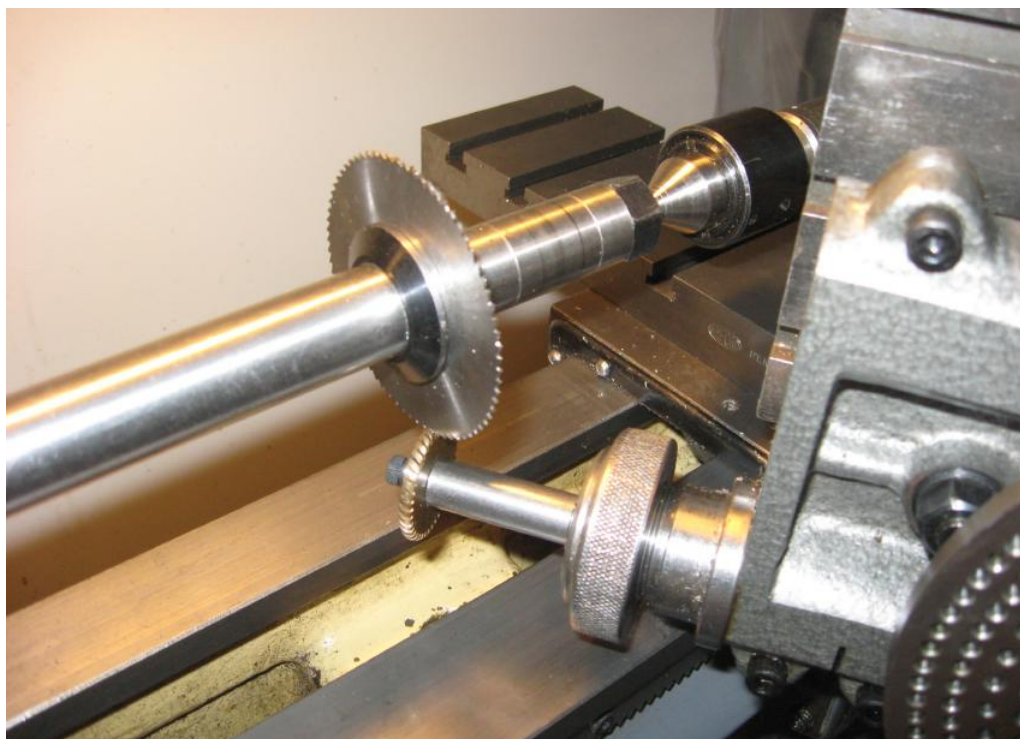
*Fig 2 Some of the damaged parts*

dividing head (Fig 3).

The disc, which rises as the speed increases, was a very loose fit and when I tried to improve it all fell to pieces, so I decided to make a new one from brass. The governor now worked very smoothly.

One of the pinions in the movement needed to be remade, and I managed to find a wheel tooth cutter to suit the job. The spring winding ratchet wheel needed replacement (Fig 2). This was not quite so easy as I did not have a suitable cutter. I set a turned and drilled steel blank up in the dividing head and mounted it on the lathe laying flat. I mounted a 3/32" slitting saw between centres, and made two cuts at different angles by moving the blank slightly to one side so that it cut into the wheel to form both sides of the twelve ratchet teeth. It was easier to mark out the tooth angles on the blank to give me some guidelines.

The problem now was the missing parts. I had no idea how the stop-start mechanism or the speed control worked. Fortunately the member who sold me the movement kindly lent me his own Edelweiss, and I was able to make new parts using his as a prototype. This was also helpful as I had no idea of the comb tuning. My combs were in a terrible state. I could not find any teeth in tune with each other, often going down when they should have gone higher



*Fig 3 Cutting the slots in the endless drive wheel*

owing to the severe pitting.

The stop-start was quite easy and worked well after several bending adjustments. The speed control was more difficult. When the control knob is turned it causes the stem underneath to lengthen by means of a coarse thread which presses down on the brake that I mentioned earlier. I managed to find just the thing in my scrap box left over from another job. When completed, an outer casing slides up and down the coarse screw by means of a peg, which passes through the casing and runs up and down in the groove of the threaded screw. The outer casing does not revolve.

The plates giving start/stop and slow/fast instructions were made from brass, and I used letter punches for the instructions. Some years ago I made a device for holding punches perfectly upright while they are tapped with a hammer, which also allows for perfect positioning. To punch letters around a circle the blank can

be placed on a pivot and rotated under the punch. This all looks a bit crude at first as the edges of the letters are raised by the punch. This is soon corrected by gentle fine filing, and finishing with 1000 grit wet and dry paper.

Before starting on the comb I decided to make a box for the movement, so that I could see how it all worked now that the

motor repairs had been completed. I had come by a supply of good quality birch-ply off-cuts, which would be just right for the job if later veneered. I was doubtful about using ply for a musical box, as fruitwood was normally used. However when I took possession of the movement, I also inherited the original but unusable lid. Examination of this proved that it was in fact made of veneered plywood (Fig 4), which exonerated me for using it for the new box.

Having completed the box I made a winding handle as near as I could to the one on the prototype.

Everything was fitted into the box but without the comb. I was now to be disappointed because, although it was not noticeable when running without the box, the governor was now quite noisy. I tried several different adjustments, but could not improve the situation. I was sure that the problem lay in the endless drive wheel. This must be the reason that the original wheel was made of fibre or composite



*Fig 4 The plywood box before veneering*



Fig 5 The restored musical box

material. The only thing that I had was some 2" diameter nylon rod. I made a new wheel from this material using my original technique, and when I reassembled everything it ran smoothly and quietly.

The two combs were cleaned up, but were still quite pitted. I replaced nine teeth, mostly singles, and one pair on the first comb. The other

comb had its lowest tooth missing. My problem was that the last tooth was past the end of the comb block, so there was nothing to fix the new tooth to. To get around this I lengthened the block by screwing and soldering an extra piece of brass onto the end so that the new tooth could be soldered on to it. The teeth were replaced using the methods described in books by Arthur Ord-Hume and Graham Webb.

When I first saw the original musical box, I photographed the front of it. I was able to use this picture to reproduce a computer transfer of the logo which I used on my box. I obtained the transfer material from:

[www.craftycomputerpaper.co.uk](http://www.craftycomputerpaper.co.uk)

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# *This, That and t'Other*

## *No 13 Victorian Musical Christmas Tree Stands*

by Arthur Cunliffe

*At this time of the year it is appropriate to be thinking about Christmas, not only celebrating a joyful time of year, but also to reflect on the impact of the Christian Festival.*

For many years having a Christmas tree adorned with decorations and surrounded by presents has been a feature of an English Christmas. I well remember as a very young child being totally absorbed and delighted by all of the excitement of the Christmas period. It is rather strange that we think of a typically English Christmas comes partly from the idea of a German Prince of the Victorian era. It was indeed Prince Albert who introduced the concept of a Christmas tree into the royal household and it was quickly seized upon by the public at large.

It was not long before the manufacturers of musical items realised that they too could enter the Christmas scene by making musical stands for this new-fangled fir tree craze, and so revolving Christmas tree stands began to appear.

key could fall down onto the comb and possibly break off teeth.

A general view of the internal layout of the stand is shown in Fig 2. One lever is for the start/stop mechanism and the second is for engaging/disengaging the musical movement. The one fairly long and powerful spring is adequate to power the stand for quite long periods.



*Fig 2 Internal layout of the stand*

Fig 3 shows the very simple and effective device for turning the music on and off. I feel that always using this lever at the end of a tune to disengage the movement is a good idea to prevent possible strain on the comb teeth.



*Fig 3 Device for turning the music on & off*



*Fig 1 Eckardt Christmas tree stand*

I believe the best of these was made by Eckardt of Stuttgart, who originally patented their design in December 1884. They named the stand *Glorioso* and it was a well-designed item 36 cm in diameter with only two minor flaws. If you look at Fig 1 you will see that there are two holes in the top. One is for winding the movement and the other is for storing the

winding key. The first flaw is that neither of the holes have a cover so pine needles can fall easily into the interior. Secondly and potentially far more damaging is that the storage hole is directly over the comb of the musical movement. Thus any larger than normal non-original

All these Eckardt stands were made to play two airs. I have not seen many of

them, but those I have seen play the following tunes: *Silent Night* and *All is Peaceful, All is Still* as seen in Fig 4 and Fig 5 shows the underneath of the stand with five feet instead of the more common four feet. The central foot is obviously designed to help take



*Fig 4 Tune labels*



*Fig 5 Underside of the stand*



*Fig 6 Eckardt's trademark*

the extra weight of the tree. In the last two photographs Fig 6 shows Eckardt's trademark noting that it was made in Germany, with Fig 7 showing a general view of the internal layout of motor and movement. Access to all the mechanism is not particularly easy in that all the



*Fig 7 The internal motor and movement*

levers need to be in exactly the right place for the cover to come off.

