

JOURNAL OF
THE
MUSICAL BOX
SOCIETY OF
GREAT BRITAIN

THE MUSIC BOX

a magazine of mechanical music



Vol. 5 No. 7

GRAHAM WEBB

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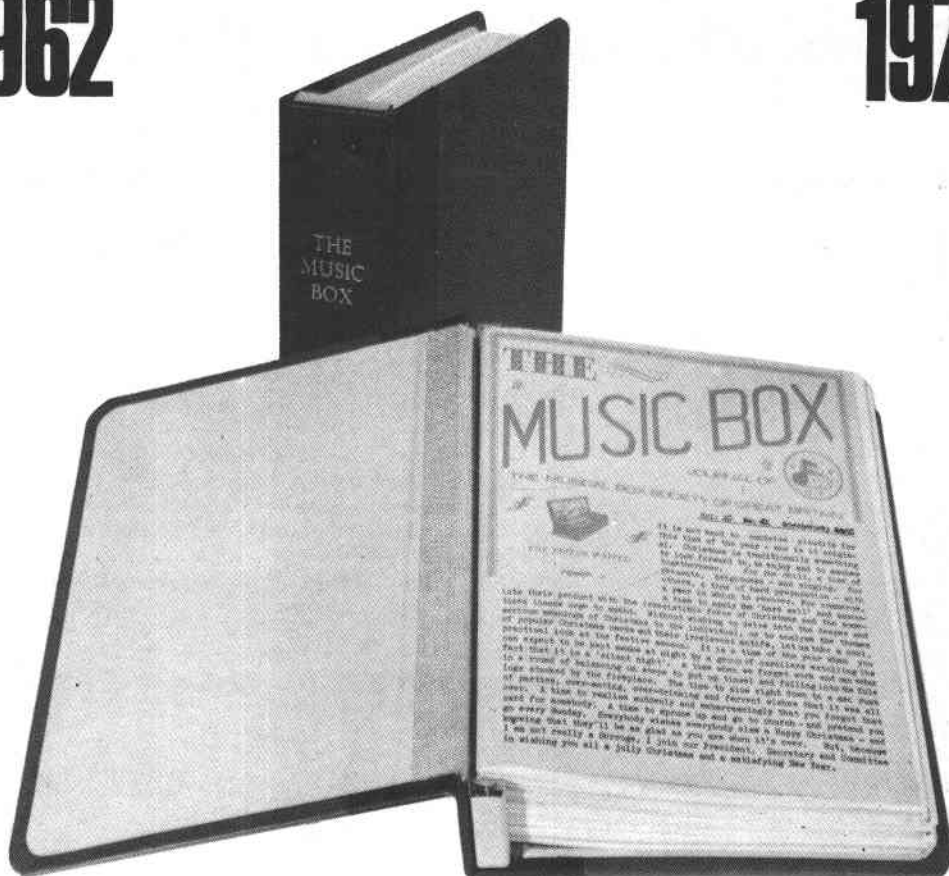


SPECIALIST
IN
MECHANICAL
MUSIC

Author of
The Cylinder Musical Box Handbook
The Disc Musical Box Handbook

1962

1972



TENTH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

THE MUSIC BOX

THE JOURNAL OF THE MUSICAL BOX SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN

Volume 5 Number 7

CHRISTMAS 1972

CONTENTS

John E.T. Clark <i>by Graham Webb</i>	316	Tuning Organette Reeds <i>by Ralph M. Heintz</i>	342
Message from the President	320	Question & Answer <i>by Keith Harding and Cliff Burnett</i>	345
Some Komet Peculiarities <i>by Dr. Peter Whitehead</i>	321	Baud Freres	346
Popper & Company <i>by Q. David Bowers</i>	324	Notes on the Seraphone Organette <i>by Roger Booty</i>	348
Sunday Visit <i>by Arthur W.J.G. Ord-Hume</i>	331	The 'Rococo' Symphonion <i>(Photograph)</i>	349
MEETING REPORT	334	What Makes Olin Run? <i>by Olin Tillotson</i>	352
Tune Sheet (Reproduction)	336	Obituaries	355
Nicole Freres — The Closing Years <i>by Arthur W.J.G. Ord-Hume</i>	338	Book Reviews	356
Society Announcements	340	Classified Advertisements	356
		Letters to the Editor	358
		List of Members	360

As part of the celebrations of the tenth Anniversary of The Musical Box Society of Great Britain a reproduced catalogue is issued as a Supplement with this Journal.

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JANUARY THE FIRST IS SUBSCRIPTION DAY

Your Committee is asking all Members to pay their subscription promptly.

Members are reminded that a bankers order is by far the best way of paying Society dues each year.

The Editor writes:

This issue of THE MUSIC BOX celebrates the 10th Anniversary of THE MUSICAL BOX SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN. With it is also celebrated the 10th Christmas during which we have been able to enjoy (or otherwise) the contents of this our Society Journal.

During the Decade for which your Society has existed we have seen many changes. In our Society we have experienced a growth, from the first handful of Members to the present thriving community, which was, I am sure, beyond the imagining of any of that intrepid few who, with hesitant steps, led only by guiding lights such as Clark and Chapuis, felt their way forward through the dark of uncertainty and ignorance.

In the early days we were all unsure; is it a Nicole? Or a Bremond? No name? Then perhaps Lecoultré! Yes, I've a Polyphon, it's called a Komet! We smile now. We can do so because the Society has brought us together, has allowed those of us interested in research to pile fact upon fact, to slot piece after piece into a jigsaw which is gradually making sense. I say gradually because, thanks to various obstacles in the way, the progress is slow. We still have far to go before we are half-way certain of our facts.

This Journal itself represents the continual collation of historical and practical knowledge. From a declaration of intent printed in our very first issue in December 1962, we take the following: "The Journal is intended as a clearing house for information, news, views and relevant material". When our first Editor, Arthur Ord-Hume, wrote these words for a duplicated Journal which consisted of 20 pages including the covers, he could not have known that 10 years and 39 issues later, (and, we freely admit, mainly thanks to his astute Editing) we could look back on such a wealth of knowledge and information, set out in Journals which any Society would be proud to own. When next you have an hour to spare, don't reach for the T.V. Times, reach instead for a volume of Journals, any one will do, and glance through the pages. You can be sure that you will come upon some item of information which at least you have forgotten and possibly did not know. It beats Coronation Street hollow!

To pass to current affairs: there seems to be some doubt as to the authenticity of the min-

iature automaton which was shown in the series "Fellow Member" in Volume 5 Number 5 of THE MUSIC BOX. It may be that the particular style of journalese which Gerry Planus, the owner, used to describe the piece, has made one or two Members feel that the description was a joke. I do assure our more serious minded Members that, although we do attempt a joke occasionally in these pages (however clumsily), we do try to make sure that people know that the attempt is being made. In this instance, having examined the piece some time ago when Gerry first acquired it, I can say that it is most definitely authentic and very much of the quality usually associated with makers of the calibre of Jacquet-Droz. The stand is not original, as can be seen, and the piece is not complete.

It will be seen in this issue that we have "Question and Answer" back with us again after being sadly missed in the last Journal. The problem in keeping this popular Series going, apart from the fact that the Experts are so busy with their work, is in getting questions from Members. Your Editor knows from daily experience that there are literally hundreds of people willing to ask a question verbally but, for some reason, these same people will not jot them down on paper and send them in. Come on now! We have a good Series here, let's give it a chance. As I've said before, even if you know the answer many will not. The Experts of this series by the way gave a broadcast on the B.B.C. in September on the very subject for which the series was created — the care of musical boxes. The talk showed off their knowledge to perfection.

Besides celebrating our 10th. Anniversary we must also keep the present in mind and ask that all Members take note that 1st. January is the date for the renewal of subscriptions. It is most important that dues are paid promptly so that no reminder is required. This costs your Society money and a volunteer worker, the Hon. Treasurer, work.

Members are reminded that there will be a Meeting of the Society at the Hallam Tower Hotel, SHEFFIELD, on Saturday, 3rd. March, 1973. The organising Secretary for the Meeting is Mr. G. Worrall, 4, Redcar Road, Sheffield, 10. I'm sure that this will be a good Meeting and we hope for a record attendance.

GRAHAM WEBB

JOHN E. T. CLARK

by Graham Webb

This is an article on the first President of our Society. It is not an eulogy, but more of an attempt to see the man as he was. There is a natural tendency for the members of a Society to raise it's first leader, particularly after his death, to heights which would have made him roll about with laughter, or at least cause him total embarrassment, were he alive to see it. This is not to say that we should not look with a great deal of respect and admiration upon a man who was not only first President but also wrote a definitive book on musical boxes which, despite later works, has an honoured place in the reference library of any collector worthy of the name. To all of us who have come to musical boxes since this book was written it remains the bible to which we had recourse, time and time again, whenever in doubt and I must confess that with all that has been learned since, *Musical Boxes*, by John E.T. Clark, is still the most interesting book to delve in to from my personal point of view.

Any writer will tell you how difficult it is to write on a specialised subject when very little in this field has gone before. Research, the life blood of any serious non-fiction book, is almost impossible when the libraries hold no earlier works on your subject. As more and more is written on musical boxes it naturally becomes more easy to look up some point one is not sure of, or simply to read another point of view to gain perspective. Here then, we begin to see what a task it must have been for a man who, after all, was a working mechanic, to write a book at all. Add to this a lack of early education, normally such a vital part of a writer's trade, and the fact that his book was not, as could well have been expected, a treatise on "repair and care" but an authoritative history of the musical box, and a man of courage and great knowledge and experience emerges.

John Clark's book "*Musical Boxes, a History and an Appreciation*" was first published in 1948 by Cornish Brothers Ltd., this edition was exhausted in a little over 1 year. In 1952 Fountain Press published a much enlarged, revised edition and a third edition was published by George Allen and Unwin Ltd., in 1961. The book was the first on musical boxes ever to have been published in Britain. While awaiting publication of the third edition, "Clarkey" entered into correspondence with Mr. C.W. Bruce, many pieces from Mr. Bruce's fine collection were photographed for the book

and much of the correspondence is to do with this subject.

Earlier this year Mr. Bruce, a Member of the Society for many years, died, and his collection of musical boxes was broken up, many of the smaller pieces were sold at Sotheby. Member Michael Gilbert (yes, the dampers man) who was a friend of Mr. and Mrs. Bruce, was given the letters by Mrs. Bruce as a memento. Mrs. Bruce has kindly given her consent for your Editor to examine these letters, which are unfortunately without the replies, and use any parts which might be thought to be of interest to Members. This article then, is not only on John Clark but also serves as an obituary on C.W. Bruce, the "Seeby" of Clark's book, who's death is here recorded and regretted.

As much of the content of the letters is, as would be natural, repetition, it seems that the best way to treat them is to use them to give us a few snatches of insight into the character and thoughts of the man who was to become our first President. The letters are also of value to show how prices were standing a little over 10 years ago.

The first letter, after my having said that there were no replies, is in fact, a letter from Mr. Bruce to John Clark. It is dated 23rd November 1953 and contains a list of photographs which Mr. Bruce is sending. This indicates that Clark was already thinking of a new edition eight years before it was eventually published. It is addressed to 34, Chestnut

Grove, New Malden, Surrey, where Clark is known to have lived since 1939, having moved from Peckham, where he lived between the wars.

Mr. Bruce writes: *"I feel that it is essential to the sale of the book to have as many illustrations as possible and for my part I have spent considerable money in having the photographs taken and will you be sure that any reference to these articles which would come under 'Jewellery' is referred to only as the 'Seebly Collection'. Please spell wish 'S' and not with 'C'. The articles that you have reproduced before and plates 8 and 9 not being jewellery can be referred to under my own name!"* Clark, who seemed always prompt in his replies, did so on 25th November. He said that the photographs were *"very fine and are of great interest"*.

The next letter in the file is dated 24th January 1956 and is of interest in that it contains the following: *"Yes, I see by the U.S.A. Musical Box Society magazine, which I get every month, that you are now a member, so also is our Mr. Bryant of Surbiton (Member Chris. Bryant) 'This is all to the good and sort of keeps us together.'"* He encloses a list of Polyphon discs with this letter which are for sale at 6/-d. each. He also talks of not knowing when the third edition of his book will be published and says *"I have a lot of extra stuff for it when the publishers make up their minds. I have heard of Chapuis' book (Histoire de la Boite a Music) but I don't think I shall get it because it is all in French and I cannot read French so I should only be interested in the illustrations"*. And a touch of asperity? *"Now you ask about my promised visit to you: you must have a very lax girl secretary surely. Before last Easter I wrote you to say I could visit you any time you care to suggest and I had no reply, now you ask when my postponed visit will materialise. When it gets warmer later in the year I will again suggest a visit and then can see and hear your latest acquisitions."*

The first mention of the price of a musical box comes in the next letter which is dated 29th May, 1957. The box in question is obviously an interchangeable box with either only one cylinder or not enough to suit Mr. Bruce. Clark writes: *"The Nicole box you mention at £25 is a bargain. I can cure the weezyness and if the cylinders are 15½ inches, I have some spare cylinders for it. These are quite new and I had them from Ely Place (Nicole Freres). I could sell it for you or any of your others. I have sold 4 boxes to different Americans during the past month and they still want more. You talk about money being tight. I don't find it so. I have more work now than I ever had."* The mention of American buyers occurs also in the next letter dated 21st June 1957, he talks about the same Nicole box and states: *"I can sell it for you if you decide to sell. A lot of my purchasing customers these days are Americans"*. And regarding the book,

about which it appears he is a little worried: *"So far the second edition of my book is not quite sold out. If and when it does and the publishers refuse to publish a 3rd edition I shall offer it to another publisher: I own the entire copyright."* In the same letter, speaking of a proposed article using photographs of Mr. Bruce's pieces: *"I too could write an article on some of these items but really very little is known of them. I can find no data to write about."*

Almost a year elapses before another letter from John Clark and we find him in bad straits. The man emerges, worried and no longer young, looking for help. The letter is dated 10th June 1958. It is written on an invoice form the heading of which is seen reproduced on these pages. The letter is of great human interest and I give it in complete form:

Dear Mr. Bruce,

I have to be out of this place by Oct. 7th. I find it almost impossible to find a house to let but there are plenty to sell. Of course I do not require a big barn of a place like this. The price of a suitable small house here is £2,000. I have not this amount. Would you care to purchase a house and let me rent it off you?

I am of course too old to get a mortgage. I have plenty of work but cannot work in the street.

If I cannot find a place I shall have to put all my things and musical box material in store.

*Yours sincerely,
John E.T. Clark*

Re my book on Musical Boxes:

The second edition is now out of print and I am preparing a third.

From the letter Clark wrote only four days later on 14th June it would appear that Mr. Bruce was unable to help him. Clark says: *"Many thanks for your note of the 12th. Yes I have been here 20 years and I shall hate to move but it will have to be. I cannot afford the rent and rates. I am sorry you could not help me."*

There is rather a long gap in the correspondence here but fortunately we do know how Clark overcame his difficult and unhappy problem. Member Philip Radford, who knew Clark well and was a good friend of his, found him a new workshop in the very centre of London's clockmaking industry. The occupiers of the building let part of it to Clark at a reasonable rent so that there would be someone living on the premises as extra security.