Other makers, mainly Lador, did make Christmas tree stands but they were much smaller in design and unable to support larger trees. In fact there are only two Christmas tree stands on the Register, but that may be partly due to the fact that the musical movements were seldom numbered and so could not be registered. Some of these stands served a dual purpose in that they had a sweetmeats bowl to take the place of the tree part.

Should you come across any of these stands, please let me know at [adcunliffe@btinternet.com](mailto:adcunliffe@btinternet.com), heading your email *Christmas Tree Stands*, so that at a future date we can all have a better idea of how they have survived the ravages of time.

# *Figures in the Fourth Dimension*

## *Michael Start reviews this important new book by Ellen Rixford*

If you want to build an automaton or make your art move, you are going to need a lot of determination and a methodical approach; a mind-set like a tank climbing a mountain. What Ellen Rixford's book gives your tank is grip and the ability to progress without endless experiment as you bring your creation inexorably to life.

*Figures in the Fourth Dimension* is an esoteric title for this essentially how-to book, but that should not put off the mechanically minded. For in its pages is a good deal of the lost knowledge of mechanical life, knowledge that Ellen Rixford has correctly identified as missing from the literature.

The book is over 500 pages long, heavy and in landscape format, which places it less intrusively on the workbench or desk than in the bookshelf. The contents are a compilation of contributions from many of the world's artists and experts in moving figures. These creative people are not always the best communicators and come from a tradition that not so long ago regarded their skills as secrets in the same way as magicians do. To quote Paul Spooner, 'I like to spend every day alone in my workshop listening to the radio' (page 347).

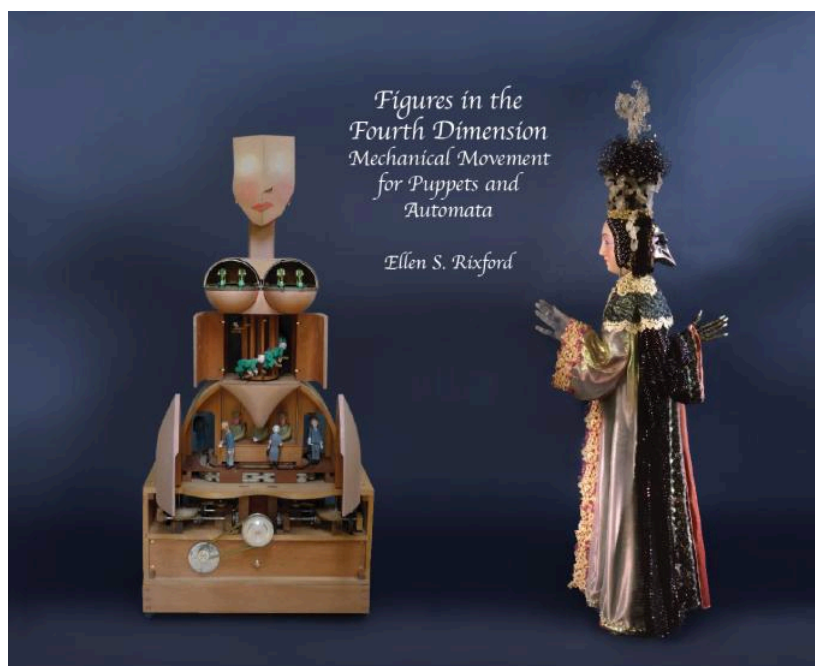
There are of course showmen in the world of moving figures, especially with puppets, where at least the artist is still present on the end of a piece of string, but the automatist creates offspring to go out into the

One such is Francois Junod, whose superb photographic contributions were trumped by his inclusion of actual technical drawings showing the precision at conception that gives birth to his *Pushkin Writer*

automaton. Another is the Musée des Arts et Métiers in Paris, who should be applauded for disseminating so clearly and candidly the inner workings of the automata treasure that is the 18<sup>th</sup> century automaton *Dulcimer Player*. This is potent revelation indeed.

The author, being an accomplished mechanic herself, realises the effort needed to explain the complexities of mechanism that works in three dimensions, and her method has been to combine the photographs and drawings of mechanisms with computer-generated plans. I think the best approach to interpret all this information

is to cross reference between them continuously, as the sequence of movement, its transformations and journeys through the cams, levers and springs to the physical features of the automaton or puppet are decoded. By combining these elements Ellen Rixford has possibly for the first time in any book of this type managed to give us all the information needed for many of these automata.



### ***Figures in the Fourth Dimension, Mechanical Movement for Puppets and Automata***

*Author: Ellen S. Rixford*

*New York, 2015*

*This book is self-published 512 pages*

*ISBN: 978-0-578-15865-5*

*The book is \$80 plus shipping at cost. Details at:*

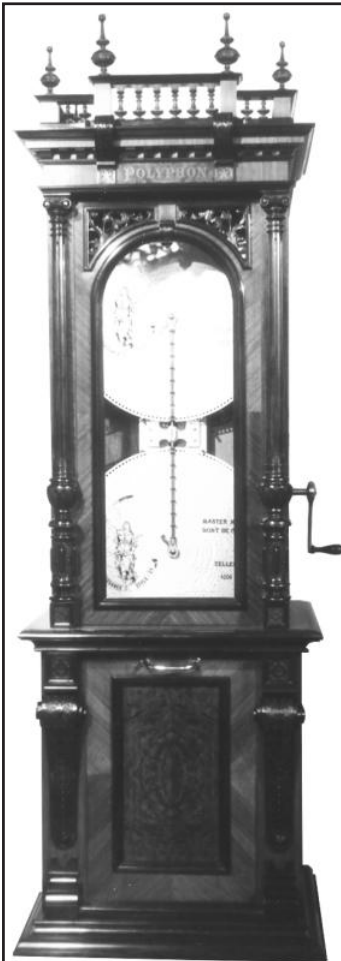
*<http://figuresinthefourthdimension.com/html/Contact-Us.html>*

*or £60 + P&P from Kevin McElhone at*

*[kevin\\_mcelhone@btinternet.com](mailto:kevin_mcelhone@btinternet.com)*

world on their own. Ellen Rixford has shepherded and coerced this disparate group into producing drawings, photographs and explanations revealing their secret mechanical methods.

Most of the artists who contributed are natural givers when shown how, but there are some fascinating contributions from sources that rarely give up information easily.



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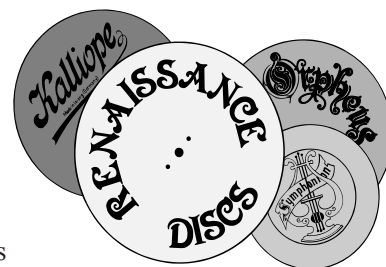
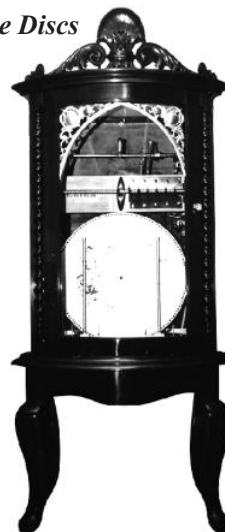
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The subject covered by the book is vast and has some dangerous pitfalls, so it is reassuring that in the area of antique automata restoration the contribution is from Jere Ryder of the Morris Museum in the USA. Jere knows his stuff and provides enough information and caution to guide the conservative restoration of antique automata. The Morris Museum contribution was obviously invaluable as the automata are so rare and many owners will not have documented and photographed restorations to the extent that the museum has. The result is that this section of the book solves the mystery of how to mechanically feed truffles to your pet pig in as clear a way as how to make a nightingale sing.

The contemporary automata scene is strong and vibrant, and uses every kind of material and method to animate its art. This provides for inspiring reading

indeed as the potential uses of magnets, electronics and found objects are clear, and it is not always necessary to have a mechanic's fitted workshop (or mentality) to invigorate objects with them. The automata described here follow the modern trend of a visible mechanism. In this electronic age it seems to be the done thing to display your cranks and levers, often to great aesthetic effect. Chris Fitch's sculptural piece *Spring* is more of a dancer than a mechanism, the components very much second in importance to the unravelling movement. For the beginner there is no fear of failure to get going, with Eric Williamson's *Timberkits* also having a section, Eric's kits provide an easily available entrée to automata making and design for all ages and abilities.

Across the disciplines of puppetry and automata there is a wealth of good work out there, with artists

who are advancing mechanical movement beyond historical achievement, and this book has brought the best of them together in one place and made them talk.

The author's passion for artistry runs throughout in the beautiful photography and the inclusion of avant-garde mechanical sculpture alongside the simple mechanical representations of life. It is this passion that comes through page after page and there is no doubting that many new artists and craftsmen will read the book and bring to life objects they could only have dreamed of.

Michael Start is an horologist and automatist. He runs *The House of Automata* in Scotland. He was the consultant for Scorsese's automata film *Hugo* which is based on Maillardet's writer automaton.