We have a letter dated 9th February 1960 which mentions the "very careless girl" once more to explain why Mr. Bruce has not received notice of his new address to which Clark had moved in March 1959. The new address was 54 Myddleton

Street, London, E.C.1. and Clark used his old invoice forms with the new address printed in and the old crossed out, this almost a year after he had moved, signs of thrift which, judging from what had gone before, was necessary. In this letter he states: *"I am getting more work here, I am of course right in the clock making trade in Clerkenwell."* In this letter there is also mention of the third edition of "Musical Boxes": *"The third edition of my book is in hand - Messrs. Geo. Allen and Unwin Ltd."*

We are reminded that John Clark was a dealer/repairer in a letter dated 4th March 1960: *"- In the Exchange & Mart about a fortnight ago was a Nicole overture box at £20. A customer of mine at Bristol bought it for £15.15.0 and by all accounts it is a good one, in the 38,000 class. - The Nicole box you refer to, 51348, is of course much too late to be really good from a collectors point of view but for all that it may be very saleable and I would be pleased to sell it for you. I can of course put in the broken teeth. The Nicole 32348 is much better and if you want to sell it I can get you a good price. My terms for putting in teeth are £1 each. If you let me know about what you want for it I can sell it. I usually get 10% commission!"*

We know that John Clark was approached many times to start a chapter of The Musical Box Society International in Britain. The first mention of it in these interesting letters is dated 11th March 1960 and the name of one of the Founder Members of the Society and sometime Vice-President is given in this context: *"I have been asked so many times to start a collectors club in England. The idea is splendid but I feel it is a younger man's job. I am 76 in April. I have however managed to interest a younger man, a collector, in the idea. You will understand of course that this would entail a gigantic amount of writing and organizing. If I had nothing else to do this may be possible but at the moment I simply cannot devote the time, although I would give it my support. The man I have in mind is John Entwistle and he is Secretary to the Chief Constable of Nottingham. He has been toying with the idea for about two years. - Yes I have seen and read the book on "History of Mechanical Music". The illustrations are the best part of this book. The letterpress is mostly copied from other writers, quite a lot from the second edition of my own book without acknowledgment I regret to say. He is not old enough to remember the Makers and other people I knew and met."*

In a letter of 27th May 1960 we again get a

TERMS MODERATE.

JOHN E. T. CLARK, BIDFORD-ON-AYON, WARWICKSHIRE, Modern and Antique Clocks

OF EVERY DESCRIPTION SKILFULLY REPAIRED,

Lantern, Bracket & Grandfather Clocks a Speciality.

Dials Re-Painted, Weights, Chains, Brass & Painted Dials supplied,

MUSICAL BOX EXPERT.

Musical Boxes, Polyphones, Symphonions, &c., of every make and description Repaired, Tunes supplied, Combs Re-Tuned, and Repaired, Barrels Repined, Talking Machines, Orchestrions, Organettes, and all kinds of Mechanical Figures, Models, &c., Cleaned and Repaired.

John E. T. Clark.

glimpse of prices of musical boxes: "*There seems to be a greater demand than ever for good quality musical boxes. A 4 overture box was advertised in the "Exchange & Mart" for £20. It was sold in a matter of hours. I know the man that bought it and he is pleased with it.*"

On 28th August 1960 we get a little insight in to Clark on Singing Birds: "*Well musical boxes and Singing Birds are fetching more than ever.*"

You cannot tell the maker's name on the old ones without you taking off the lid. Brugiers' name is usually on the top plate in large letters. The trade mark of Rochat is always very small. The boxes with two birds are rare and expensive. Our mutual friend W - - has several but he can afford it. The bird cage trade mark is a German make. I am expecting every day now to see the third edition of my book. I did not put in an illustration of 2 birds in a box because I have no such photos. Very few people have them and then they are not always willing to let me have pictures.

The next letter is not until 29th April 1961 and in it we see that age is beginning to make itself felt. Not only is Clark not well but he has made an uncharacteristic blunder: "*I have been ill with blood pressure since before Xmas. I have not actually been in bed but have had spells of giddiness and it has slowed me down somewhat. I suppose I must expect to put the brake on now: I was 77 last Monday week.*"

Well now I had 6 copies of the third edition of my book given me free and I have disposed of them all some weeks ago. I forgot about you in actual fact." Although this sounds quite unrepentant he does go on to say that he will get a book from the publishers for Mr. Bruce.

On 18th May 1961 we hear more of the proposed "Musical Box Club" in England: "*The Nottingham man is the most likely starter: He has plenty of spare time. It means a lot of correspondence I fear I am too old now. You see I have to admit now that I am too old. I do not actually feel too old but I cannot move so quickly as I used to. This, what must be the eternal sad cry of those growing old, is by far the most moving part of all the letters. So simply said. So deeply felt.*"

In the last letter in Mr. Bruce's file John Clark manages to put many things of interest. It is almost

as if he knew that the letters would one day form a part of "The Music Box". The letter is dated 14th July 1961 and gives us a prophecy, an illustrious name and the price of a musical watch. In the letter he confidently expects a fourth edition of his book and then goes on: "*There have been some interesting items at Sothebys of late. Some good prices were obtained. They will fetch more yet. I thank you I am keeping well, I look after myself of course. I am after a bungalow in Warwickshire at the moment. This does not mean I shall retire but I can take things a little easier there and in any case I have to be out of this place by the New Year and it is quite impossible to get a place here, besides I feel now I would like to take it quiet.*"

I still have plenty of work. One large one here now from the Marquis of Exeter. Very good one too.

At the moment I have an 18ct. gold case repeater with musical box, not a very large watch, dial 2 1/8". I want £200 for it.

We now know of course that John Clark did get his wish to return to Warwickshire where he was born, thanks mainly to a nameless benefactor who appreciated what Clark meant to the whole world of musical box collecting. In 1964 he gave up his post of President of this Society owing to failing health and on 14th October 1965 he died in Bidford-on-Avon, his birthplace, at the good age of 81.

As a tailpiece there was also in the file of letters from John Clark a letter to Mr. Bruce from a man named Ackroyd of Bradford. The letter is dated 10th November 1950. Mr. Ackroyd poses a question: "*- - - Mr. Clark has been telling me of an Auto-change Regina for sale in London for which they are asking £75. I really think this is far too much. Would you have any objection to informing me how this compares with what you paid for your machine?*" It is not known whether Mr. Bruce told Mr. Ackroyd what he paid for his machine. But if you look back to page 251 of issue number 4 of Volume 4 of "The Music Box" there can be seen the catalogue of the Sotheby sale of Friday, 7th July, 1939. Those interested in the prices of yesteryear can spend a happy hour studying them. While studying, spare a thought for the dealer/repairer of the day. Ask yourself what could be earned from a musical box which cost, say, £2 in one of England's best Salerooms.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Our Editor has asked me to write a note to commemorate the tenth anniversary of our Society. Looking back over the years I find that my recollections of the birth of this Society are quite vivid, for it was following a visit to John Clark at his small workshop in Islington that the idea of this Society germinated. He told me that he had been approached by The Musical Box Society International of the United States to form, what is over there known as, a "Chapter" of their Society in this country. He gave me the names and address of some 25 musical box enthusiasts to whom I wrote and to whom I sent a questionnaire. As a result I invited those who had replied to tea one Saturday afternoon at the Mandeville Hotel, W.1. to discuss the formation of the Musical Box Society of Great Britain, and I am glad to say that I have the whole of that meeting recorded on tape. Unfortunately John Clark was unable to be present but he was elected at that meeting as our first President, whilst I myself was chosen as Secretary.

During the following years the Society I am glad to say has expanded both numerically, technically and in the knowledge of our hobby.

The publication of a Journal under the Editorship of Mr. Arthur Ord-Hume was one of our early milestones and a few of our members will recall the evenings we spent with a hand wound duplicator printing the Journal, followed by sorting of the pages, stapling the Journal together, folding, putting into envelopes and addressing. The Journal, in my opinion, has been the corner stone upon which the Society has flourished, for now we have members from all parts of the world many of whom we have never met but who are through the Journal bonded together as musical box collectors and, through the Journal, there is no doubt that the knowledge of our hobby has increased in a previously unknown dimension. The gargantuan efforts of our first Editor Mr. Ord-Hume have often enabled the Society to be quoted authoritatively and some years ago I was pleased to note that it had influenced the content of the publication of our United States cousins.

Two and a half years ago through the pressure of professional activities I handed over my term as Secretary to Mr. Reg Waylett who has tidied up many loose ends in organization and through his efforts the Society continues its well-being. This leads me to one final point; your Committee has discussed the desirability of preserving the archives which this Society has and still is acquiring. A number of members have already donated historical information much of which has been published but it is now felt that there is the need for these archives to be stored and made available to our membership for any who may be conducting some research or knowledge. For example I have in my possession tape recordings of every Committee Meeting and of every lecture given for the first seven years of our existence which I shall be happy to donate. The Society needs a member living in London who has the space to house our archives, the ability and willingness to catalogue them carefully and the facility to make them available to members upon request. I have great pleasure therefore in announcing that your Committee has elected an Archivist in the person of Member Alan Frost of Hampstead, London. I take this opportunity of thanking Alan for his willingness to take on such a task and to wish him well in his new job.

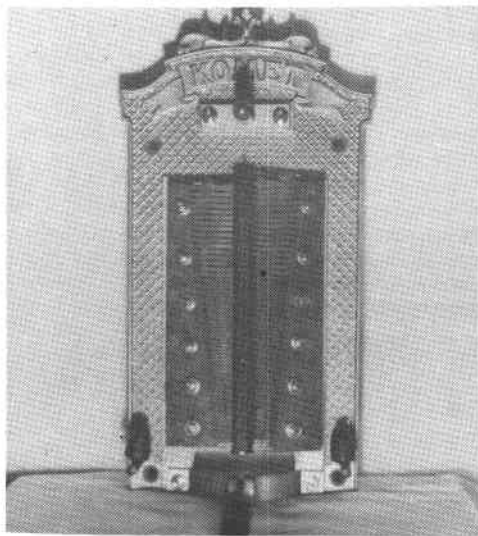
I wish this Society continuing success in its next decade and in those which follow.

C. de Vere Green.

some KOMET peculiarities

by Dr. Peter Whitehead

The following description applies to a Komet musical box playing 20½ inch discs, though many characteristics also apply to the 13½ inch disc size, one of which I recently also owned. A steel disc is used which rotates clockwise and is peripherally driven by way of circular holes; the projections on the disc appear to be of usual Polyphon type. There are two sets of combs each one on either side of the star wheel assembly and each star wheel plucks only one tooth at a time. On the 20½ inch size each bank of combs is split into a bass and a treble half (see photo 1). There is an interesting arrangement of bass teeth and corresponding star wheels in that the spacing between these teeth is greater than at the treble end of the comb (see photo 1); possibly this enables greater accuracy of placing of the bass projections on the disc. The shape of the teeth is interesting in that the tips are L-shaped instead of the more commonly found square ended tips (see photo 2). The arrangement of the tooth damping and star wheel braking mechanisms is unusual in that each side has a different, but both have a combined mechanism. Both sides have erect flat strips of steel with L-shaped tips which are mirror images of the tooth tips and which dampen the tooth "end-on" (see photo 3). These strips of steel are attached to a bar which is bolted to the rear of the bed plate.



1. Frontal view of bedplate and combs. Note the difference in spacing between the bass teeth and treble teeth.

Each mechanism works as follows, dealing first with the mechanism on the left side of the bed plate (when viewed from in front). The star wheel, during its rotation, turns a "dog-leg" shaped lever (see photo 4 and fig 1) which at its tip touches against the damper strip pushing the free end of the strip against the tooth tip thus damping the movement of the tooth. Further rotation of the star wheel releases the base of the lever, and the natural springiness of the damper strip pushes

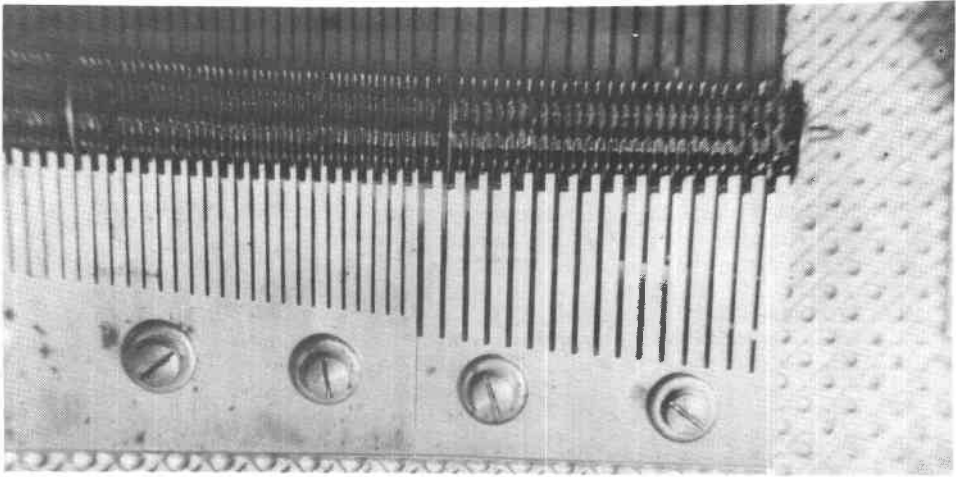
the lever back, so that the tip approaches the midline and so that the base of the lever acts as a brake preventing further rotation of the star wheel (see fig 2).

The mechanism on the right side of the bed plate seems to be simplification itself. The damper strip has a "crimp" in it (see fig 3 and photo 3) and the rotation of the star wheel touches the crimp thereby pushing the free end of the damper strip against the tooth tip damping the movement of the tooth. Further rotation of the star wheel allows the natural springiness of the damper strip to push back the crimp into the space between the two star wheel projections and the strip thereby acts as a star wheel brake (see fig 4).

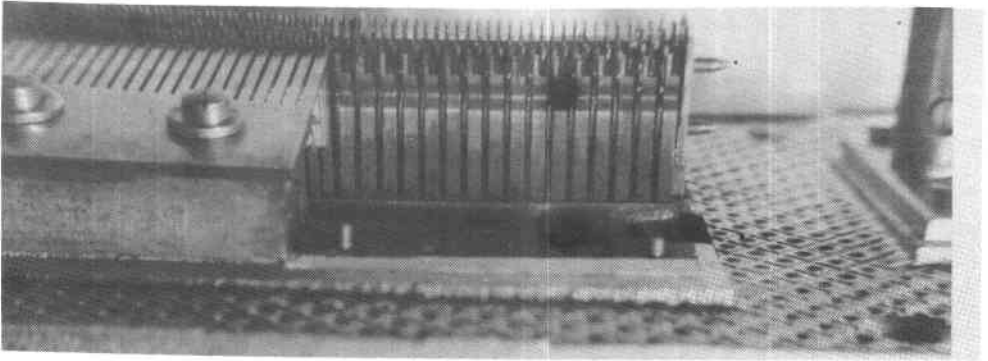
Repair and adjustment of the damper and braking systems are, applying principles found in Graham Webb's book "The Disc Musical Box Handbook", largely a matter of common sense. It appears that if the dog-leg levers do not pivot freely then the dampers on the left side combs will appear to be "hard on" and any adjustment necessary to the mechanism will not, therefore, be initially needed to the damper strips. However, in order to clear and free the levers, the entire damper rail unit must be removed (after first carefully noting its position and making appropriate marks on the rear of the bed plate to facilitate its return). Replacement dampers can quite easily be fashioned out of feeler gauge material (slightly detempered) of approximately 7 thou. width, cut to shape with strong (but not favourite) scissors and soldered into position – bearing in mind that the right side dampers should have their crimp introduced before soldering.

My thanks are to Graham Webb for permitting me to refer to his recent publication (see above) and to Ray Hall for photographic advice and help.

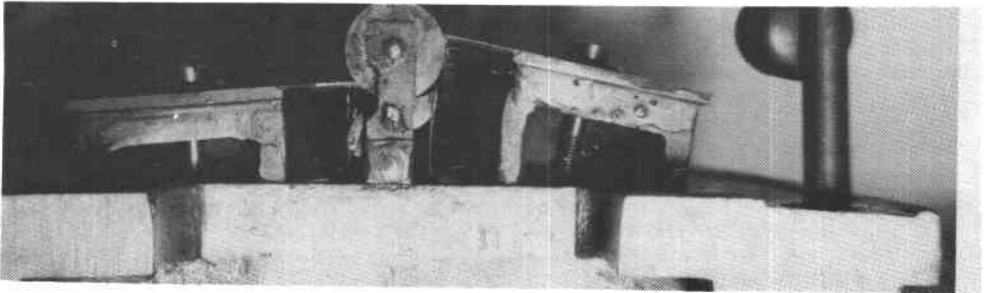
Lastly, has anyone any 20½" Komet discs that I may beg, borrow or buy?!



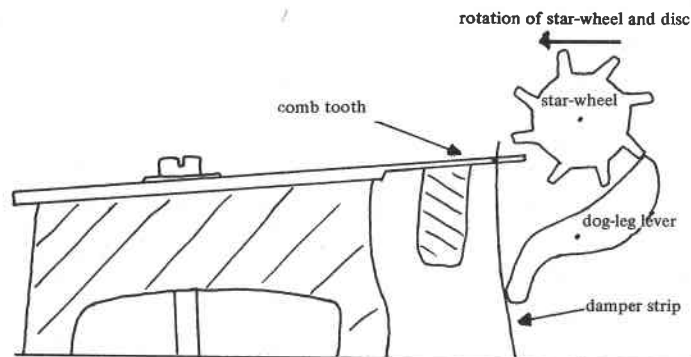
2. View of upper right (bass) comb. Shows L-shaped tips of teeth and difference in spacing between bass and treble teeth.



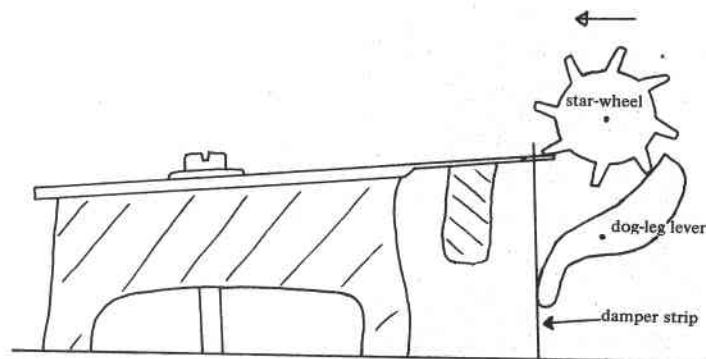
3. Upper right comb removed; lateral view of damperstrips, which have L-shaped tips and the 'crimp' is clearly seen. Damper strips on the left side are un-crimped and are otherwise mirror-images of those on the right side but do not project so far from the bedplate.



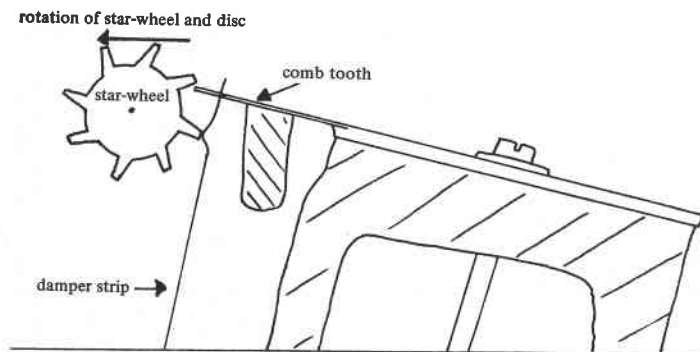
4. View of bedplate assembly from below. The 'dog-leg' lever is clearly seen below disc covering star-wheel.



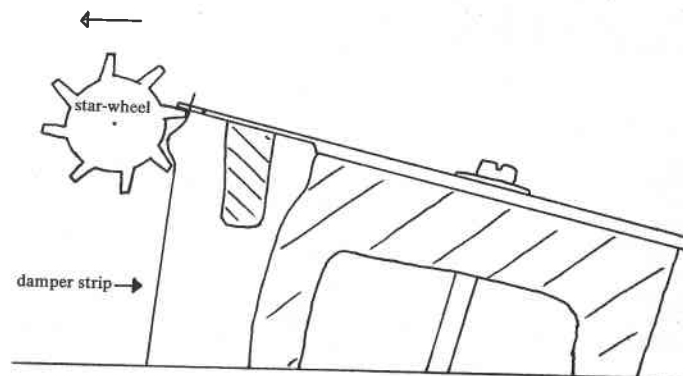
1. Left side comb. Damper is fully 'on' tooth tip. The view is a cross section of the bedplate assembly.



2. Left side comb. Damper free of tooth tip; star-wheel braked by means of damper strip exerting pressure, by tension, on the lower part of the dog-leg lever.



3. Right side comb. Damper fully 'on' tooth tip.



4. Right side comb. Damper free of tooth tip; star-wheel braked by means of crimp on damper strip settling between two star-wheel projections and being held there by the tension in the strip.

POPPER & COMPANY

A MUSICAL DYNASTY

by Q. David Bowers

Earlier in the present century the city of Leipzig, Germany, was pre-eminent in the automatic musical instrument industry. The accomplishments of the Polyphon Musikwerke are familiar to most of our Members, as are the remarkable products of another famed Leipzig firm, Ludwig Hupfeld. Less heralded perhaps, but certainly not less important in its own way, is the firm of Popper & Co. While Popper did not dominate the field of pneumatic instruments in Germany (that distinction was reserved for Hupfeld), the firm did produce an absolutely fascinating array of different products — ranging from reproducing pianos to violin players and including along the way such diverse items as reproducing harmoniums, player pianos, and large orchestrions.

Popper & Co. was founded around 1891 by Hugo Popper, a native of Austria. In partnership with Hugo Spangenberg, Popper set up a business of selling musical products made by other companies. From premises in Leipzig he exported to the Orient, Britain, and elsewhere a large variety of instruments, mechanical and otherwise.

A turning point in the firm's fortune came in the 1890's when disc-type music boxes "caught on" with buyers all over the world. In Leipzig the factories of Symphonion and Polyphon could hardly keep pace with all of the orders. During this time Polyphon expanded to a point at which nearly 1,000 persons were employed.

One of Polyphon's main export agents was Popper. Polyphon music boxes were sold in two ways by the firm: At retail (such instruments sold this way often bore the Popper name) and also wholesale to music stores, department stores, and other outlets. This second avenue represented the greatest amount of business.

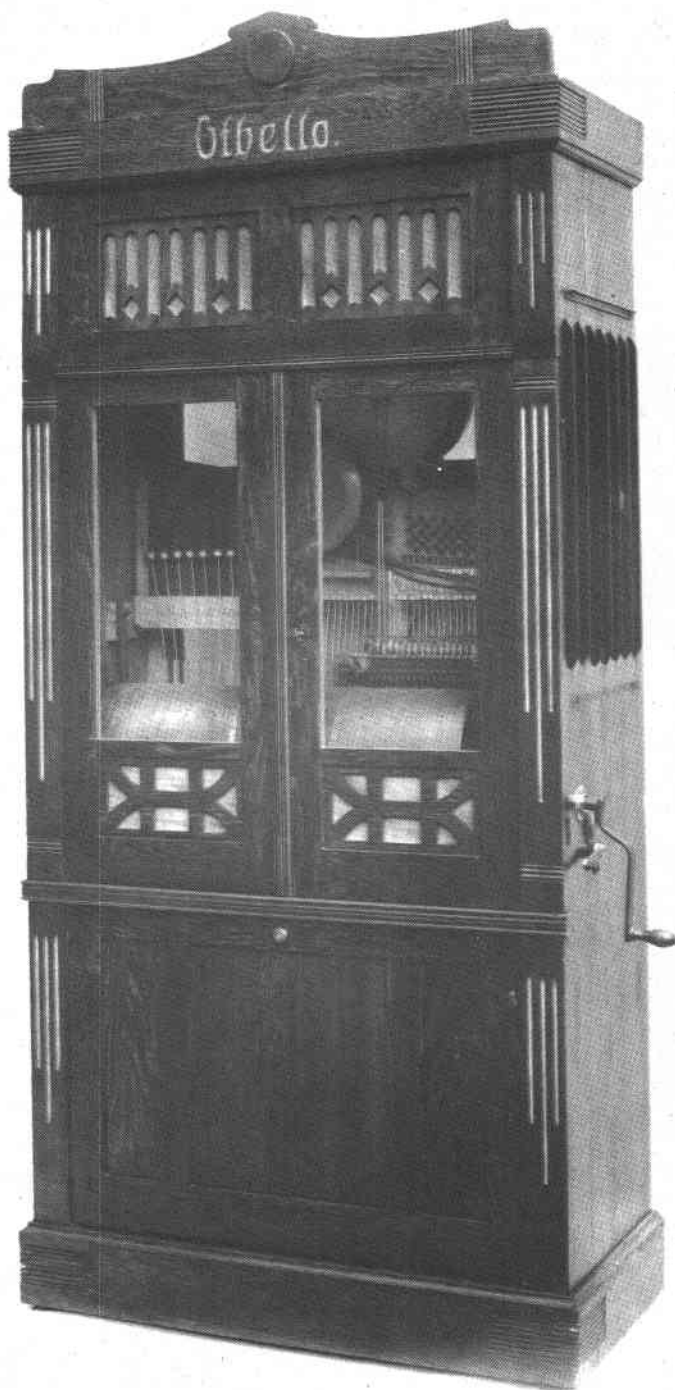
Another extremely profitable agency was that of distributing instruments made by G. Racca of Bologna, Italy. The Racca firm manufactured hand-cranked mechanical pianos, often in the shape of a harpsichord, which were sold under such names as "Piano Melodico" and "Piano Orchestrion". Although the exact number Racca instruments handled is not recorded, trade must have amounted to thousands of individual pieces.

By the year 1900 Popper's line had expanded to include just about every type of automatic musical instrument from cylinder and disc-type music boxes to large orchestrions. Glamorous catalogs were issued in several languages. Many of these catalogs bore the

Popper name, but others were left blank so that an individual retail outlet in some distant location could stamp its own imprimatur on it.

From early days onward mechanical pianos and orchestrions fascinated Hugo Popper. Many varieties of these were incorporated into the Popper line. Some were made by other manufacturers, and others were made by the Popper firm itself in factory facilities in Leipzig. Most Popper instruments were assigned fanciful names rather than model numbers (although model numbers were sometimes also given). Barrel-operated piano and orchestrion nomenclature includes such designations as Aurora, Triumph, Othello, Danubia, Aida, and Bravissimo. It might be well at this point to mention that these names, most of which have operatic origins, were not used exclusively by Popper. Similar designations are found on instruments of other sellers. Further compounding the situation is the fact that these names proved very popular with Popper and were continued in use over a period of years — even though the instruments to which they were applied changed radically. An example of this is the Triumph. Early Triumph instruments are barrel-operated orchestrions of fairly simple construction. Very late Triumph instruments are very large paper-roll operated orchestrions with many ranks of pipes, jazz percussion effects, piano, and other attachments.

At an early date Popper secured the German sales agency for M. Welte & Sons of Freiburg. The worth of this agency must have been immense — for at one time Popper was the sole exclusive German outlet for all Welte products! Welte was, of course, one of the world's leading manufacturers of orchestrions and, later, was responsible for the world's first reproducing



An 'Othello' barrel-operated orchestration from shortly after the turn of the twentieth century.

piano – the Welte-Mignon.

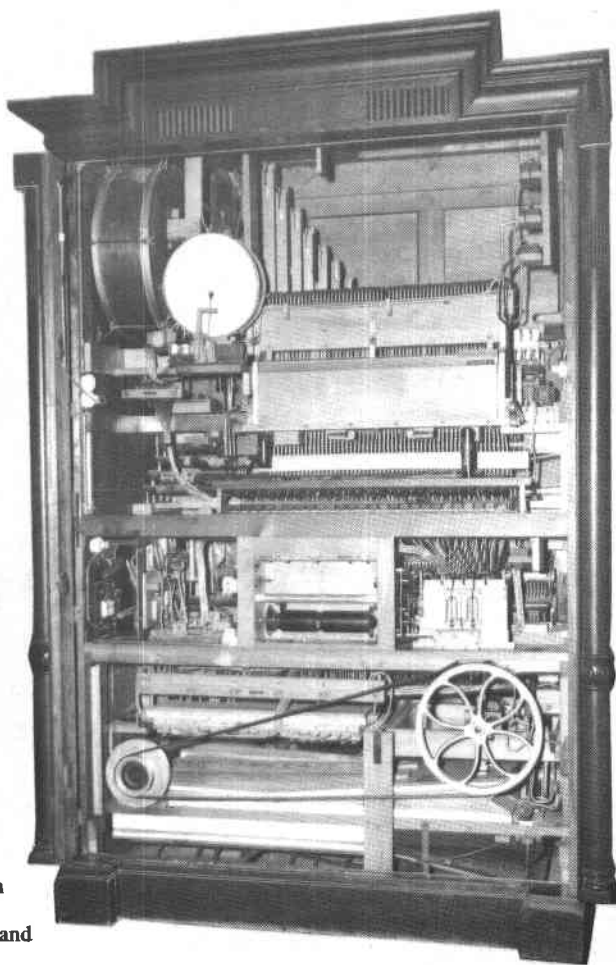
In the development of this latter instrument Hugo Popper played an important part. Around the turn of the century the Welte firm was being run by young Karl Bockisch who married into the Welte family. Bockisch demonstrated excellent business and technical leadership, and within a few years of coming into the firm most business decisions were his – although for tradition purposes most of the credit was given to members of the firm. Around 1900 Karl Bockisch and Hugo Popper, who were personal friends as well as business acquaintances, and Edwin Welte met to discuss the creation of a fantastic device: an instrument that would record all the subtleties and characteristics of a human pianist's playing – and then by means of an appropriate compatible device all of these performances could be played back in any place in a precise manner.