[www.thehouseofautomata.com](http://www.thehouseofautomata.com)

# Introducing Children to Mechanical Music

by John & Jean Tibbles



We have lived in our small village in the mid-south of France for a long time, and have often tried to interest the local school in making a visit to hear the wonders of mechanical music. But until recently there has been no interest. That could perhaps have been because the teachers were not aware of what there is to see and hear, or perhaps thinking the children would not be interested in seeing a ballerina dancing on a mirror. That is until the Mayor visited us on our wedding anniversary, and said, 'Of course this should be shared with the school.'



The teacher's advance visit gave her something new to think about. She was utterly amazed, not having ever seen the like before. So we then had to decide what to show and what not to show the children. Twenty-one children

between three and six years old arrived, which is not quite what we had wanted, but perhaps following the success of this visit, the older children may visit too.



So we had to start off with items that would interest and fascinate ones so young without getting too technical or boring for them. Novelty items were top of the list to

capture their attention, followed by the sweet sound of tinkling music boxes. The teacher did a survey following the visit, and what was top of the children's list? The musical toilet roll holder! Not any collector's favourite item, but it got their attention, and the musical beer tankard was a close second. The roll playing saxophone got a few laughs as John tried to play it, and a demonstration on the roll playing accordion didn't do much better. It does need some practice and coordination, which seemed to be missing on the day.

The wind-up gramophone was totally alien to them, as they probably held a thousand tunes in the palms of their hands. But we did manage to find some old French nursery rhymes on old 78s, which they sang along to. There were lots of other mechanical musical instruments and items both serious and novelty on show, and they were fascinated. The barrel Orchestrion was however too noisy for some of the little ones. The *Can-Can* on the Ariston went over their heads, but a couple of the teachers recognised it and restrained themselves from dancing.

When we finished with a tune on the Orchestrelle first taking the left hand off the keys, and then the right hand, and then both, they declared this was magic. The local village magazine contained an article about the visit, and the children thanked us, and said it was 'magic' and 'well cool'. Where do six year-old French kids get it from?



# *A Trip to the Continent*

by Thomas Colin Cave

In May this year we had an opportunity to travel to the continent to view some private collections and museums. We were introduced to some of the finest mechanical musical instruments to be seen, both in appearance and in quality of sound.

The trip had been suggested and organized by John Phillips, and Mohan Fernando advised on the places to visit. Two excursions were proposed, one of ten days and another slightly shorter tour. We chose the longer trip, and began our travels in Belgium, first visiting Jean-Marc Lebout's collection, followed by Johan Goyvaert's collection. Our small company consisted of the American couple Margaret Bisberg and Richard Van Metere, Kevin McElhone, me Colin Cave, and my photographing wife Linda.

Jean-Marc made us very welcome in his museum, where he had an extensive collection of mostly cylinder boxes, some of them early (circa 1830); a few of the instruments were encased in the bases of what were once parts of musical clocks. After coffee and some tasty homemade delicacies, we were treated to the playing of the movements, all sounding extremely fine.

We then set off to visit Johan Goyvaert with Jean-Marc accompanying us, and on the way we enjoyed lunch in a nearby restaurant. Johan also has a collection of very fine cylinder boxes, and we spent time admiring the exquisite sounds produced by the mechanisms of superb quality. Johan works on the restorations

himself with skill, and sympathy for originality.

The next day we journeyed to the museums of Speyer and Sinsheim. Apart from the mechanical music interest, which included a giant Mortier fair organ, an Aeolian grand concert organ, various Decap dance organs, a Philipps Violine Orchestrion, disc musical boxes, cylinder boxes, player pianos, flute-playing clocks, and much more, there was a broad spectrum of other interesting exhibits to appeal to all tastes. These included vintage and modern aircraft, cars, motor bikes, tractors, railway engines, fire engines, Concorde, Concordski (otherwise a Tupolev 144), and a submarine, to mention but a few. A second visit is a must. On the same day we also visited Bruchshel Palace, where we saw a superb collection which included magnificent orchestrions, large disc machines, organ-clocks, and fairground organs.

On the third day we drove to Germar Schrimpf's collection in Walldorf in Germany. Again we were offered hospitality on a grand scale. We were treated to delicious home-baked delicacies, and later we dined at an exclusive restaurant. Germar played us some of his unique cylinder boxes and other instruments, and we heard delightful tones from his large Polyphon.

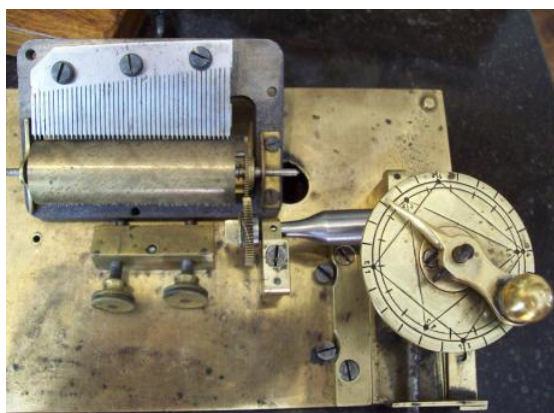
The next day our party divided, and Lin and I caught a train to Stuttgart where we visited the Musik & Instrumente Museum, which is part of the Landesmuseum in Württemberg. This has an extraordinary collection of ancient

musical instruments, some of them unique. In general the lower floors contain pianos, harpsichords and other old keyboard devices, while the upper floors contain the unusual pieces, some of which can be played by the public. Here also are some of the museum's mechanical music objects.

Nearby is the main State Museum, which is housed in a former castle dating back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. We had time to view only one particular part, which was in a dramatically vaulted cellar. This contained a collection of magnificent Renaissance clocks, and a wonderful collection of scientific instruments from four centuries ago. We marvelled at the outstanding and intricate workmanship exhibited in this treasure chamber. One of the exhibits was a gilded automaton in the form of an ostrich and a bear. Upon the hour, the ostrich flaps its wings and rolls its eyes, whilst the bear beats a drum and moves its lower jaw. This beautifully engraved clock/automaton was made in Augsburg in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Back together again the following day we travelled to Lucerne in Switzerland where we visited the Pilatus rack mountain railway. We took a trip up to the mountain top on this remarkable mode of transport, and stepped out into a snow-covered landscape. There were wonderful views but it was very cold. We then made our way on to Saint-Croix.

On the sixth day we travelled by rail to Geneva to see the Patek Philippe museum. On entering we



*Jean-Marc Lebout – This is a machine that a tune arranger would use for marking out the pin position on to a blank cylinder*



*An early barrel pipe organ clock made in Germany at the Museum of Mechanical Music in Bruchsal*



*A Decap dance organ at Sinsheim Museum*



*Colin Cave at the M of M in Bruchsal standing between a Regina 27 inch auto-changer disc musical box on his left and a rare upright Chordephon disc-playing zither on his right.*



*Concorde and 'Concordski' at the Sinsheim museum*



*Jean-Marc Lebout showing his rare Arno paper-roll playing musical box. (see The Disc Musical Box by K.M.)*



*Colin Cave at the Museum für Musikautomaten in Seewen*



*The old couple on a bench at the Museum für Musikautomaten in Seewen*



*The Musée d'Horlogerie du Château des Monts in Le Locle*



*The Ostrich and the Bear at the Landesmuseum in Württemberg  
Courtesy of Landesmuseum Württemberg, Stuttgart  
(Photo: P. Frankenstein; H. Zwietsch)*

found some very familiar faces, other MBSGB members on their own tour. After cordial greetings they kindly invited us to join their pre-arranged guided tour of the museum, and this enhanced our visit. The treasures on view were breathtaking in their exquisiteness, and a joy to see.

On the seventh day we drove to Le Locle to the Musée d'Horologie in the Château des Monts. The museum predominantly displays a fine collection of bracket clocks, but also one or two longcase clocks, some watches, automata, singing birds in cages and intricate snuff boxes, all of very high quality.

We then moved on to Seewen to the Musikautomaten Museum. Upon our arrival we were greeted by the exhilarating sounds of a Mortier, one of three large fairground organs at the entrance. A further display of orchestrions was presented, all in fine working order. Another hall contained modern devices: playable jukeboxes, and some not so modern gramophones. The highlights however were the captivating automata, which included acrobats, an artist, musicians, and a charming old couple on a bench: she knitting whilst he read his paper. We were very privileged to be invited into the workshops, and to witness the amount of restoration taking place, and the skills deployed.

Day eight, and we journeyed to l'Auberson to the Musée Baud. This family-run museum remains a favourite. It contains an extensive selection of mechanical music and automata in splendid condition, ably demonstrated by the patron. Again we were invited into the

workshops and large storeroom which contained many constituent parts; cylinders, combs, motors, boxes, various automata, etc. Overall it was a delightful excursion to a much-loved museum. This same day we made an excursion to the Cima museum, which was also a thoroughly worthwhile event for us.