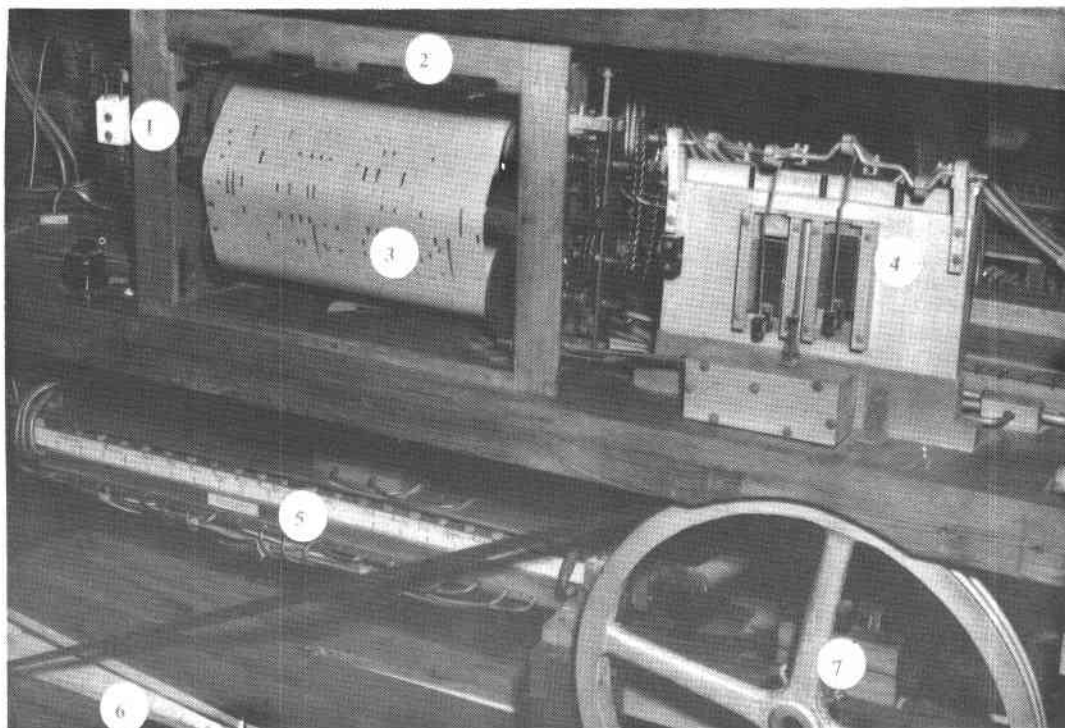
This revolutionary idea grew into the Welte-Mignon which first made its debut in 1904. Marketing of the reproducing piano, first simply called the "Mignon," was the domain of Hugo Popper. Also Popper's responsibility was the obtaining of contracts with recording artists. All of this was accomplished in Leipzig, for distant Freiburg (home of Welte) was too far from the mainstream of music activity.

When doing research for my book, *The "Encyclopedia of Automatic Musical Instruments,"* I had the opportunity to go through a large amount of correspondence of the Welte family, a large amount of data concerning Popper, and to speak with a number of people once connected with the Welte firm. A rather different picture of the Welte-Mignon piano introduction emerged from this. Within a few years after the introduction of the Welte-Mignon it was famous world-wide. It created a sen-



Exterior and interior views of a Popper Salon Orchestra, one of the most popular types of orchestrions sold by this firm during the 'teens and 1920's.





View of the interior lower part of a Popper salon Orchestra. The numbered parts are: 1. contact switch; 2. levers for turning on and off the effects; 3. the music roll shown in playing position; 4. the wind motor for driving the roll mechanism; 5. the register chest whereby the different effects are controlled; 6. the main combination vacuum and pressure pump assembly; 7. pump crankshaft.

sation – and business was so good for Welte that in 1906 a new salon was opened in America to sell this particular instrument (and other instruments as well), and within a few more years Welte manufacturing facilities were increased in size many times. In the meantime (in 1910) Hugo Popper died, and as might be expected, his contribution to the early success of the instrument was forgotten. Compounding the problem was an intense personal rivalry, a feud at times, which developed between Karl Bockisch and Edwin Welte. Karl Bockisch, it seems, furnished much of the technical advice and inspiration for the Welte-Mignon reproducing piano. Indeed, he may have furnished most of it. When it was first proposed to name the instrument the “Welte-Mignon” Karl Bockisch objected vigorously for this name gave no credit to Bockisch personally. A compromise of sorts was reached – and the name “Mignon” was used alone. This did not last for long, however, and the now-familiar “Welte-Mignon” nomenclature was adopted shortly thereafter. In later years Bockisch was to gain nearly complete control of the Welte firm, and after the 1930’s Edwin Welte had no ownership interest. But by this time the golden age of automatic musical

instruments had passed, and this was a hollow victory.

Popper’s merchandising of the Welte-Mignon in the years following its introduction and Popper’s contractual relationships with recording artists were so strong that the Welte-Mignon obtained a dominant position in the German reproducing piano market – a position so strong that no other firm was able to significantly compete. For instance, the Hupfeld Dea, a reproducing piano with a keyboard (contemporary Welte reproducing pianos were all of the cabinet-style – Welte keyboard-type reproducing pianos did not come until later), came on the market shortly after the Welte did – but the Welte name was magic so far as the music industry was concerned, and the Hupfeld apparatus, although superior in many ways from a technical viewpoint, was never marketed in large numbers.

Around 1910–1914 Popper advertised the “Stella” reproducing piano. Stella instruments were made for home use as well as personal use, but the main market was coin-operated units for public places. By that time the exclusive Welte agreement was no longer in effect, so it is possible that the Stella represented a Popper effort to compete with Welte. This reasoning, however, is not completely

valid for Welte instruments were still being handled at the same time. Also, a contemporary account reads that the original Stella masters were recorded on the Welte recording apparatus – but that the construction of the instruments which played back the music – the Stella on one hand and the Welte-Mignon on the other – were different. So, it would be interesting to learn more about the Stella. Perhaps a Society Member can help?

Another “mystery” instrument about which the author would like to learn more is the curiously-named “Animochord” advertised in 1907 by Popper as being a “string orchestrion” with a “horse hair bowing mechanism”. Perhaps Paul Daehne was speaking of this or a similar instrument when he wrote in 1910 that: “By means of another invention Hugo Popper helped to create one’s dreams. This instrument has a violin and mandolin with a piano accompaniment. The musical character is very delicate; the soul of the violin and mandolin have been reproduced perfectly. Everyone who has heard a melody played on this wonderful instrument considers it to be marvelous. This instrument, playing with soul and grace, resounds in our hearts. Close your eyes and you will see the high rocks of Sorrento, you will have an adventure on the Grand Canal of Venice, you will thrill to the serenades by Santa Maria della Salute. This was Popper’s last achievement!” The preceding was written as part of a eulogy following Hugo Popper’s death on November 14, 1910.

The history of violin players is an interesting one – and the author has found research into the various products made by Hupfeld, Mills, et al to be quite fascinating. However, many “violin players” (the preceding instruments being an exception) do not incorporate a violin. Rather, they use violin-toned pipes. However the use of pipes is not usually brought out in the advertising for the instrument – so careful reading of patents related to these instruments, or, better yet, examination of surviving instruments themselves is necessary to determine exactly how the music was produced! The Animochord, which evidently did incorporate a real stringed mechanism, would be interesting to see and hear today. As of this writing the author knows of no surviving example.

One interesting aspect of automatic musical instruments and their history is that new things are constantly being learned. The challenge is that many more things remain to be learned. I have often wondered, for example, what a Popper “Superba” sounds like. The late Eugene DeRoy, a Belgian who was very prominent in the automatic musical instrument business, told me that the Superba featured a “separate unit with zither or mandolin strings played by a special attachment. This device was not part of the case. After they had been on the market for a time, the service problems became so great that

later models of these omitted the gadget.” Just a few weeks ago I learned of a surviving example of one of these – and, hopefully, I will have the opportunity to hear it after its present restoration is completed. The instrument is actuated by a series of tiny fingers which “pick” the strings.

Around 1929 a new type of Popper violin player came on the market. The “Konzertist with real violin” made its appearance. The “Konzertist” pianos had earlier been made in many different forms, mostly simple pianos with mandolin attachments. This new entry soon had its name changed to the more catchy-sounding “Violinovo”. Made in several case designs, the Violinovo was heavily advertised in Germany in 1930 and 1931. The author has seen patents relating to the Violinovo and has seen many advertisements concerning it, and awaits the day when an instrument itself can be examined – if, indeed, such exists.

In the 1908–1914 years Popper saw its greatest period of activity. Dozens of different models of automatic instruments were produced and sold during that time. The “Eroica,” a pipe organ, played rolls recorded by leading organists. Another version was



made for theatre use and featured a different styling from the normal “classic” look. A cousin to the Eroica was the “Mystikon”, a roll-operated harmonium or reed organ. This also used hand played rolls recorded by prominent organists. According to a contemporary account an example of the Mystikon was a featured attraction in Hugo Popper’s palatial home in Leipzig: “How we remember the wonderful times we have spent in Leipzig with Hugo Popper in his home, where we have completed forgotten about the world outside. He had a magnificent mansion furnished with elegant and artistic accessories, including a number of his own musical instruments. When going from one room to another you could see the golden ornaments, the statues, the flowers, and the wonderful paintings. Here in a completely noiseless room the genius of the instruments would play for us. Now we hear the flutes. Then suddenly comes the magnificent crescendo with the flaming brilliance of string voices! We are listening to the Mystikon! We enjoy the sweet sound of the love song of Tristan and Isolde, Professor Bie’s master-



Exterior and interior views of a Popper 'Roland' keyboard-style orchestrion with Swannee Whistle

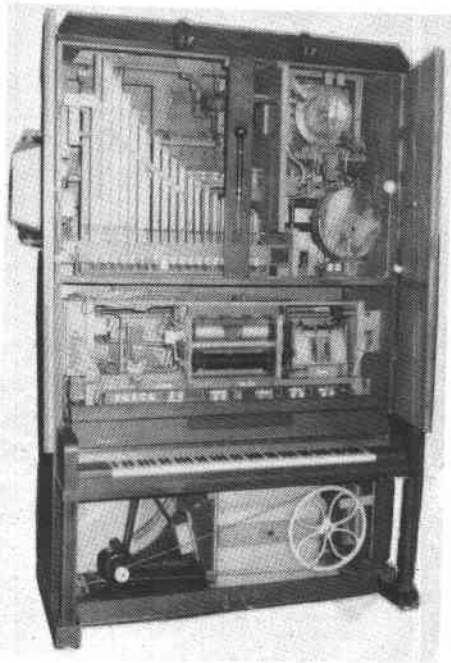
piece. And then we hear the voices of the forest, the sweet singing of birds, and then Siegfried's horn sounding with joy, and then we dream the fantasy of the deep forest opened before us – with sparkling shafts of sunlight, with bright flowers, and with many wonderful things. What an inspiring experience!"

From Mr. Daehne's description it appears as though Hugo Popper's home was a virtual showroom for his own instruments – for his narrative continues: "And then we hear in this music room the rich choir voices of the Eroica – fantastic, monumental, majestic! Far from the distractions of the ordinary concert hall we enjoy these musical reveries provided by the instruments in Mr. Popper's personal collection. All of the instruments – veritable artists – seem to perform for us and only for us. This seems impossible, but it was true. We heard their innermost feelings without which no real art would have been possible. We felt the vibrato of their very souls".

In the three decades from 1900 to 1930 many fascinating varieties of roll-operated orchestrions bore the Popper name. Early models, many of which were made by Welte, were of classic appearance with symmetrically-arranged pipes, glassed-in cases, and with ornate pilasters, columns, and top railings. Later instruments were of more modern appearance and featured mirrored fronts or translucent panels

with motion-picture effects. The Feurich piano, made in Leipzig by Hugo Popper's close personal friend Hermann Feurich, was one of Germany's finest – and instruments of this name found wide use in concert halls. In many instances Popper orchestrions incorporated Feurich pianos, and this accounts for the excellent tone that they produced. I have had the good fortune to have owned a number of Popper orchestrions in the past – instruments ranging from small keyboard styles to what is probably the largest surviving Popper instrument, an example of the Gladiator Symphony Orchestrion (which is presently in the illustrious collection of Mr. J.B. Nethercutt). The construction of Popper orchestrions is excellent. Good-quality materials were used, and the interiors were designed to permit easy access for tuning and regulation (and in later years rebuilding!). The Popper firm was operated using good business principles, so components were standardized as much as possible. As a result only a few different types of rolls were made for use on dozens of different orchestrion models – something which greatly simplified inventory keeping and which made a wide variety of selections available for Popper instruments, a much wider variety than would have been the case had each instrument had its own individually-designed roll type.

Popper innovations used on its orchestrions were



many. The Triplex was a cartridge-type roll mechanism which stored three rolls and which could be easily snapped in and out of place. Even more versatile was a ten-roll magazine device which featured ten different music selections arranged on a vertical rack. This rack could also be snapped in and out of place quickly so as to make a new program of music instantly available. In the 1920's most Popper instruments features a cleverly designed unit valve – a small cylindrical aluminium device which could easily be snapped in and out of place should trouble develop. A variation on this same theme, although of entirely different appearance, was used by the competing firm of Hupfeld.

Most Popper orchestrions known today have essentially the same type of instrumentation: Piano, mandolin attachment (of the curtain type), xylophone bells, bass and snare drums, cymbal and triangle. In addition a rank of string-toned pipes furnishes the musical effects of violin, viola, and cello. Instruments incorporating this basic list of components were made in many different case styles. One of the most popular was the Salon Orchestra, of which the author has owned three examples – more than any other single Popper orchestration style.

During the 1920's a popular type of instrument was the Popper's "Welt Piano" with jazz band attach-

ment. Most of these consisted of a keyboard type piano with mandolin. Mounted on top was a "jazz band aufsatz" (literally, jazz band top) which contained percussion effects, and in some models a rank or two of pipes. Still other models incorporated a phonograph or a phonograph and ardio. Instruments of this last type were designated as the "Phonoradio Combination."

The Swanee Whistle, a device patented in 1924, featured a mechanical slide whistle which was operated pneumatically by a special mechanism which followed the topmost perforations in the orchestration roll. The Swanee Whistle, mounted on the front of an instrument in plain view, provided music with an unusual rising and falling pitched effect.

Music rolls for Popper orchestrions were excellently arranged. Most such orchestrions have a rich and full sound when heard today – a sound which is very "listenable," for want of a better adjective.

In the early 1930's the doors of the great Popper firm closed forever. By this time the world was looking to other sources for its music – and automatic musical instruments were anachronisms. Now in our own generation these glories of musical yesterday are again appreciated and the rich legacy of Popper and Co. is again bringing pleasure – not to the entire world as Popper products once did, but to a group of people possibly even more enthusiastic: collectors such as you and I.

POPPER & CO. = LEIPZIG

Fabrik pneumatischer Musikwerke



Hauptbüro und Fabrikbetrieb: Bitterfelder Straße 14.

Standig großes Musterlager: LEIPZIG, Reichsstraße 33-35, pt. I u. II.

ANTWERPEN: Rue Nationale, 93.
BRESLAU: Junkernstraße 4.
ESSEN: Bahnhofstraße 83.

SUNDAY VISIT

A series of articles describing places of interest to lovers of mechanical music.

5. THE BRITISH PIANO MUSEUM

by Arthur W.J.G. Ord-Hume

For the fifth in our Sunday Visit series, THE MUSIC BOX travelled just 13 miles westwards from the centre of London to visit a museum which is known already to many of our Members for its excellent collection of the larger automatic musical instruments. The British Piano Museum was founded nine years ago by Frank W. Holland and, having been begun as a private collection, it grew so rapidly that it has now become a charitable trust with Frank as resident curator.

There is something sadly unusual about Brentford High Street. Metropolitan London has pushed further outwards into the surrounding counties and although Brentford is still (just) in Middlesex, this is a fact which does not show. A high-speed road for traffic heading south-west from Kew Bridge has replaced the majority of buildings in this once rural Thames-side suburb. "They" (those faceless dictators who cleave asunder our neighbourhoods with the assurance that development is good for us) tore down the last of the little shops and a quaint pub a year or two back and thus completed the grinding down of this once pleasant village to an almost uniformly bleak and dreary expanse of forced regulation grass, high-rise living machines and concrete. Only two things spoil this planner's delight — one is the vast gasometer of Brentford Gasworks and the other, nestling so closely under the former that its very existence calls for a second look, is an aged church. This has the official postal address of 368 High Street, Brentford, but you may look in vain for its one-time neighbours 366 and 370. Or any other nearby building come to that. The church building remains as an oasis of sanity in an ocean of induced sterility. For it is here that The British Piano Museum has its home. Here, in the sublime surroundings of this crumbling mid-Victorian edifice with heavy traffic passing just feet outside its weather-worn oaken doors, is set out Frank Holland's collection. Beneath a huge plastic false roof which insulates the collection ("The church would cost a fortune to heat in entirety and besides the roof leaks") have stood countless hardened mechano-musicophiles from many parts of the world and all have commended the collection for its size and variety.

The range of exhibits is awesome. Although it naturally centres on pianos ("We do have a 1794

Broadwood grand" says Frank, "but this one by William Stodart was made in 1840 and was played by Mendelssohn") by far the great majority of instruments are mechanical and represent a good cross section of the world of automatic music. Here can be seen Princess Beatrice's Steinway Duo-Art which once stood in Kensington Palace. And facing it is the giant Imhof & Mukle orchestrion which, until a year or so ago, stood incongruously and forelorn on the third floor of Imhof's record and hi-fi shop in London's New Oxford Street.

Aeolian Orchestrelles in several impressive sizes rub carvings with roll-playing jazz pianos, barrel orchestrions and peculiar instruments which were the abandoned love-children of inventors who believed they could revolutionise the musical world. Among these is a double-sided piano with two vertical keyboards. . . . A stately Hupfeld Phonoliszt-Violina with pneumatically-played violins contrasts with the electrically-played violin in the Mills Violano-Virtuoso with its built-in 44-note symmetrical piano.

Largest instrument on show is a Welte Philharmonic concert organ (pictured on page 514 of Volume 4) upon whose ivory manuals unseen hands faultlessly render Bach's Toccata & Fugue in D with unseen stop changes, unfailing memory and unflappable panache, even when a member of the audience lets out an unstified adulation. Even larger is the Museum's latest acquisition — the Wurlitzer theatre organ from the old Regal Cinema at Kingston — which will be restored next year.

There is something for everybody at the B.P.M. A few well-chosen musical boxes will please those whose interests have not yet ascended to the point where the pneumatic computers behind early 20th century mechanical instruments find favour. And many will



A view down one side of the main hall of the British Piano Museum at Brentford. The aged phonograph in the foreground has to be heard through rubber tubes connected to ear pieces. There are eight grand player pianos in this view – all different and all in first rate playing order.

enjoy some of the clever visual aids Frank uses such as the giant vacuum gauge which even startles the more knowledgeable watchers as it illustrates the fluctuations in a piano stack whilst playing.

Facts about the collection:

Owner: The British Piano & Musical Museum is a trust registered as a charity for the preservation of automatic, old and odd musical instruments.

Address: 368, High Street, Brentford, Middlesex.

Telephone: (01-) 560 8108

Opening times: Saturdays and Sundays from 2.30 pm. Other times may be arranged by prior negotiation with Frank Holland

Admission: 25p donation to the Museum

Parking: Parking prohibited at all times outside the museum (yellow lines : busy road)

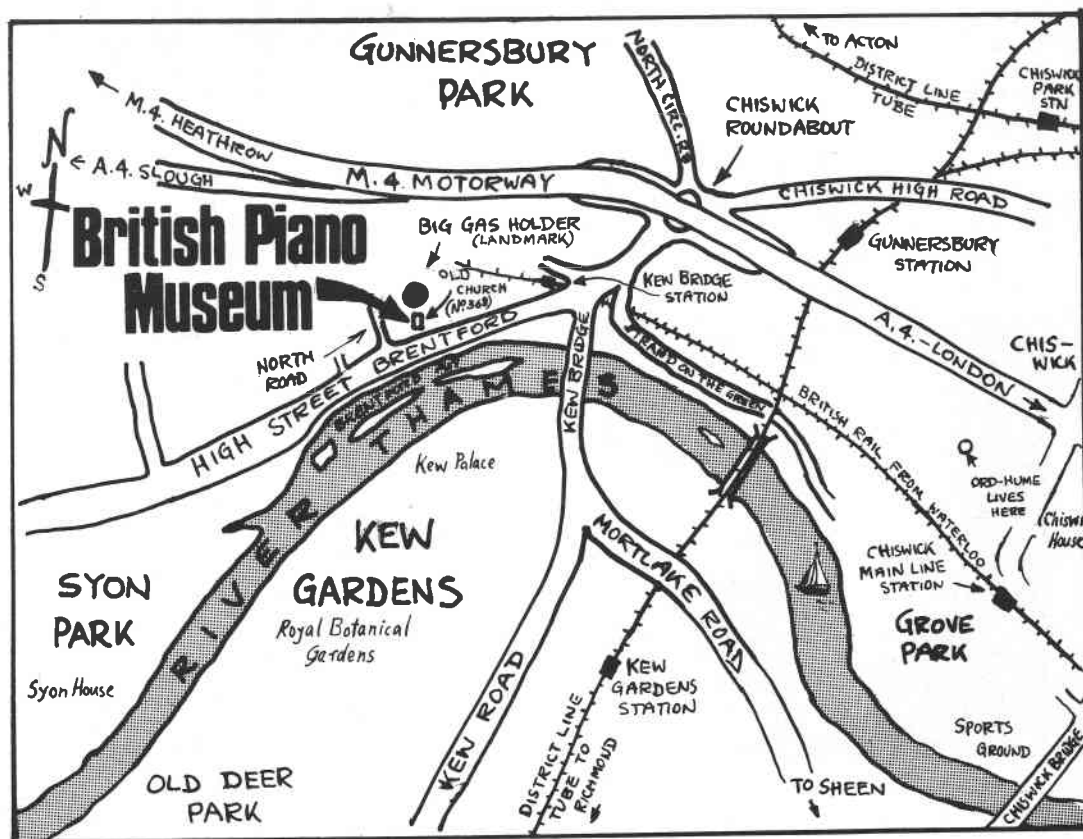
Programme:

Quick-Fix Location:

Cars and coaches can park in North Road, the first turning northwards on the west side of the museum. At owner's risk.

The majority of instruments in the main section are played on every tour: others may be by special request. 13 miles from the centre of London (A.4 west to Chiswick roundabout junction with North Circular Road, then half a mile towards Brentford). Nearest river bridge: Kew. Twenty minutes' walk from Gunnersbury Tube; fifty yards from the River Thames. On 'bus routes 117 and 267 (stops only yards from the door). Although you may not at first see the church, THE GASOMETER IS VISIBLE FOR MILES!

LOCATION OF THE MUSEUM



THE AUTUMN MEETING

of The Musical Box Society of Great Britain was held on Saturday, 14th. October, 1972 at the Great Western Royal Hotel, London.

The registration was again ably handled by Mrs. Marie Waylett and Mrs. Sarah Tallis, and once more the raffle, on this occasion for a very pleasant new musical box by Reuge, was in the charge of Mrs. Jo Webb. The prize was won by Mrs. Bertha de Vere Green, a very popular win since we all know and appreciate the work she has cheerfully undertaken for the Society for many years.

The day was fine and sunny with just that hint of crispness which tells us that it is no longer Summer. For this reason it seemed a shame that there were not more of our overseas Members to share our Meeting and enjoy a truly English beautiful Autumn day. Even so the attendance of this one day Meeting was a good one, being well over 100 Members and guests.

One overseas Member who did manage to join us was Dr. J.J.L. Haspels, Conservator-Director of the Nationaal Museum van Speeldoos tot Pierement, the Museum of mechanical music in Utrecht, Holland. Dr. Haspels, surprisingly young in appearance for such an important post, is full of a rich enthusiasm for anything musical. A man of modest disposition, he comes vibrantly alive in a quest for knowledge.

Member Frank Holland, Curator of The British Piano Museum, was our first speaker of the day and using a combination of slides and photographs (by means of an episcopes), he treated us to a look round his Museum. Using an easy to absorb mixture of humour and erudition Mr. Holland was an interesting guide, and I'm sure he can look forward to a growing number of visitors from our Society. Especially



Frank Holland – humorous erudition.

interesting from a more personal point of view was a film shown toward the end of his talk which could be titled "A Day In The Life Of". Here we caught a glimpse of a true British eccentric in all his glory. A man it seemed, not easy to know, but worth the effort.

After lunch there was an open discussion by a panel consisting of David Tallis; Arthur Ord-Hume; Keith Harding and Graham Webb, presided over by Cyril de Vere Green. An interesting hour and it must be said that the Meeting seemed to enjoy it very much. A friendly difference of opinion came during the examination of an early 'rechange' piano-forte key-



Arthur Ord-Hume with the star of the late-late show.

wind movement. Arthur put the age of the movement at 1860–1870, David at 1850–1870 and Graham at 1850–1860. This was, by the way, a most interesting movement displayed by Robin Southward.

There followed an informative talk on "House Security and Burglary Prevention" by two police Officers, Sgt. Joyce Crooks, a crime prevention officer from Scotland Yard, and P.C. Pat Morris, also a crime prevention officer, from Paddington Police Station. Temptingly named Sgt. Crooks has the distinction of being the only female crime prevention officer in London, there being only two in the whole of Britain.

The talk, illustrated by slides, was full of advice on how to keep what you have. It was a good mixture of common sense and dire warning. At one point we were told that, according to statistics, one or more of those of us who had come to the Meeting by car had a good chance of finding it stolen when leaving. The talk provoked so many questions that tea was delayed, and then, after tea, it was decided that the questions would continue, and so they did for a further 20 minutes.

Next on the programme was a short film on mechanical music which had been made by Jonathan



An elegant country gentleman – Peter Ward.

White. The film won 1st. Prize in the 1971 competition of the Manchester Cine Society. Jonathan apologised in advance for the fact that the film was not intended for showing to a knowledgeable audience, being far too basic in approach, but as we watched the film we were pleasantly surprised at the professional way in which it had been made. It was a most interesting film and one sincerely hopes that it may encourage more of our Members to attempt a similar project. The showing of films such as these is invaluable in the spreading of knowledge and in the furtherance of the aims of the Society.



Cyril de Vere Green's Mini exhibition.

The final offering of the day, that of demonstrating selected musical boxes from those on exhibition, was presented by Arthur Ord-Hume. The star of this event (apart from the inimitable A.O.H.) was without doubt a small key-wind sectional comb movement in an open wooden base. The movement was owned by Reg Waylett and, despite the presence of a number of Nicoles, this no-name small piece stood head and shoulders above the crowd for clarity of sound and the clever arrangement of the operatic music.

The exhibition of Member's boxes, again unfortunately small, was distinguished by the showing by our President, Cyril de Vere Green of a selection of L'Epee/Thibouville Lamy boxes. At the same time an automatic projector threw a continuous series of pictures of pieces from the seemingly inexhaustible de Vere Green Collection on to a small screen. A



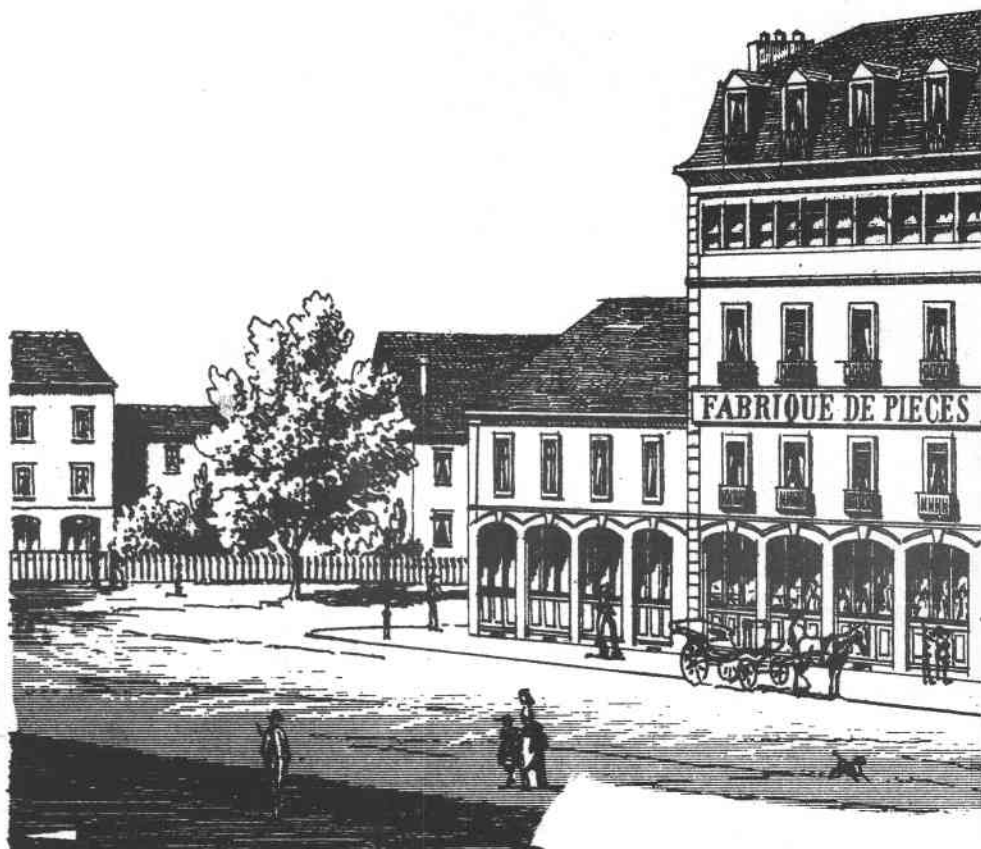
Norfolk contingent – Bernard Nichols and Frank Greenacre.

well thought out mini-exhibition which deserves praise (and imitation from other Members).

Also in the exhibition was shown some literature from a "Musée Musique Mechanique" which Member Stephen Cockburn and his charming wife Judy had found while on holiday this Summer in the South of France. The Museum publishes a bulletin for Collectors and is open from Pentecost to mid September, from 9 am to 7 pm daily. The address is Musée Musique Mechanique, Parc Sainte Donat, Sainte Maxime, Var, France. It stands on the D.25 road half way between Muy and Sainte Maxime.