An interesting display focused on the making of a cylinder music box, which proved to be hugely informative. We saw examples of the masterpieces created by the Saint-Croix craftsmen of old, particularly automata such as singing birds, clowns, and a writing harlequin. The concert room contained large orchestrions and an invitation to dance.

Next we made a visit to the home of Dennis Margot, and we observed how he performed his techniques for restoration and cabinet making. Dennis also showed us examples of his skill in making very small furniture on a doll's house scale. We saw a small lathe with a half-pinned cylinder in place, and the corresponding comb mounted alongside. He also took us to his shop, which was filled with restored instruments and other objets d'art for sale.

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For our last day of visits we drove to Luxemburg to see Leo Cohen, who made us welcome and demonstrated his impressive collection of music boxes. These included a Weber Otero Orchestrion, a Lochmann 62.5, a Komet 65mm, a Stella 43.5, three Polyphons 50cm, three Symphonions, an Imperator 53cm and a Kalliope 58cm. Also in Leo's collection are several table disc models and some cylinder boxes.

Our last hotel was in Metz in France before we returned to the UK. Finally we would like to thank Mohan most heartily for arranging all of the trips, hotels, transport, personal visits and museums. He invested a lot of time on our behalf.



## *The President's Message No 10*

At time of writing I have just returned from the Society's Autumn meeting in Derby in Staffordshire, marking the end of a very hectic month in which I went to the MBSI convention in Los Angeles, quickly followed by the 11<sup>th</sup> International Organ Festival in Longiano in Italy.

Each of these events encompassed both the fun and more serious aspects of our interest in a number of ways. First and foremost we have the pleasure of the music. This is on a par with and inextricably married to the ingenious machines which produce it. So long as we can enjoy this unique combination I believe there will always be a future for mechanical music. Second is the camaraderie – being able to share the wonder and the pleasure of our interest with others who feel the same response and passion for the subject. Then there is the sense of unity in the common cause of promoting mechanical music and preserving the instruments.

These events afford us opportunities to meet old friends, make new ones and exchange ideas on how to disseminate to a wider audience the importance of mechanical music in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. If only a fraction of the ideas which have evolved over the last several months can come to fruition great strides forward will be made.

Having presented at the MBSI's convention in the USA on the topic of 'Working Together' it was particularly gratifying for me to hear recently in Longiano Sandro



*President of the MBSGB  
Alison Biden*

Gozi, Under-Secretary to the Italian Government on European Affairs, when he addressed the European Project meeting. He emphasised the international aspect of mechanical music, how it is common to all our cultures, and how, by collaborating in educating people about it, we are assured of greater success. We are all aware these days, through faster communications, how much smaller the world appears to be getting. The further the channels of communication stretch, the more one becomes aware of the universality of mechanical music, and that as enthusiasts we belong to one global family. It has been very exciting and stimulating to discover some of our hitherto lesser-known 'distant cousins'.

On a more sombre note, just as the last issue of the journal was going out in the mail, news came of the death of Ralph Schack, who was well known to our American members. It is an unfortunate fact of life that as a Society, the

profile of our membership is increasing in age and natural loss is becoming ever more frequent. This latest notification came not so long after the news of the death of Johnny Verbeeck, well known internationally in organ circles. I would not wish to see our magazine become a publication of obituaries; however, these two men were towering personalities, both of whom devoted their energies to promoting mechanical music, each in his own way. To Isaac Newton is attributed the first use in English of the expression of 'standing on the shoulders of giants', and possibly the most fitting tribute we can pay them is to reflect on what they achieved, and feel inspired to follow in their footsteps.

Concerning the perennially vexing question of recruiting more and younger members, I have always subscribed to the view that anyone who has the time and inclination to take an interest is a potential member. I was reminded recently of some statistics: more than one in six of the UK population is aged over 65. At 65 a lot of people don't know what to do with their time, but want to contribute something and make a difference. For the Society, an active retiree is as useful as his or her younger counterpart, and probably has more time available. To end on an up-beat note, while still embracing the international theme, I am delighted to inform those of you who don't already know that the Musée Baud in L'Auberson, Switzerland, is celebrating its sixtieth year. I am sure you will all want to

congratulate Arlette and her colleagues, and thank them for flying the flag for mechanical music so well over the past decades. We wish the museum continuing success in the future.

This is the last magazine before the festive season. I would like to thank everyone who has been in touch during the past twelve months and on behalf of the Committee send you all our best season's greetings.

We look forward to your company once again in 2016.

Alison Biden

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## Letters to the Editor

I was disappointed to see a number of typographical errors in the latest issue of *The Music Box*. The use of the numeral 2 in place of the words 'to' and 'too' is unacceptable. This 'shorthand' is a spill over from the world of juvenile tweets and texts and should never, ever appear in any published document. Also there is some confusion over the presentation of numerals. Cardinal numbers up to ten should be spelled out in full, e.g. 'three', 'four', 'eight' etc. Ordinal numbers are subject to the same rules covering 'first' to 'ninth'. Above these limits numerals are used except for numbers which can be written with one word e.g. 'thirty', 'fifty', 'seventy' etc. Some

authorities say that these rules apply up to twenty, but ten is the more common figure.

Numerals are also to be used for quantities that are, or will be, counted as measurements or in calculations.

Useful reading is The Government Printing Office Style Guide and The Little Brown Compact Handbook commonly used by students on typography courses.

I offer these notes as a past Editor and I hope that you will find them useful.

**Alan Pratt**

alan.pratt@me.com

*I agree that the new style of typing on mobile phones, where numerals are substituted for words, and which is followed by many people today, would be unacceptable in this magazine, and in fact this has never happened.*

*We have decided in future to spell out numbers up to twelve, which is the convention used by Oxford University Press, for whom our copy editor was once a professional editor.*

*Editor*

### New Members of the MBSGB in September 2015

We welcome the following new members who have joined the MBSGB since the last journal was published:

3217	Miss Florence Kennard	London
3218	Roy Fear	Gloucestershire
3219	John Cook	Berkshire
3220	Stuart Kitch	Nottinghamshire

If you would like to get in touch with members near you, please contact the correspondence secretary whose contact details are on the Officers page. You will get much more from your membership if you come along to local or national MBSGB meetings, and there you will make new friends and hear wonderful instruments, and can ask for restoration and other advice. If you are not sure the first time, then just book in as a day visitor with the organiser of the meeting. There are four Local Area Groups so we hope more members will come along and join in.

kevin\_mcelhone@hotmail.com 01536 726759

<b><i>DATES FOR YOUR DIARY 2015 and 2016</i></b>	
1 <sup>st</sup> November 2015	Amersham Fair Organ Museum. Open Day. <a href="http://www.fairorganmuseum.org.uk">www.fairorganmuseum.org.uk</a> 01494 433948. 11am start
21 <sup>st</sup> November 2015	St Albans Museum Dance Organ Day. St Albans Organ Theatre, 320 Camp Road, St Albans, AL1 5PE 11am start
5 <sup>th</sup> December 2015	<b>MBSGB Teme Valley Winders Christmas meeting.</b> Eastham, Tenbury Wells, Worcs. 11am start. Details from John Phillips. 01584 781118
6 <sup>th</sup> December 2015	Amersham Fair Organ Museum. Open Day. See above
10 <sup>th</sup> January 2016	Amersham Fair Organ Museum. Open Day. See above
7 <sup>th</sup> February 2016	Amersham Fair Organ Museum. Open Day. See above
6 <sup>th</sup> March 2016	Amersham Fair Organ Museum. Open Day. See above
19 <sup>th</sup> March 2016	<b>MBSGB Home Counties Group.</b> St Mark's Church Hall, Church Lane, Colney Heath, Herts AL4 0NH. Coffee at 10.30am, meeting at 11.00am. Bring your own lunch. Contact Robert Ducat-Brown 01438 712585.
2 <sup>nd</sup> April 2016	Jonny Ling Open Day. Wide-ranging collection including pianos, organs and orchestrions. Diss, Norfolk. Please contact Jonny on 01379 783350 or <a href="mailto:jonnyabcuk@yahoo.co.uk">jonnyabcuk@yahoo.co.uk</a>
15 <sup>th</sup> to 17 <sup>th</sup> April 2016	<b>MBSGB National Meeting.</b> Somerset. Includes a visit to a major local collection and a tour of an historic cinema. See separate details.
30 <sup>th</sup> April 2016	<b>MBSGB Midlands Group.</b> Kettering. Please contact host Kevin McElhone at <a href="mailto:kevin_mcelhone@btinternet.com">kevin_mcelhone@btinternet.com</a> 01536 726759
2 <sup>nd</sup> May 2016	Second Winchester Organ Festival. Details to follow.
15 <sup>th</sup> May 2016	National Vintage Communications Fair. Warwickshire Exhibition Centre.