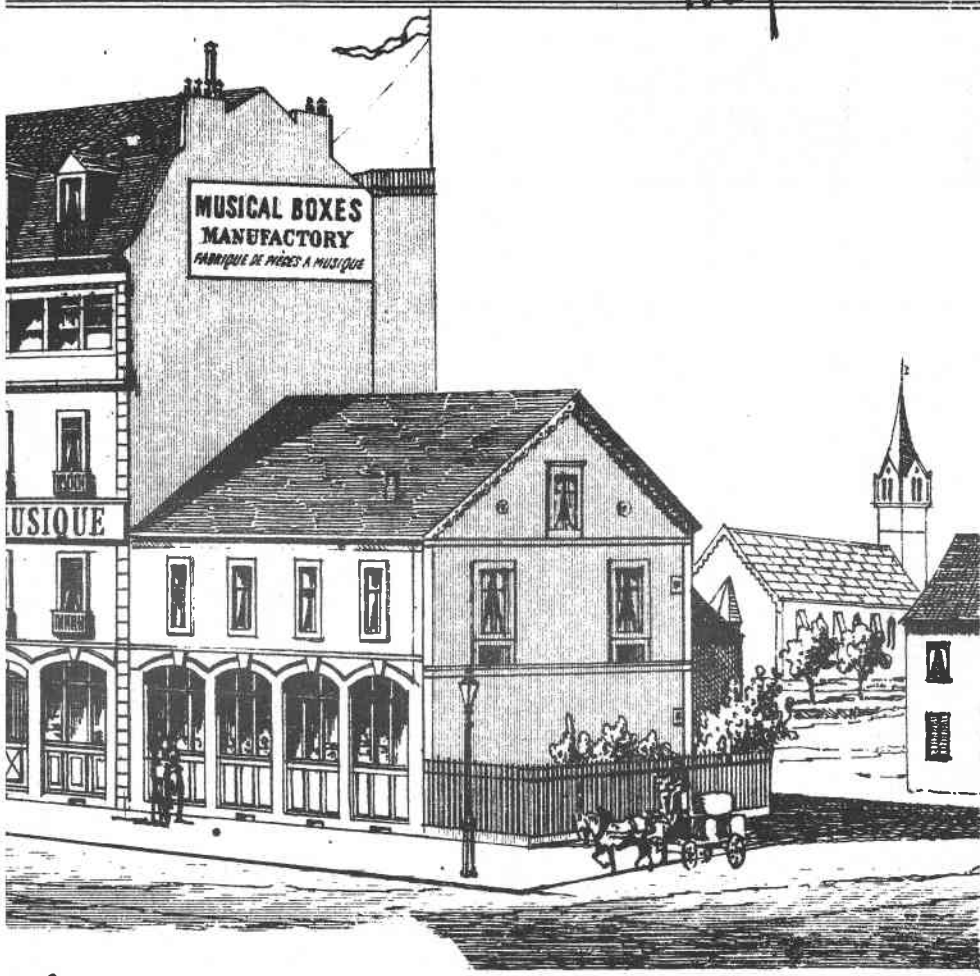
Thanks to Judy and Stephen we now have one more place to visit when next on holiday in the area but beware, very little English is spoken.

G.W.


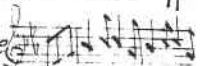
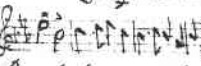
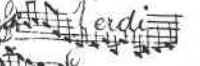
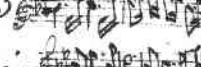
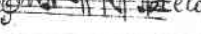


Cambourville

- 1 La Muette de Portici *Marche*  *Reuber*
- 2 La Norma *"Oh! di qual"*  *Bellini*
- 3 Fra Diavolo *"Je vois marcher"*  *Reuber*
- 4 La Timbale d'Argent *"Encore un qui"*  *Wagner*
- 5 Polka *Nena*  *Kraus'*
- 6 Geneviève de Brabant *"Rip, hip"*  *Offenbach*



Libres en vne

- Le Pont des Soupirs Catarina  Offenbach
- La G^{de} Duchesse Chanson militaire 
- Martha Cor di Tattori  Holow
- Il Trovatore Chœur des Bohémiens  Verdi
- Giroflé - Girofla Quadrille N° 5  Lecocq
- Valse Am schönen Rhein  Heller Béla

NICOLE FRÈRES

— THE CLOSING YEARS

by Arthur W. J. G. Ord-Hume

On page 281 of Volume 3 of THE MUSIC BOX, an advertisement announced the Nicole Freres Duplex gramophone record. Several members expressed interest in further details of this departure from the more familiar musical box activities of this company. The story of the Duplex enterprise effectively draws to a conclusion the whole story of Nicole Freres which has been the subject of previous articles in the Journal. These articles have traced the delineation of the company in Switzerland, related how the business was sold to London management and thence became a British-registered limited-liability company. It has also already been told how Nicole Freres became major distributors for the Polyphon disc-playing musical box.

The phone, contemporary periodicals tell us, brought about a rapid revolution in the music trade in the burgeoning years of this century. It comes as a surprise to us to discover that the phone referred to was not the *tele* variety, but the *gramo* with the sit-up horn which at one and the same time begged for attention — and downright demanded it. Among the first wholesalers to offer the gramophone to the trade was Nicole Freres of 21, Ely Place, Holborn. Initially these instruments went under the genus of talking machines, but since this was to become synonymous with the cylinder-playing instruments of the early Edison type, the arrival of Emil Berliner's patent flat-disc gramophone suggested this new name as the genus disc-playing talking machine.

Nicole Freres Limited was extremely successful in pushing the new instrument. With a highly respected reputation in the musical box business and, through this, well-established connections throughout the music trade, those who bought musical boxes from Ely Place were automatic customers for gramophones. But Ely Place had its limitations, particularly as regards space since most of this was now devoted to Polyphons. In November, 1902, the company took premises at 34, Charles Street, E.C., to stock an immense quantity of records for phonographs. Everybody under-estimated the demand for the phone and its music in these early years and soon a serious bottleneck arose over the supply of the records themselves. Nicole Freres decided that the only possible solution was to undertake the manufacture of its own discs.

The first Nicole records were advertised in 1903 and, according to contemporary sources, the company was the first to make disc records in entirety in England. A special feature of these discs was that they were "unbreakable" and a malevolent columnist writing in *Musical Opinion* at the time stated that he

satisfied himself as to this claim that the discs would not break "even if thrown from a height".

Ely Place did not lend itself to use as a gramophone record factory — there just was not enough space — so an extensive factory was erected at nearby Great Saffron Hill in the vicinity of the homes of the itinerant Italian street musicians and their *padrones* (*padrone di casa* in most cases!). Here the standard seven-inch size of record ("obtained by a new method") was made and this retailed at a shilling. A larger disc, ten inches in diameter, sold at half-a-crown. Whatever the secret of their manufacture was, they were it seems an obvious improvement on the other makes of record available.

By good fortune, that worthy music publication *Musical Opinion* (then solely a trade paper), despatched its reporter to Holborn Circus one Spring day in 1904 so that he might commit to paper what he found. The reproduction shows, with acknowledgements to that publication (now five years short of its century), his description of what he found.

Within a year (April, 1905), the Neophone Co. Ltd. of 149–153, Roseberry Avenue, London, E.C., was in full production with Dr. William Michaelis's Neophone and its discs which sold at sixpence each for the seven-inch size, and a shilling for the ten-inch size. There were also other British makers and, on top of this, French and German manufacturers had stepped up production and were better able to meet the British demand. Their discs were all cheaper than those of Nicole Freres. Neophone failed in 1908, but lasted long enough to add its weight against the pricey products of Great Saffron Hill.

In October, 1905, Henry Klein, now at his new, larger premises off Oxford Street, was allowing sixpence for an old Nicole record in exchange for a new ten-inch one. The writing was on the wall. The first

Visit to the "Nicole Record" Works

A NEW BRITISH INDUSTRY.

THE talking machine has made rapid strides of late, and the price of a really efficient one is now within the reach of all. Retailers, too, sell all makes upon easy terms. Many say that a delightful entertainment can be given forth by this automatic instrument, the rendition by a wonderful reproduction of songs and pieces being one of the most captivating of home pleasures. The records favoured by the majority of the public are in the form of a disc, a convenient and economical arrangement. Possibly there are others who prefer cylinder shapes.

Naturally, in the making of talking machines, there has grown another industry,—the production of the records. Users of machines would, however, find many an evening's pleasure getting monotonous if it were not that new tunes are constantly being put on the market, although the supply of records to English wholesalers had assumed something of a monopoly. Here we should state that Messrs. Nicole Frères (Lim.) were one of the pioneers in introducing talking machines to the trade; but it was found that the sale of them was hindered owing to difficulty of obtaining records. It was decided, as a way out of the trouble, by the firm to manufacture the tunes themselves.

The house alluded to was the first firm to make disc records in their entirety in England; and we have satisfied ourselves that the discs will not break even if thrown from a height. The production is obtained by a new method, thus enabling the standard size to be retailed at a shilling. Apart from cheapness and durability, it is claimed that their records reproduce with clearness; and we could not detect any "screeching" noise when the discs were being used.

The new factory is at Great Saffron Hill, Holborn Circus. In the basement there is the power used for driving the machinery, and the lighting is made from electricity generated on the large premises. Roughly speaking, the direct vibration of the sound to be reproduced on a record is taken on a disc of extremely sensitive wax, which is specially prepared, is carefully levelled, and is then marked with circular lines so finely made as to number eighty to ninety different lines to the inch. On these the recording needle plays, thus breaking

the fine lines with uneven dashes according to the nature of the sounds; there is thus an actual *fac-simile* (in wax) of the record that is to be. From this mould a matrix is produced,—used to stamp impressions on the composition of which the Nicole article is made. The process appears to be so very simple, but it is much more complicated in operation. Elaborate machinery is necessary for preparing the wax originals; much work is necessary in producing the material of which the discs are composed of, and an expensive plant for hydraulic pressure is needed to get the right impression from the matrix to the record itself. There are also intricate electrical and chemical processes for turning out matrices, all of which play a great part in the apparently easy method of getting ready a shilling record.

We found Messrs. Nicole Frères' record making room a strangely amusing place. One imagines a singer trilling into the mouth of a machine; but it is not so. Singing into a phonograph is an effort. Imagine a small room, with little furniture in it; the machine which actually takes the records is located in a laboratory which is hidden from our view by curtains, but the mouthpiece or huge bell projects into the apartment. Whilst the pianist is playing a few introductory bars of music, a lady places herself at the large horn referred to, and sings into it (but not as if she were in a drawing room, but with all the power and volume of an artist singing to an immense audience). Sometimes a military band appears, the members of which are huddled together, playing extra loudly: the noise made is great, but the music sounds all right when it is reproduced from the disc. We heard the Irish Guards play popular airs such as "Down South," &c. Some pieces had to be performed twice, in order that the record might be perfect. Then followed music of a totally different kind,—several songs rendered by Miss Kate Cole, with flute obbligato. On the day preceding our visit the Meistersingers Orchestra played selections into the talking machine. Of course a new concern cannot hold so large a catalogue of records as an old established house; still, there are hundreds of pieces in the lists already issued, and dozens of items are being added daily.

The company employ about one hundred and sixty people; and as the disc records are sold to "the masses" at prices within their reach, we think that the enterprise of the firm will meet with success.

thing that happened was the slow but unmistakable onset of a recession in all commerce. The great hopes of the twentieth century shattered as unemployment rose and trade became depressed. At Easter, 1906, Henry Klein, full of years, decided to shut up shop and retire. For twenty years, he had led the field in advertising and presenting his wares to the trade. He factored Polyphons, talking machines, pianos and automatic machines generally. As the shutters went up at 142, Wardour Street, The New Polyphon Supply Company of Newman Street published that it had taken over the goodwill and assets of Klein's business. And with it, the failing trade in Nicole records.

Nicole Freres had registered a subsidiary company called The Nicole Record Co. Ltd. and by the summer of 1906, this company was in voluntary liquidation. It would seem that a receiver

was also appointed for Nicole Freres Limited, a notice of termination being published in July 1906 as follows:

"The New Polyphon Supply Co. . . . have acquired the goodwill and stock of the old established firm of Messrs. Nicole Freres of Ely Place, E.C.; and this business is now incorporated with our own. The large and extensive connections of that firm (established in 1815) added to our own should enable us to greatly increase our turnover. We wish the trade to clearly understand that there will be no further connection between Nicole Freres (as incorporated) and the Nicole Record Co. (Lim.) We have no intention of manufacturing records (either disc or cylinder); but shall as hitherto devote ourselves to factoring only,

STOCK OF MUSICAL BOXES



SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY.

A Stock of Musical Boxes acquired from the Official Liquidator of

Messrs. Nicole Freres

(late of Ely Place), to be sold at greatly **Reduced Prices.**

A splendid money making chance for Pushing Dealers.

About 201 of the Well Known **Penny-in-Slot Polyphons No.104**

Equal in every respect to new. To be cleared. Some of these are already advantageously placed in Licensed Houses.

NEW POLYPHON SUPPLY CO.

2, Newman Street, London, W. [Ltd.]



so far as this class of goods is concerned."

In October, 1906, The New Polyphon Supply Co. Ltd. advertised for sale "A stock of musical boxes acquired from the Official Liquidator of Messrs. Nicole Freres (late of Ely Place)".

So died one of the most famous of all names in the field of musical boxes. Are the plaudits directed at the magic name 'Nicole Freres' justly awarded? Were Nicole Freres the very best makers? It remains, perhaps, a question of personal opinion. For my part, though, I believe that they were just one of many excellent early-to-mid-period makers of cylinder musical boxes. I know a number of later

Nicole-marked boxes which are of poor quality from both a manufacturing and a musical standpoint. Nicole Freres had a name which was pushed and which was represented by the very best distributors right from the start of musical box sales in Europe and London. There are always those names which get assimilated into the "credit cult". Look at Pianola, His Master's Voice, Polyphon, Ford, The Queen Mary. They are all names which everybody knows and they represent perhaps not the very best, but the best-known.

By all means let us give Nicole Freres every credit. But do not let us forget the many other makers who were at least as skilled whose work survives today to demonstrate that skill to us.

ARCHIVIST APPOINTED

It has been announced by the Committee of The Musical Box Society that Member Alan Frost has been appointed as Archivist to keep the records of the Society and any historical information, books, records, catalogues or the like which have been or may be donated to the Society. The object sought in this appointment is to gather together, and make available to any Member, the fruits of the concerted search for knowledge on our subject by the Society.

FUTURE SOCIETY MEETINGS

In addition to the Meeting at SHEFFIELD on Saturday 3rd March 1973, the following information is now available on Meetings during the coming year. The ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING will be held on June 2nd and 3rd. 1973 at the GREAT WESTERN ROYAL HOTEL, Paddington, and the Autumn Meeting at the same venue on Saturday 13th October, 1973.

G. W. MacKINNON

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—○—

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TUNING ORGANETTE REEDS

by Ralph Heintz

A glance at Dave Bowers' *Encyclopedia of Automatic Musical Instruments* will reveal the amazing variety of mechanical organettes and related instruments (Tanzbars, Rolmonicas, etc.) built in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Not only were the sizes and shapes extremely varied and novel, the quantities made and sold far exceeded the total production of conventional disc and cylinder music boxes. The fact that so few have survived is testimony not only to their delicate nature, but also to the unfortunate fact that they were truly "throw-away" items; seldom costing more than a few pounds.

The complete restoration of a badly damaged organette can be as time consuming and frustrating — and rewarding — as the salvage of any fine instrument. Frequently, however, only the tuning of a few reeds is needed to give an organette top-quality performance, and the tuning operation is one in which the careful amateur can engage with a minimum outlay for tools and equipment. The only specialized tools required are a reed hook and a reed scraper, obtainable for about 30p and 50p respectively from the local piano supply house. Of course, a source of properly tuned notes (such as a piano at £350) is also necessary, but this is usually available somewhere, and need not be purchased especially. Fortunately, organettes are small and can be easily carried to the piano for tuning, rather than the other way round.

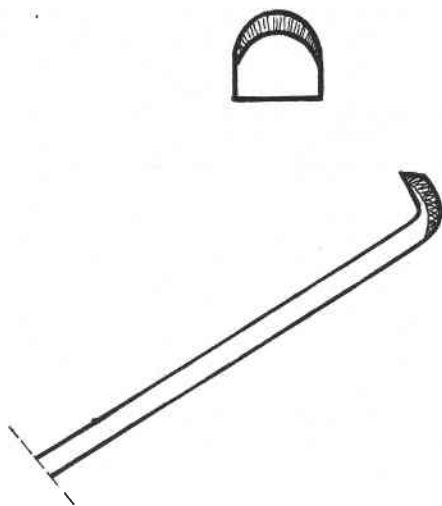
All organette reeds will have basically the same design, differences occurring mainly in the method of mounting the reed within the instrument. The reed itself is a thin rectangular strip of metal (usually brass but occasionally steel), firmly fastened at one end (the "hinge") to a thick metal base plate having a rectangular slot very slightly larger than the reed. Thus, the tip ("tongue") of the reed can vibrate in and out of the slot, in effect "chopping" the flow of air through the slot and producing a more or less musical note.

The pitch of the sound produced will be dependent to a small extent on the air pressure exciting the reed, but to a much larger extent on the material from which the reed was made; its "springiness"; its length, weight and thickness; and the distribution of weight along the length of the reed. Since the material and length are fixed at the time of manufacture, the only things that can be varied for tuning are the weight and thickness.

With one exception (to be discussed later), all tuning is done by REMOVING material from the reed. To lower the pitch, material is removed from the area near the hinge, thereby reducing the thickness in

the region where the bending stress is greatest, and making the reed more "floppy". To raise the pitch, material is removed from the tongue area (i.e. from the surface of the reed, NOT by reducing its length), which reduces the weight in an area not subject to much bending stress and allows the air to push the reed about more rapidly. Obviously, material must be removed very carefully so as not to overshoot the desired pitch and necessitate removal of even more material from the opposite end of the reed. The game is over when *all* of the material has been removed and the tuner is left with an empty slot. Usually it ends sooner than that by fatiguing and breakage of the reed in a hinge area that has been rendered too thin.

Organette reeds will be found either as single "harmonium" reeds with each base plate usually stamped with its proper note; or as banks of unmarked reeds on a single base plate as in the harmonica. With the harmonium type it is generally not necessary to know the tuning scheme of the organette, since the notes can be read directly from the base plates. With the harmonica type, however, the tuning scheme can be quite important, since some rather strange scales



A reed scraper

were used. The Rolmonica, for example, used a conventional ascending scale except for the top two notes which were interchanged. If the out-of-tune notes are not too far off, their correct pitch can be inferred from the adjacent notes that are assumed to be in tune.

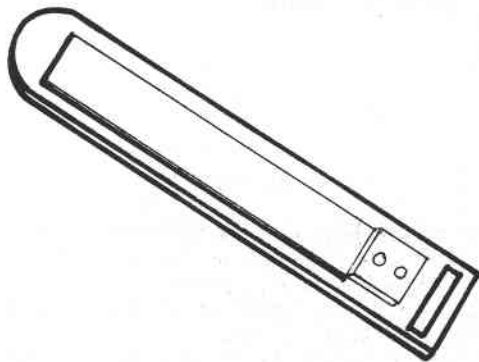
When checking pitch it is usually desirable to have the reed playing in its proper location in the organ with normal bellows pressure applied. It is possible to sound the reed by placing it between the lips and huffing gently; however, carefully calibrated huffs are required, and there is always the possibility of discomfort and expense if the reed is accidentally ingested. Unfortunately, most organettes do not come with a voicing strip that allows notes to be played individually and continuously. Although such a strip can easily be made, in practice it is usually quite simple to block off all but the desired note. In the

keyless instruments, masking tape can be used to seal the undesired holes in the tracker bar, while in the keyed organs small strips of cardboard can be slipped under the pressure arm to hold the valves closed on the unwanted notes.

With these preliminaries out of the way, let us now consider a practical tuning example. One of the simplest organettes is the Melodia; a 14-note, direct-suction, paper-roll organ whose harmonium-type reeds are mounted directly in the tracker bar, from which they may easily be removed without further disassembling the organ. The tuning scheme is G # , A # , C, C # , D # , F, F # , G, G # , A # , C, C # , D # , F, and these notes are stamped into the base plates of the reeds. The reed slots in the tracker bar are precisely cut, so that it is impossible to insert the reeds out of order and still have a smooth fit in the tracker bar.

Without removing any of the reeds at this time, place masking tape over all but the first hole on the tracker bar, crank the organ at its normal rate and compare the sound with that of the corresponding note on the piano. Actually, it is usually more effective to strike the note first on the piano, holding it with the sustaining pedal, THEN crank up the organ while the piano is still sounding. This avoids having to use the toes to strike the piano keys.

If the pitch is not sufficiently close to its counterpart on the piano, make a note of whether it is sharp or flat; cover up the first hole on the tracker bar; uncover the second hole; make a similar comparison, and so on up the scale, ending with a list of all reeds needing tuning and the directions in which they should be tuned.



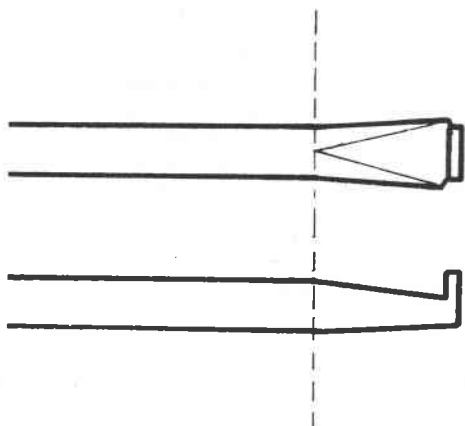
A normal reed from a Celestina or similar machine.

UNUSUAL TUNESHEET

The most unusual tunesheet featured on the centre pages is from a musical box in the collection of Member L.C. Thompson. It belongs to a box with drum and six bells, the cylinder is 13 inches long and the case is of poor quality and sparse inlay. There is no sign of a maker's name or mark but it bears a label with the legend: T.S. BESWICK, 9, BERRY STREET, LIVERPOOL. EST. 1845.

A word of caution may be in order here. Some organettes, notably some of those made in America, were tuned to a scale based on an "A" of higher frequency than the commonly used 440 cycles per

second. On these instruments EVERY note will sound sharp (usually about a quarter-tone) compared to the piano, even though the instrument is in as perfect condition as when it left the factory. There are several alternatives in such a case. First, if the organ does not sound particularly out of tune playing its regular music rolls, it should be left alone. Second, the tuning of the whole instrument can be brought down to a scale based on International "A". This will necessitate retuning every reed and may result in weakening the reeds by removal of too much material in the hinge area, but it does permit direct comparison with piano notes for future tuning. Finally, for those devotees to authenticity, the original tuning can be checked and restored through the use of a "strobe-type" tuning aid (for example, the Petersen Strobotuner) which can be given any desired frequency offset while still maintaining the correct proportionality among the notes of the scale. Obviously, the investment of £100



A reed hook

or so in an electronic tuning aid is hard to justify for restoring ONE organette; however, such devices are widely used by latter-day piano tuners, and it should be relatively easy to find a co-operative tuner willing to assist in bring a few reeds into line.

Assuming, now, that one has a list of the reeds to be tuned, these reeds are removed from the tracker bar using the reed hook. Examination of the base plate will reveal a small transverse slot near the point at which the reed is attached. When the reed hook is engaged in this slot, the entire reed assembly may be withdrawn from the tracker bar with a steady pull.

Before attempting any tuning, the reed should be carefully examined for any dirt, bits of lint or paper fibres that may have lodged in the space between

the reed itself and the base plate, particularly at the hinge end. Such debris can cause detuning or failure of the reed to speak at all. It can usually be dislodged by slipping a strip of writing paper between the tongue of the reed and the base plate and working it gently back and forth toward the hinge until it will go no further. Care should be taken to ensure that the reed is not deformed or given a permanent set by this action.

If it has been determined that the reed is sharp, the pitch must be lowered by removing metal from the hinge end of the reed. The reed scraper is used for this and the scraping action may extend toward the tongue for approximately one-fourth the length of the reed. Extending it farther will not lower the tone appreciably, and may even raise it. Gentleness and restraint cannot be overemphasized at this point. It is far better to make several trials, reducing the pitch very slightly each time, than to overshoot, and be forced to raise the pitch back up.

For the first trial, make one or two very gentle passes with the scraper, applying practically no pressure. If the scraper is properly sharp, a few small curlicues of metal will be scraped from the reed.

Replace the reed in the organ and try the tone comparison. Chances are it will still be sharp, but detectably closer to the desired pitch. Repeat the procedure, spreading the scraping action out over the width of the reed rather than concentrating on just one spot. As experience is gained the number of trails needed can be reduced, although it is always best not to attempt the entire correction in one trial.

If the reed is flat to begin with, scraping is done at the tongue end and may extend back toward the hinge for about one-fourth the length of the reed. The reed is quite flexible at this end must be supported for scraping by slipping a piece of paper or a business card between the tongue and the base plate. Again, the trial-and-error system is preferable, and care should be taken not to alter the set or position of the reed.

On the rare occasions when a reed has been tuned and returned so often that the metal in the hinge area is exceedingly thin and in danger of breaking, its pitch can be lowered by the application of small dabs of metallic-loaded lacquer to the tongue area. The use of a heavy lacquer is equivalent to replacing some of the material scraped away in attempting to raise the pitch of the reed. It may be necessary to degrease the reed first in order to get proper adherence of the lacquer.

The simple procedures described above can be extended to the more complex reed banks with the proper exercise of caution. On some instruments it may be necessary to tune the reeds in situ, which may, in turn, require the grinding of special scrapers; however, the basic techniques are the same, and the results in terms of improved performance can be extremely rewarding.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

by Keith Harding and Cliff Burnett

Member George Worswick writes:—

"I have had a little time to examine your manual on repinning. (The Musical Box Workshop Manual). Comments; Removing the divider, when of zinc, can be a disastrous process, as I have found. You do not mention knocking it from both sides to assist it to turn, as there is bound to be shellac in the very corners. If cracked or broken, I have soldered together and corrected on a lathe. As you mention part etching for long cylinders, how does one prevent the "tide mark" which I once had, where acid, brass and air meet? What are Bonelli punches, and who sells them? I make my own. You do not as far as I can see condemn the repairer who tightens the drive slot by hitting it from the outside. I try to rectify this sort of repair when the end cap is off, from the inside. It is a brutal scar, though not very visible. I am glad you do not mention partial repinning, of the type practised by watchmakers. It is too skilled a process to risk ruining a cylinder. For cleaning out traces of shellac, I merely use meths. It's cheap enough to throw away after a few cylinders, though I must admit I have not used the solution you recommend."

Thank you very much for your comments on the repinning notes. I am always delighted to have this kind of constructive criticism, as it all helps to make the manual that much better.

All workshop processes must be carried out with a reasonable amount of care so as not to damage the object, but your suggestion is a sound one. However, if you use the strong stripper we recommend you will find as we did that it is much better at removing all traces of shellac from cylinders than meths, and I

think that the problem of breaking dividers will not arise. It is vitally important that all shellac is removed, or the acid will not be able to do its work.

As regards the "tide mark", when the cylinder is reversed, the acid level should be only just above the level of undissolved pins, so that the remaining pins will protect the brass electrochemically. The cylinder should be kept under careful observation and removed as soon as the pins have gone. It might be a good idea to protect the already stripped portion of the cylinder with a ring of lacquer or micro-crystalline wax.

Member Richmond Mason writes:—

"Could you please help me? Where could I purchase Bonelli punches and a Perfecta Remover? It is impossible for me to purchase these locally."

There is no reason at all why you should use this particular make of punch for repinning. Any tapered punch of the right size, with a hole in the end of sufficient diameter to just hold the pinning wire, will do. The depth punch is the same thing with the end ground so that the hole is exactly the right depth. We use 0.046" depth. We just happen to use Bonelli punches ourselves, which we obtain from Messrs. A. Shoot & Sons Ltd., 116 St. John Street, Clerkenwell Road, London, EC1V 4JR.

Likewise Perfecta remover is a strong paint remover, far superior to proprietary strippers, which is sold by Messrs. Gedge & Co. (Clerkenwell) Ltd., 88 St. John Street, Clerkenwell, London. This is highly inflammable, and must be used in a well ventilated room, with no smoking and no naked fires. For the same reason, you will probably have to call for it.

We have been very short of questions for the last two issues. Please help us by sending interesting questions, or even answers, to "Question and Answer", 93 Hornsey Road, London N7 6DJ.

BAUD FRÈRES

A recent Member of the Society is Samuel Margot, a Swiss/Englishman who was at school with the brothers Baud. Sam was apprenticed in the family musical box business in St. Croix and now, having held several posts, is a member of the Graham Webb workshop. He has kindly lent to us a copy of the Swiss Newspaper "Feuille D'Avis de Ste Croix" for 18th March 1970, which contains an article and several interesting pictures of M. Frederic Baud and pieces in the Musee Baud. With apologies in advance for the necessarily poor quality of the pictures, we give a free and adapted translation of the article.



M. Frederic Baud.



An automaton figure considered to represent Tino Rossi. Lifesize, the figure moves his eyes; eyebrows and lips, the hands and feet move in time to the music. circa 1925.



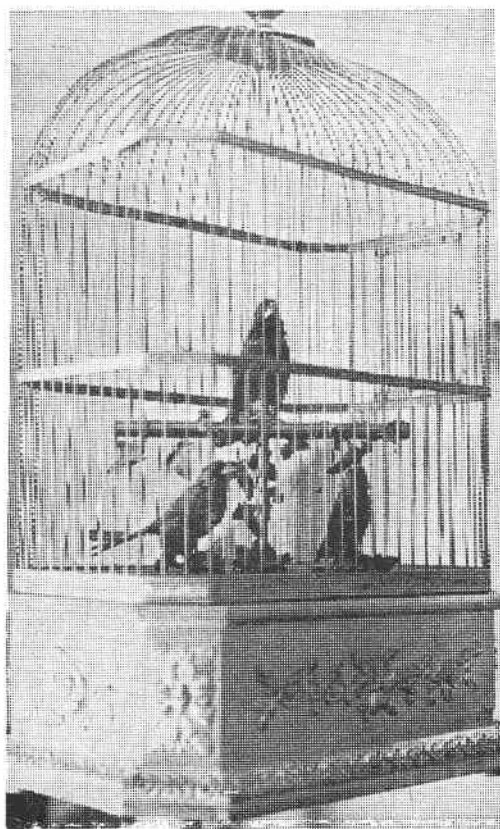
Made recently in L'Auberson, this automaton is a copy of an original from about 1900. The figure has now been made by Bertrand of Paris and the movement was assembled by Baud Freres.

"It is said that Parisiens never ascend the Eiffel Tower. It can also be said that the inhabitants of the region never visit the museum at L'Auberson. For all that everybody speaks of it, as it is perhaps one of the rare specialised museums that the layman will not find boring. What matters if the visitor does not grasp all the finer details of the mechanism of the Singing Bird Box or of an Orchestrion? They experience pleasure, and marvel at the cunning subtlety and refinement when faced with the art of mechanical music. The older people forget their rheumatics, the sonorous music of a wax Tino Rossi playing an accordion momentarily brings them back to the good old days.