### **MBSGB Home Counties Group**

Following the success of the meeting at Brentford Music Museum, the Home Counties Group will operate alternately between Brentford and Colney Heath in Hertfordshire. This should give easy access to members in various parts of London and the Home Counties to at least one local meeting a year, although you may need to travel a little further for the second one. The first meeting at Colney Heath will be on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> March 2016 at 10.30am for coffee. The meeting will start at 11am and continue until 4pm. Bring your own lunch, tea and coffee will be provided. The venue is St Marks Church Hall, Colney Heath, Hertfordshire AL4 0NH.

Colney Heath has been chosen because it is an excellent hall with good facilities and ample parking. It is also within easy reach of a large part of London and the Home Counties. Google Maps show the following journey times and distances from the following towns without traffic:

Brentwood	32 miles, 47 minutes
Southend	52 Miles 1 hour 08 minutes
Guildford	50 miles, 54 minutes
Kettering	70 miles, 1 hour 11 minutes
Dartford	44 miles, 1 hour
Biggleswade	27 miles, 35 minutes
Aylesbury	31 miles, 40 minutes

Colney Heath is about 2.5 miles from junction 22 of the M25 and about 1.5 miles from junction 3 of the A1M. Further details and directions are on the Forthcoming Events page of the website [www.mbsgb.org.uk](http://www.mbsgb.org.uk)

Please bring something to tell us about, either just to show and play or to give a short talk about it.

If you would like to come or require further details please contact:

Robert Ducat-Brown Tel: 01438 712585 or Kevin McElhone Tel: 01536 726759. We look forward to seeing you.

# Obituary – Johnny Verbeeck

14<sup>th</sup> October 1951 – 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2015

The mechanical organ movement was saddened by the death of Belgian organ builder Johnny Verbeeck following a battle with cancer.

Born into the famous organ-building family of Verbeeck, Johnny was the fourth generation of his family to take up organ building. Initially working alongside his father, Johan Verbeeck, he took over the business in 1979. Johnny built the business up to become one of the largest of its kind.

He was very productive in the building of new organs. The smallest instruments were his 36-key hand-turned organs, and he built organs of many different sizes, including a number of 52-key and 72-key instruments. Larger instruments were constructed too, perhaps most notably the 115-key *Centenary* Verbeeck, built in 1984 for the late Tom Varley, Lancashire, on the occasion of the centenary of the Verbeeck organ business. In 2003 the 118-key concert organ *Victory* was built for the Kelders family in the Netherlands. This has become one of the most famous mechanical organs in recent years, thanks in part to its wide-ranging travels across Europe promoting the work of Verbeeck to thousands of people.



It was Johnny who developed the business into the global brand it is today.

In 2009, the family celebrated 125 years of mechanical organ building, the highlight of which was a one-off event in the centre of Antwerp featuring a number of Verbeeck organs including *Victory*.

Over the years, Johnny took on a number of apprentices in mechanical organ

The quality of his work in his own instruments was highly regarded by many, and they have been exported around the world.

The business was not just focused on building new organs, but almost every thinkable component for mechanical organ could be supplied by Verbeeck. This included supplying cardboard music for organs of all scales, regardless of manufacture, with arrangements supplied in the main by Dutch music arrangers.

Johnny also developed the business in restoring older instruments. In fact many of the large mechanical music collections today were amassed thanks in part to the fact that Johnny developed a very good business link with many American collectors as well as those from other countries including Japan.

building. One of them was David Burville from Kent, who has since set up in business in his own right.

The Verbeeck family business continues under the leadership of Johnny and his wife Marijke's son, Jeffrey Verbeeck, who is the fifth generation of organ builders in the family. The name Verbeeck is known the world over thanks to the remarkable business which Johnny built up, and his legacy is one which will be remembered by many people for many years to come.

*David Dingwall*

We have also recently learned of the deaths of Robin Timms and Joe Petit, and we extend our heartfelt sympathies to those close to them.

# *Singing birds as never heard before – Report on the Society's Autumn Meeting in Staffordshire*

Once again there was a good turn out for the Society's Autumn Meeting, based at the popular Mickleover Court Hotel on the outskirts of Derby. Although this is not the first time we have used this venue, the weekend featured all new content.

After a relaxed Friday evening, Saturday saw us off early for the start of a pleasure-packed day of activities. Our first treat was the coach ride itself, as we meandered up hill and down dale through the glorious autumnal Peak District, bathed in sunshine. We wondered whether the coach driver was lost when eventually he drew up outside an unprepossessing but sprucely kept rural petrol station, clad in crimson virginia creeper. However, it was soon clear that we were expected as we were welcomed into the tardis-like interior of *Pipes in the Peak*, and the large Decap dance organ occupying pride of place at one end of the cavernous building struck up. This afforded car enthusiasts an opportunity to inspect the collection of classic cars also housed there. Although the collection is modest in size, all the cars were in tip-top condition, and were complemented by a collection of old petrol pumps, which were also well restored, and other garage paraphernalia. It was good to see that the other items of interest, ranging from clocks, a phonograph and radios, were also all in good condition and well displayed.

After a good selection of lively tunes on the Decap, much of it toe-tapping Latin favourites, we were invited to take our seats for a concert rendered by talented local

organist Christian Cartwright on the other major attraction, the Compton cinema organ. This originated from the Regal cinema in Derby, where it resided from

as the *Mighty 'Cello'*, although purists amongst our audience observed that it was more like a double bass. Christian explained the 'cello' was very rare, with only



*Christian Cartwright at the Compton console. Above him are a selection of some of the percussion instruments played mechanically*

1938 to 1965. Once again in impeccable condition, it boasted a number of novelty pipes and unusual features festooned across the walls. Amongst these was a mechanically bowed 'cello', known

seven extant examples still known in this country. It was not part of the ex-Derby organ, but had spent several years in a cinema in Ealing; the console from that cinema now resides in Wormwood Scrubs



*The Decap organ*



*Part of the percussion section of the Compton organ. Note the classic car in foreground*

prison, where it has been converted to play church music.

We were treated to a wide variety of music, ranging from the haunting *Londonderry Air* when the vibraphone was very effectively demonstrated, to popular dance rhythms, many played in the strict tempo demanded by Blackpool Tower ballroom, to Buddy Holly and Cilla Black hits from 1950s and '60s respectively. The magical effect was completed by the glitter ball spinning from the ceiling and the progressively changing illuminated organ console.

Arguably the most popular feature, and literally a hoot, was the 18-pipe tune bird whistles, employed very effectively to render the melody of *When I'm 64*. It was impossible not to have a fit of the giggles watching the row of birds wobbling and bobbing up and down as each note was played.

Nor did the entertainment stop during the coffee break, when the

Ampico player piano was put into action, and those interested were given a short tour of the inner workings of the Compton organ. Christian then resumed his post at the console for another session, which included an explanation of the various organ features, and then a return of the bird whistles aptly employed for *Ain't Misbehavin'*. Finally Christian played a medley of tunes culminating in the Sinatra

hit, *My Way*, and the organ slowly descended into its pit.

Next on our tour of Staffordshire was the legendary Yew Tree pub, where we were greeted by member Roy Evett, pint already in hand, and his Model T Ford tucked into the carpark, although his underfed passenger gave some cause for concern (was an obsolete medical skeleton, for those who don't know.) This was another location where the outside appearance belied the space inside. With walls lined with large disc-playing machines and pianos of various sorts, as well as a vast array of other collectibles, there was barely room to perch to consume one's lunch of steak and ale pie with mushy peas. Although many of the instruments can be played by inserting a modest 2p coin, most of the music at this venue came courtesy of a foot-pumped player piano. Time for more toe tapping as well as a spirited singalong to *Delilah*.

Lunch over, we were once more on the move, to the National Memorial Arboretum, where despite the opportunity to walk off



*The tune whistle birds which caused so much mirth. Out of shot: a duck*

the steak pie across 150 acres, many people opted for the more leisurely 50-minute train tour. The contemplative atmosphere and fresh air afforded a contrasting respite to our lively morning. A number of members were surprised to find personal connections amongst the memorials, either to family members, friends, or fellow servicemen and women.

Saturday's programme concluded with our traditional dinner followed by an entertainer specialising in mind reading and prediction tricks, in which our members gamely participated.

Sunday morning was another packed session, this time in the hotel, where a number of presentations were made. After the first screening of the final version of Florence

Kennard's short film, John Harrold took the floor to talk about the restoration of a small Imhof & Mukle hand-cranked dance organ rescued some years ago from Brighton's Royal Pavilion, where it had suffered the ravages of fire, water and woodworm. The tuning had been particularly challenging as there was no clue as to what it had been, and it took John 700 hours to achieve. However, when the organ played we all agreed that his efforts had been worthwhile. An unusual feature of the organ was the pins of the barrel, which were both different lengths and thickness, with some even having chamfered

tips.

After coffee John Phillips presented an unusual Alexandra cylinder box playing removable pinned sleeves, of which there were six in all, each with six airs. This was followed by Peter Howard and David Worrall displaying between them three buffet boxes, which, as Peter described, are effectively cylinder boxes on their sides. The last of the three, by Monjon Manger, featured a number of Gilbert and Sullivan tunes which had been previously



*Compton cinema organ console at Pipes in the Peak*

owned by Anthony Bulleid.

The mood changed as new attendee, Jenny Weaver, explained how to make a feather brush, a low-tech but highly effective cleaning tool. This was followed by Terry Longhurst demonstrating an exceptionally fine cylinder box, which was not quite as it had been described in the catalogue of the auction where he bought it: 'A Nicole Frères two per turn eight-air overture cylinder box.' It had an unusual feature whereby the dust lid could be locked into place, and dates to about 1845. Although furnished with a detached tune

sheet listing eight airs, two of them were known to have been composed after the date of the box ... During its chequered history it had been repinned twice, the stunning end result being well worth the expense.

From the sublime to the ridiculous, with Dennis Evett contrasting his Celesta disc musical box with one sent to him for repair. Initially there was some doubt as to whether the second of these was a genuine Celesta. However, having established that it is, it still poses an unsurmountable challenge as it appears to have been fitted with a now broken gramophone motor.

Hugh Morgan played the first musical box from his collection, before, saving the best till last, Alan Godier played a superb early Frères Nicole cylinder box, one of the first of the large boxes to have been made. After many hours of work by Alan, it plays

beautifully. We were all extremely envious of its owner, even more so when we learned he had been given the box as scrap four years ago.

The morning's proceedings concluded, we all decamped to Nicholas Simons' residence for a splendid buffet lunch and more musical treats, mostly from his collection of orchestrions, pianos and organs. Nicholas deservedly received hearty appreciation for organising a very successful and enjoyable weekend.

# *Longiano Organ Festival*

## *and Report of the European Project, September 2015*

Representatives of the European societies participating in the European Mechanical Music Project met at the Villa Silvia Carducci, Cesena, in Italy for their annual meeting on Saturday, 12<sup>th</sup> September 2015. The meeting coincided with the 11<sup>th</sup>

Trémouille of the iCloud tool being used to compile the glossary of mechanical music terms. The glossary for the barrel piano is almost complete, lacking only the input of the Dutch. However, the diagrams of the musical box supplied a few years ago on behalf

All agreed to complete a copy once it had been amended to correct some minor errors.

During the session there was a visit from Sandro Gozi, Under-Secretary to the Italian Government on European Affairs, accompanied by



*Delegates at the meeting of the European Project, 12<sup>th</sup> September, 2015. L to R: Jean-Pierre Arnault, Alison Biden, Flavio Pedrazzini, Franco Severi, Sandro Gozi, Michel Trémouille, Raphael Luthi, Robert Florizoone, Ralf Smolne*

International Festival of *L'Antico Organetto* held biennially in Longiano in Italy. The meeting was attended by Robert Florizoone (Belgium), Michel Trémouille and Jean-Pierre Arnault (France), Ralf Smolne (Germany), Franco Severi and Flavio Pedrazzini (our hosts in Italy), Raphael Luthi (Switzerland) and Alison Biden (UK).

The assembly was addressed by the town of Cesena's cultural representative, who welcomed the delegates and acknowledged the importance of the work of the Project meeting. There was a demonstration by Michel

of MBSGB were deemed not to be good enough for the purpose, and were now being replaced by images created from photographs by Jean-Marc Lebout. Michel Trémouille was delegated to interact with Lucas Wendel to progress the creation of a Wiki site for mechanical music, starting with the introduction of the images and translations available to date. There was some discussion about finding a shorter name for the project, and/or an acronym, and the creation of a suitable logo. Finally, the Italian contingent introduced a draft Partnership Agreement to be signed by the participating organisations.

a large entourage of bodyguards and an armed police escort. Sg Gozi addressed the meeting, first paying tribute to Franco Severi for all his work to promote mechanical music. He then went on to point out that mechanical music is common to all our cultures, and the project was a good way for all to be Europeans. The Project helped in the building up of a network which could exploit the reality and the potential of Europe.

The next Project meeting is provisionally set to coincide with the Les Gets Festival scheduled for July 2016.

## The Festival

The 11<sup>th</sup> International Organ Festival of Longiano, spread over the weekend of 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> September, was supported by more than 100 organ grinders. Although advertised as being from all over Europe, the participants were mainly French and Swiss, with some Italians, and others from further afield, such as Britain, Germany, the Czech Republic and Slovenia.



*Henri & Alexandra Noubel from the Czech Republic*

On Friday night all those participating were given a tour of the AMMI (Associazione Musica Mecanica Italiana) collection at the Villa Silva Carducci, followed by an animated dinner.

From 4.30 pm onwards, on both Saturday and Sunday, the main street of Longiano rang out to a cacophony of traditional organs. Any attempt to play them in turn was thwarted by the enthusiasm of their owners to show off their instruments to the delighted and fascinated spectators. Additional entertainment was provided in the form of an art exhibition and a concert on both days, and a demonstration of dancing to organ music by a troupe decked out in spectacular costumes from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, evoking the final

scenes of the Visconti film starring Burt Lancaster and Claudia Cardinale, *Il Gato Pardo – The Leopard*. In the evening strollers were treated to the unusual spectacle of a white grand piano supporting a ballerina, seemingly gliding along the street. On Sunday there was also an antiques street market, with a tempting selection of mechanical musical instruments, clocks, radios, gramophones and records.

Despite all the activity, the atmosphere of the weekend was very relaxed and convivial. There was plenty of time to catch up with old acquaintances, and new friendships were quickly forged, making it an excellent opportunity for networking and exchanging invitations.



*Children delighted by some of the Swiss visitors*



*Italian participants playing and singing in the traditional style*



*Gianni from AMMI and his companions who add both glamour and colour*



*Crowds throng the streets of Longiano*



*This young lady was delighted to be recognised as a Steampunk! (See the Autumn journal.)*

## *Longiano Organ Festival*



*Visitors from Slovenia*



*Flavio Pedrazzini of AMMI with his latest co-creation*



*Edi Niederberger from the Swiss Society, SFMM*



*Back view of Flavio's machine*



*Meals on wheels Logiano style*



*Flavio's instrument is programmed by a punched card book*



*The illuminated piano with ballerina offers an ethereal spectacle as it glides up the street*

*Percussion section of Flavio's instrument seen from the back. It has been cleverly designed to look like a robot*



# *London and Home Counties Group Meeting*

## *at Kew Bridge in London*

The new London and Home Counties Group met at The Musical Museum at Kew Bridge on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> September at 10.30 in the Concert Hall. I had contacted all new members who had joined in the last five years and my own customers who live within 30 miles of the museum. I am pleased to say we had 21 people at the meeting. This included Richard Cole and Owen Cooper from the Museum, members and friends, including six whose first attendance it was.

We sat under the balcony around tables on which various instruments, brought along by the participants, were placed to be played. We listened to talks from many regulars and also some of the newcomers. In no particular order we heard cylinder musical boxes by Reuge, an old unidentified four-air keywind box for tune identification (we only managed one tune out of four), a couple of novelties including a musical clock, a twelve-air Langdorff Piccolo Tremolo box, and a four-air Overture box which played through its entire impressive programme. We also had a rather unusual small cylinder box made by Mojon Manger which played twelve airs, two per turn. As there were at least four people who dabble in clock collecting and repairs, we had a talk and demonstration about how to cut gear-wheels.

After midday Richard Cole gave an illustrated talk about the technicalities of the Wurlitzer Cinema Organ and the rare roll-playing system which enabled the organ to replay pieces of music recorded by organists of the day,

and which included the stop selections and shadings of sound. Later this seamlessly changed into part of the tour for public visitors who were in the gallery directly above us and enjoying it.

After lunch of sandwiches in the museum café overlooking the River Thames the shorter afternoon session continued with a Kalliope disc musical box with bells, and a Drapers Orchestral Organette. Mark Windisch from the National Early Music Association gave a talk and demonstration on two Crum reed horns. Richard Cole was able to demonstrate that the cinema organ could reproduce a similar sound using the crummet stop.



*Jack Henley and Bob Ducat-Brown listen intently to a rare café piano, which has percussion in a separate side case. (The side case was found in a barn some years after the museum acquired the piano).*



*Part of an exhibition on inventions – this was a machine to scoop out the middle of the coconuts ... (Nothing to do with musical boxes!)*

We also saw some illustrations of very rare instruments which had been seen by one of the groups who visited continental museums in late Spring this year, and watched three short sound-film extracts of music hall performers. This showed them performing in the early 1930s around the time they were about to retire. Such film is hard to find.

This was an informal meeting with plenty of time to join in or ask questions. We finished by 3 pm thus allowing two hours for a guided tour of the museum by Owen Cooper.

The date and location of the next meeting, which will be organised by Bob Ducat-Brown in March 2016, will be published on the web site and in the journal.

Kevin McElhone

# News from other Societies

## ***Mechanical Music Vol 61 No 4*** ***July/August 2015***

See also [www.mbsi.org](http://www.mbsi.org)

After the routine introductory columns of this publication, the contents proper kick off with a brief article by Dr Wayne Finger on how to use Mechanical Music Digest (MMD) to promote the MBSI. This is something I have considered writing about with respect to the MBSGB, so congratulations to Wayne for getting off the starting block ahead of me. Editor Russell Kasselmann then pens an article entitled *A Hupfeld Helios* about how a restoration project became the kernel of one man, Mike Argain, achieving his dream. First imported into the USA by Q David Bowers, it passed through a number of hands, and the various exchanges which took place form as much of the article as the description of the instrument itself. The next nine pages are dedicated to previewing the convention (which subsequently took place at the beginning of September) in Torrance, California (effectively Los Angeles.) *A Chevron Comb in a Strange Musical Mechanism* heralds a feature from frequent contributor, Luuk Goldhoorn. Prefacing his piece with a potted history of the development of Swiss musical boxes Luuk focuses on the specific: a musical movement with a number of unusual features, suggesting a one-of-a-kind construction. There is then a brief account, again by the Editor, of a musical box in the Morris Museum with connections to Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*. I think many of us are aware that Puccini discovered



some of the musical themes of his opera *Turandot* on a musical box made for China. Now it would appear he found two musical themes for his Japan-set work also on a Chinese box. It is well worth a visit to <http://goo.gl/6J3Rn3> to see a short film clip about this.

The Japanese Chapter then takes centre stage as it comes in the middle of magazine, with a report of a Chapter Meeting, and an organ rally. Other Chapter Reports are from The East Coast, Southeast, Golden Gate (February 15<sup>th</sup> and April 18<sup>th</sup>), and National Capital Chapters. The last item in this edition comes under the regular feature *The Hunt*, this time about a Molinari hand-cranked organ, restored by Craig Smith

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## ***Mechanical Music Vol 61 No 5*** ***September/October 2015***

See also [www.mbsi.org](http://www.mbsi.org)

This edition contains the last message from the outgoing President, Julian Grace, and the first from the incoming Membership Chair, Warren Stiska, and together with such a comprehensive Editor's column it was tempting just to copy it for this column instead of actually reading the magazine. Dr Wayne Finger, who is always doing no end of amazing and useful things, has turned his hand to drafting a children's activity book to keep little ones amused while parents attend mechanical music gatherings. Robin Biggins then writes very succinctly about a rare Brandenburger upright disc playing musical box, which may have had some connection with the Orpheus company. Troy Duncan writes about harnessing the power of YouTube to share

MBSI with a wider public. This would seem to complement the item on MMD by Dr Wayne Finger in the previous edition. Coincidentally, it is Dr Finger who provides the next article; *Arranging Beautiful Music for the Mills Violano Virtuoso*. This is a follow-up to the article in the MBSI journal Vol 59 No 6, and he explains how you do it. The restoration of a Cremona G nickelodeon in the DeBence Antique Music world in Pennsylvania is the subject of the next item. Unsurprisingly, no fewer than eight pages are dedicated to tributes to Johnny Verbeeck. The stunning magazine cover photograph is a detail from a Gaudin organ formerly in the Milhous collection and now in a collection in Fort Worth, which was restored by Johnny. Four other recently deceased personalities from the mechanical music world, including Ralph Schack, are also remembered. It is anticipated that more of Ralph will feature in later issues. Reports from the National Capital, East Coast, Southern California, and Lake Michigan Chapters complete the contents of this issue.

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## ***AMICA Bulletin Vol 52 No 4*** ***September/October 2015***

See also [www.amica.org](http://www.amica.org)

In an extensive Editor's column, Glenn Thomas describes how the AMICA bulletin is put together; planning on each issue starts twelve months in advance. In a brief item compiled from information from Joe Hillferty, we are informed of the acquisition by the American Treasure Tours of a rare lost



large Wurlitzer Style 166/175 band organ. Matthew Jaro then continues with his account of the Welte-Mignon, drawing heavily on primary sources. Vincent and Maryam Morgan write about a visit they made to the Nisco Museum of Mechanical Music in Israel. Those who remember reading about the devastating fire here of 2010 will be cheered by the recovery the museum has made since. Somewhat belatedly there is next an item about last year's International Festival in Walldkirch. Glenn Thomas then instructs us on how to record automatic musical instruments, taking us through the gamut of equipment options from the cheap to the professional, and describing how to use software to receive, manipulate and store the recordings. There are reports from the Boston, Chicago, Founding, Heart of America, Lady Liberty, Midwest, Southern California, and Sowmy Chapters. The Lady Liberty meeting coincided with the party celebrating Ian Fraser's 14<sup>th</sup> birthday. In memoriam remembers Johnny Verbeeck and Wolfgang Schweppe.

## Non-English language journals

### *Das Mechanische*

#### *Musikinstrument August 2015*

See also [www.musica-mechanica.de](http://www.musica-mechanica.de)

This edition **DAS MECHANISCHE MUSIKINSTRUMENT** opens with the article about machines driven by the Stirling motor also published in the Italian Society's magazine. Ralf Smolne writes about a cylinder musical box with Vox Celeste feature. This is followed by an article about the

organ-building firm of Gebrüder Reimer, containing many facsimile catalogue pages. Next to feature is a detailed article about a Baldur-Kastner Autopiano. After yet another tribute to the late Johnny Verbeeck, there are several news reports. Amongst these are the Conference on Mechanical Music, held at the Villa Silvia-Carducci Italy (as reported in the Italian magazine), an exhibition in the Bruchsal Museum of Black Forest Clocks with figures, and a very long item about organs in Cuba. This edition also hails the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the GSM, and announces an upcoming exhibition opening at the end of October in Leipzig about its musical instrument heritage, Leipzig once being the industrial centre for mechanical instruments.

### *Het Pierement July 2015*

See also [www.draaiorgel.org](http://www.draaiorgel.org)

The first two pages of this magazine are occupied by the seventh instalment of the series *50 years ago in Amsterdam*, a photographic archive.



Tom Meijer then writes about the Baas family of Haarlem, three generations of which built organs. Two pages are then dedicated to Jacq. van der Meer describing the various ways in which organs get their names. This is followed by the regular feature *From the Archive*. Something different follows: an article about an organ built in 1954, which was subsequently bought by a Swedish owner. It was reported in *Het Pierement* in 2002 that the organ was to be restored and would soon be heard playing again, but instead it went back to the Netherlands, and was converted into a wonderful dance organ,

both in terms of the music and the front. Jan van Eijk is the subject of the next feature. An accomplished organ builder, restorer and decorator, he died earlier this year, aged 83. This is followed by the third instalment in the series by Maarten van der Vlugt on scales and systems. Another organ festival – this one the first Hinzen's Organ Festival, held over a weekend at the end of February and the beginning of March in Swalmen. It was followed by another a week later. Three generations of the Hinzen family and other contributors took part. Band leader Pérez Prado is the subject of the next article, whose author, Alois Broeke, goes to pains to explain that both Pérez and Prado are surnames, and his first name is Dámaso. (You learn something every day!) Even only being able to understand a smattering of the Dutch, it is an enlightening article. Apparently he was born and grew up in Cuba, where he became a musician, and was inspired by American be-bop music. He went to live in Mexico and gained international fame (who does not remember his composition *Patricia* from the late 1950s?), finally dying in Mexico in 1989, at the age of 72. The magazine's contents are completed with two pages of organ-related news.

### *Het Pierement October 2015*

See also [www.draaiorgel.org](http://www.draaiorgel.org)

The first article in this edition concerns two amateur organ builders in the Netherlands, coincidentally building organs for the 90-key Carl Frei scale. Building an organ is no easy task, and they take their work very seriously. This is followed by an item about a Mortier organ, known as *The Scala*, written by Tom Meijer, who informs us he had written

about this particular organ before, but it hadn't been published. The organ of the small type of dance organ which Mortier built up to 1914, with 72 keys, and similar to one sold in the 1990s by the Utrecht museum to Japan, was built before WWI. Meijer relates the more recent history of this organ, in as far as it is known. Wim Snoerwang delivers the eighth in the series entitled *50 years ago in Amsterdam*. Two pages are dedicated to a tribute to Johnny Verbeeck, and elsewhere four more deceased organ personalities are remembered: George Jocker, Piet de Bruin, Leo van Bruin and Jacob Leijssenaar. Hans Meijer writes briefly about the discovery of a hitherto unknown museum of mechanical music in Crillon le Brave in Provence, France, and reports on the appointment of Marian van Dijk as the new Director of the Speelklok Museum. There is the fourth instalment in Maarten van der Vlugt's series on scales and systems featuring Wurlitzer, DeKleist and Fratti instruments, followed by a response to a previous instalment, submitted by Alois Broeke. A couple of pages are dedicated to an article about Henry Bishop, composer of *Home Sweet Home*. There is a brief report on the National Organ Day at the Arnhem Open Air Museum on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2015 and two other events which took place in on 25<sup>th</sup> May (Pentecost) – one in Haarlem and one in Leeuwarden.

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### **Musiques Mécaniques Vivantes** **3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2015**

See also [www.aaimm.org](http://www.aaimm.org)



This magazine opens with an account of the French Society's

AGM held on 5<sup>th</sup> April in Les Gets. This event also marked AAIMM's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the celebrations taking place appropriately at the same venue as its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. It also coincided with Easter, affording the opportunity for the attendees to receive goody bags of seasonal chocolate. This is followed by a preview anticipating the society's Autumn trip to the Netherlands. Arnaud Moyencourt writes about the Back Piano, a much travelled instrument. Although repeating previously published material, this article gathers it all together, as well as publishing some new discoveries, including two little-known areas where back pianos (i.e. pianos carried on the back) were used. These are the East European countries of Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania, and the Dutch Antilles: Curaçao, Aruba and Bonaire. The article covers seven pages, including a proliferation of illustrations. Piano experts Marcel Mino and Philippe Beau review the makers and agents of French mechanical and automatic pianos. Jean-Marc Lebout then gives an account of recent sales-room activity, featuring auctions at Chartres and Cologne. Jean-Luc Alexandre and Antony Chaberlot give an account of how they restored a rare continental mechanical piano by Hofmann and Czerny, first writing about the maker, who was born in Bohemia in 1873 and died in 1948. The piano had remained in the same family of owners for almost a century. This is followed by an account of the First Organ Festival of Collonges (it was only a matter of time before one took place there) in May of this year. Fourteen organs took part. The penultimate item in this magazine concerns a *Coquette* organette, first

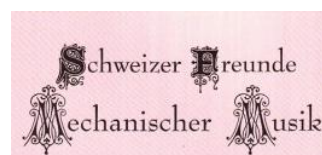
spotted in a flea market in Metz. While its soon-to-be new owner was getting advice from his more knowledgeable friend, the organette lost the piece of wood bearing its name. Long story, but eventually it was all reunited, and the new owner restored it. The *Coquette* is the larger sister of the 16-note Dulcine, made in Prussia in the 1880s, by the Manopan workshop. The 16-key *Coquette* is well known amongst organette collectors, but the *Coquette Grand Modèle* featured here is unheard of, having 24 keys. It reads 24-note Manopan books. The last item is this edition is the regular *SeriNET* column, highlighting items of interest on the internet. The future of this column is in the balance, as the compilers wish to retire.

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### **Schweizerischer Verein der Freunde August 2015**

See also [www.sfm.ch](http://www.sfm.ch)

After various Swiss society notices,



this edition opens with an item about an Ignaz Bruder organ with animated figures discovered by Peter Rohrer at an auction house in Southern France, thanks to the internet. Raphael Luthi then previews the fair organ weekend taking place in Waldkirch on 16th-18th October. Organs feature in the next items about an organ event in the Netherlands, and the Thun festival. The 60th anniversary of the Musée Baud is marked by an interview with Arlette Baud and Michel Bourgoz. This is followed by a treatise on buying and restoring mechanical instruments, by Raphael Luthi. Another museum celebrating an anniversary this year is MUMM (Museum für Uhren und

Mechanische Musikinstrumente) in Oberhofen am Thunersee, which is 20 years old and has a five-page feature dedicated to it. The contents conclude with an account of an organ gathering in Neumunster.

***L'antico Organetto***  
***(Associazione Musica***  
***Meccanica Italiana)***  
***August 2015***

See also [www.ammi-italia.com](http://www.ammi-italia.com), or  
[www.ammi-mm.it](http://www.ammi-mm.it)

Under  
the title  
*Handle*  
*music*



(not Handel) *Journey into mechanical music with an exceptional guest*, there is an account of an evening's entertainment at the Villa Silvia attended by 500 people. The guide for the journey, who is the 'exceptional guest', was Vinicio Capossela, described as a 'songwriter, poly-musician and writer.' Capossela is always looking for something unusual to grab an audience's attention, and found it at the Villa Silvia where he performed some of his work, some accompanied by mechanical instruments. Giulia Pedrelli reports on the first national convention on mechanical music, *Mechanical Music Past, Present and Future*, also held at the Villa Silvia. The more than 50 participants comprised representatives from various musical collections, aficionados, experts and local representatives. Ralf Smolne from the German society gave a presentation on the evolution of mechanical music, from antiquity to the present day. There were also presentations on research, restoration, and the SISAR project. This is followed by an article on mechanical musical instruments powered by the Stirling



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motor. The next item, covering five pages, is an interview with Marco Contini, collector of gramophones and records. The final feature in this edition is *Notes on the Origins of the Barrel Piano* conveniently rendered in both Italian and English. This is no doubt due to much of the research being done by British scholars as well as Italians.

*Congratulations to  
Arlette, Michel and all  
at the Musée Baud,  
L'Auberson, on its  
sixtieth anniversary*

# The Last Word

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Please note that to gain access to the Members' Section of the web site contact Kevin McElhone for a user name and password.

His contact details are on the Officers' page

The **Second Winchester Organ Festival** will happen on Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2016 following the success of the first one held in May this year. The organisers have been invited to return, and will build on the experience and success of the first, which at the time was thought would be only be a one-off event. So a bigger and even better event is planned, and to extend the scope with more in the way of side attractions.

*Target posting dates for the magazine each year are:*

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*27<sup>th</sup> April*

*7<sup>th</sup> August*

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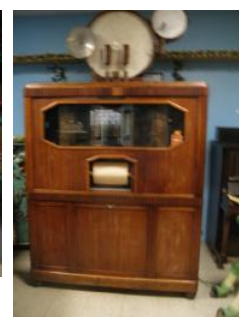
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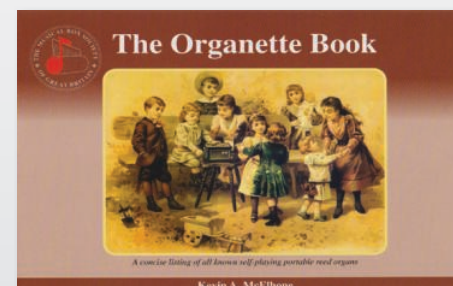
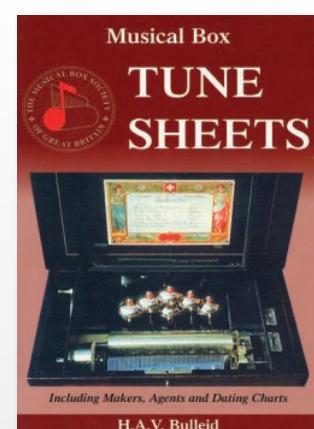
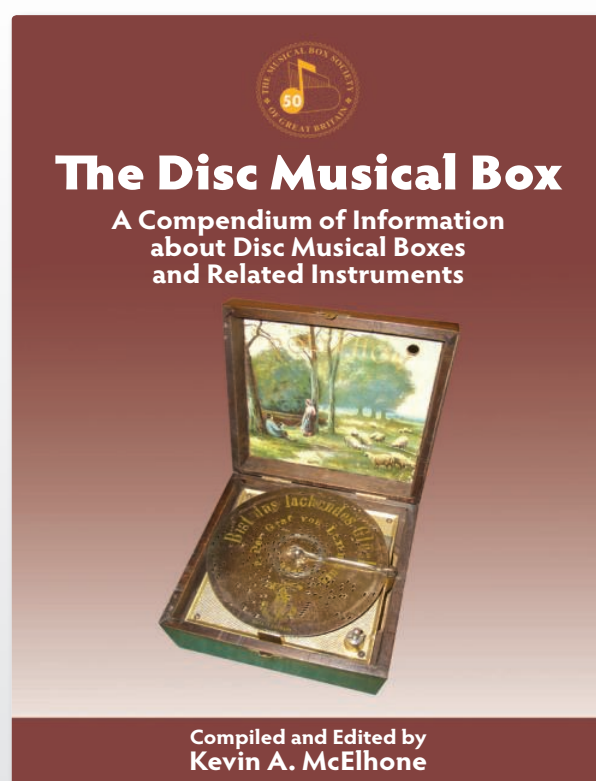
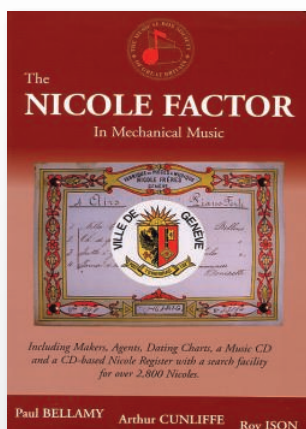
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