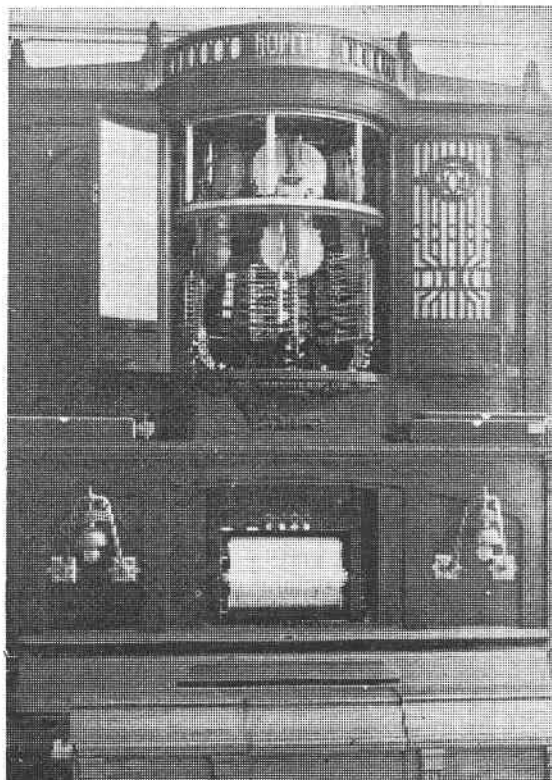
It was in 1811 that Jeremie Recordon brought from the Vallee de Joux the first musical box to St. Croix. In less than a century our region was going to be known the world over, owing to the rapid expansion of the new industry. Certain products were veritable works of art which only wealthy people could afford.

The commode musical box for example was worth 1006 francs in 1890 and now these pieces are sold for between 12,000 and 36,000 francs. Some pieces constructed about 1927 were at this period sold for about 50,000 francs (the Swiss franc is worth about nine pence).

The idea of the Baud brothers is to create a revival of the period that extends between and around 1800 and 1925 and to show the public the rapid evolution which manifested itself in the research of the mechanical reproduction of music, research in which our region held an important place. We must alas refer to the past, for since the appearance of records and magnetic tape the orchestrions and other large pieces, so subtle and so complete as they were, no longer have their place, at least not in the manner for which they were made. But there remains the reflection of a past not too far off and for every visitor, the object of never ceasing wonder and admiration."



A 'triple' singing bird cage.



A Handsome and rare Model B Hupfeld Phonoliszt-Violina. It was found in a cafe in Yverdon. The ceiling of the cafe being too low to contain the violins they had been removed. Only after a long search were they discovered elsewhere and reunited with the piano.

NOTES ON

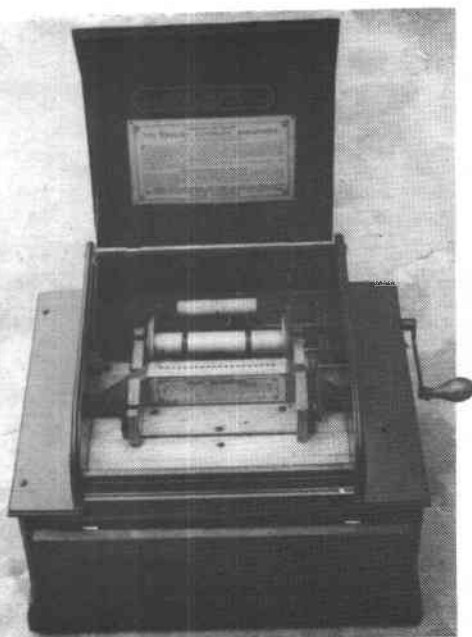
THE SERAPHONE ORGANETTE

by Roger Booty

In my article on the Ariel organette I mentioned some of the similarities it has with the Seraphone. One difference however is that the Seraphone has only one set of reeds. These are tuned the same as those of the Melodia stop on the Ariel. The machine illustrated here was made at the beginning of this century and has a case measuring 17" x 12" x 11". A label fixed on the inside of the lid reads; Peter Black, 10, Chorlton Terrace, Upper Brook Street, Manchester. He apparently was a supplier and did not manufacture mach-

ines.

At the front a swell flap is provided to allow what advertisements of the day may have referred to as gentle variations in the tone of the music. Of course a more fitting term would have been to make more noise. Two handles are provided, one for playing the music, the other, a small wire handle is for rewinding. Both rolls and endless bands can be played. The way in which the notes are sounded is like that used in the Ariel but without a mute covering the reed openings.



The Seraphone, writes Arthur W.J.G. Ord-Hume, was patented by A. Maxfield of London on December 6th, 1887 (Pat. No. 16,748). Its mechanism is very similar to that of the Celestina and in some aspects it appears to be a direct infringement on the patents of the American Organette Company, makers of the Celestina. A version of the Seraphone was called the English Automatic Seraphone, introduced during 1889. There were two musically inventive members of the Maxfield family – A. Maxfield (who also invented a hand-turned foot-pumped organette in 1896, an air-operated motor for moving tune sheets in 1897, and other devices) and J. Maxfield who patented several ideas in connection with the player reed organ. A further Maxfield, H. Maxfield, improved the attachment of paper tune sheets to their spools in 1911.

The Maxfield factory established in 1859, was at 326, Liverpool Road, London, N. Strange to say, very little is known about the company and its founders. However, a relative of the family now lives in retirement in Essex and, prompted to some extent by the current interest in the past achievements of his forebears, has promised some detective work to try to fill in a few of the many gaps.



This 'Rococo' Symphonion, which plays discs of $11\frac{7}{8}$ inches is from the Collection of Member Werner Baus of Germany.

From Copenhagen the latest news from the . . .

Mekanisk Musik Museum

A Note of Appreciation!

Thank you for the many orders you have been sending our way from our *MMM Review*. The next issue of the *Review* is now being prepared – and if you're one of the many MBSGB members who have subscribed, you will receive your copy immediately upon publication. If you haven't subscribed, we encourage you to do so. For just two pounds you'll receive our next six issues. Each issue will contain many interesting musical boxes, reproducing pianos, coin-operated pianos, orchestrions, organs, automata, fairground organs, and other items for sale – all priced to be excellent values. We're building up quite a commerce with MBSGB members. Let us help you with your collection. We offer convenient shipping, reasonable prices, and accurately-described instruments. Try the Mekanisk Musik Museum – and you'll like it!

The Larry Givens Collection

On our recent buying trip to America we acquired the fabulous collection formed over a period of many years by Larry Givens of Wexford, Pennsylvania. We have made arrangements for packing and shipping of instruments for export directly from the Givens home, thus saving us both the expense of moving the items to an intermediate location. Any item in the Givens Collection can be securely packed and sent to you at low cost. Our forthcoming *MMM Review* issue No. 2 will feature instruments from this fantastic group – plus many, many other purchases we've made recently in Europe, America, and other places.

"The Encyclopedia of Automatic Musical Instruments"

The new *Encyclopedia of Automatic Musical Instruments* was recently released by the Vestal Press of New York. Written by Q. David Bowers, the new *Encyclopedia* features information provided by hundreds of collectors, historians, and others worldwide – including well-known MBSGB members Arthur W.J.G. Ord-Hume and Graham Webb, to mention just two.

The 1008-page book contains detailed information on thousands of different models of automatic instruments – including cylinder musical boxes, musical watches, automata, disc musical boxes, player pianos, reproducing pianos, coin-operated electric pianos, violin players, barrel pianos, orchestrions, organettes, player reed organs, player pipe organs, calliopes, fairground organs, and others.

Histories of various manufacturers are given together with illustrations and data concerning the various models, types of rolls, discs, etc. used, and other information. Now you will be able to identify by model and style number the various products of Mermod, Symphonion, Polyphon, Regina, Hupfeld, Welte, and other manufacturers. Thousands and thousands of different instruments are pictured!

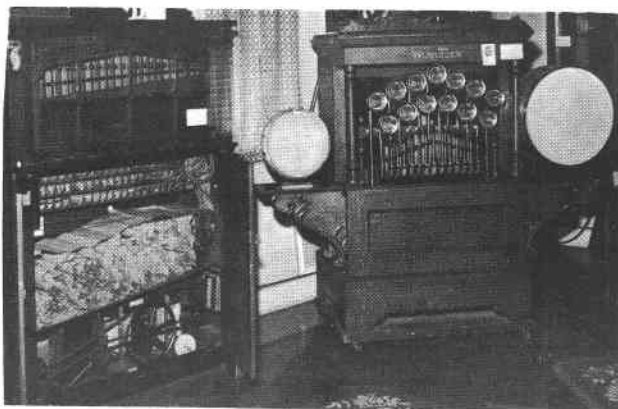
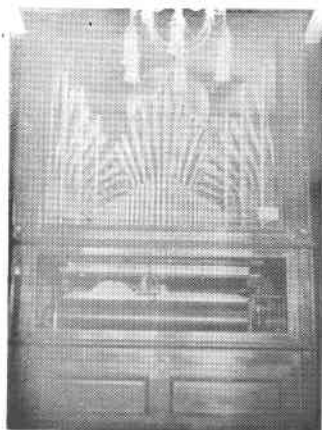
How has the *Encyclopedia* been selling??? The answer: spectacularly well! In the first month after publication over 1,200 copies were sold! A huge second printing is now in process!

How to order your copy: The *Encyclopedia* sells for \$27 U.S. funds postpaid (or to addresses within the U.S., \$25), or 11 pounds English funds.

Guarantee: If, for any reason whatever, you are not 100% delighted with the new *Encyclopedia* just return it and your money will be instantly refunded in full – no questions asked. We know you'll be delighted with it – as many other Society members have been.

The *Encyclopedia of Automatic Musical Instruments*: 1008 pages, large 8½x11" page size, thousands of illustrations, complete index, glossary of technical terms, and many, many other features. Order yours today!

The Mekanisk Musik Museum (Claes O. Friberg and Q. David Bowers) -Continued on next page . . .



Above and left: Some of the Givens Collection Instruments.

—“Want List” Service!—

Your “want list” is solicited! Chances are good — excellent, in fact — that we can find those pieces you are seeking. Here’s just a sample of our interesting stock: Polyphon, Symphonion, and Regina disc boxes in many varieties; reproducing pianos including Welte-Mignon and Ampico; Hupfeld coin pianos, orchestrions, reproducing pianos; dance organs and fairground organs; portable hand-cranked barrel organs; cylinder musical boxes; theatre instruments including a duplex Reprodico, a Seeburg organ, and a Wurlitzer photoplayer — and dozens and dozens of other fascinating things! Send Claes Friberg your want list today!

Musical Instruments Wanted

We are now on a “buying campaign” to build our trading stock of musical boxes, electric pianos, etc. If you have one or several choice instruments for sale, please send Claes O. Friberg a description of them. We’re not seeking bargains; we’re willing to pay well for choice pieces.

Our affiliated firm, Friberg + Co., one of Denmark’s largest electronics and high-fidelity firms, has large shipments coming regularly to Denmark from England — so adding a few music boxes as part of one of these shipments is easy for us to do! We’ll take care of all packing and shipping arrangements from London.

Right now we would like to buy from 50 to 100 disc-type musical boxes by Polyphon, Symphonion, Kalliope, et al, as well as some fine cylinder boxes. We would be very interested in any offers you make to us.

Musical Fun at the MMM!

The directors of the Mekanisk Musik Museum, Claes O. Friberg (our director who lives in Denmark) and Q. David Bowers (our American director who lives in California) enjoy instruments a lot — and invite you to share their enthusiasm. Visit the MMM in person, or “get acquainted” by mail. Either way, we look forward to your friendship!

Mekanisk Musik Museum

Vesterbrogade 150 / Copenhagen, Denmark

Directors: Claes O. Friberg and Q. David Bowers

? what makes olin run?

As reported in THE MUSIC BOX the Annual General Meeting in June 1972 was attended by, among other interesting members, Olin Tillotson. During the Dinner which followed the Saturday meeting, we were treated to a talk by Olin which was one of the highlights of an extremely interesting day. In the report of the Meeting it was announced that the talk had been borrowed from Olin, together with some of the slides which accompanied it, for publishing in a future issue of THE MUSIC BOX.

On the double occasion of the 10th Anniversary of our Society and the Christmas issue, we now offer the humour of part of the talk those present enjoyed.

After a general introduction we heard and saw the following:—

..... Those of you who saw Danny Kaye as Walter Mitty can picture easily the light-hearted other self he always managed to portray in his reveries. Our little trip together is going to be such a reverie.

Tonight, we shall all be little green men from a friendly planet somewhere over the rainbow. We have assembled here on the occasion of my return from a trip to that planet called Earth. It's not a newly discovered planet, this Earth. We've known about it for a long while and have had plenty of opportunity to examine it in detail from our flying saucers. We know nearly as much about the planet as its inhabitants, but as spectators, if you will, rather than as participants. We've reached a point in our inquiry of this planet where we concentrate our attention on some of the more rare species found there. Among

unusual creatures from my experience among them and offer some possible explanations for their existence and rather eccentric behaviour.

I shall use as my example, a fairly typical species, *Hominus Musiboxicus* otherwise known as musical box collector. But, little green friends, (my apologies to Cyril de Vere) before I proceed further, it would appear necessary to explain to you what a musical box is..., for if we are to appreciate fully these fascinating creatures, *Homini Musiboxi*, it requires an understanding of the devices by which they are known. This is not a simple matter, for these devices are often cleverly disguised in an altogether vain effort to escape the gaze and grasp of the collector.



The Gem Hunters

those strange creatures is a sub-culture of idiosyncratic people wholly unlike those found elsewhere. These people are called 'collectors'. Tonight I wish to attempt a difficult task. I would like you to bear with me while I attempt a description of these



"Saw this lovely thing... delicate shadings, perfect teeth, beautiful shape."
"...m m... Key winder, I presume?"

The history of musical boxes goes back well into the past of these earthly creatures. We are told that long ago in a wilderness area of a land called Africa lived natives in small groups quite apart from one another. For centuries these peoples were content with only mumbldypeg and dominoes for their sole pastime. But one can only lose at dominoes so often

before going positively crackers, and so in a desperate search for positive enrichment of their leisure activities, they began to attempt tribal intervisitation. This was fraught with considerable risk for these natives dwelt in clusters surrounded by snake-infested jungles. Lions, gorillas and man-eating crocodiles lurked in the depths. Many an unfortunate native was served up as main course before it was learned that the only safe, yet living creature in the jungle was the Sanza bird.



Now the Sanza bird, besides being extremely elusive, was possessed of a rather hypnotic song. The natives were convinced that the soulful, hypnotic melodies of the Sanza lulled into quiescence everything within earshot, assuring the bird its safety. Thus it was that desperate attempts were made to trap the cage this phantom flyer since the natives were convinced that possession of a Sanza bird would insure its bearer safety on the trail. All to no avail. It was discovered however, that a reasonable facsimile of the song of the Sanza could be produced by tongues of steel on a hollow wooden core and plucked with the thumbs. The effect was equally hypnotic and produced a similar result.

Thus was born the first unpatented, damperless musical box company Ltd. Its business developed phenomenally and overnight numerous adaptations appeared. A novel corruption of this device included a feathered imitation of the Sanza itself and is to be found in both cages and small boxes from which it attempts periodically, though futilely, to escape. These are called singing birds and bird boxes.

The protection thus afforded by this imitation Sanza bird was however, but one of a multitude of unusual qualities possessed of this strange instrument. Soon its fame had spread to distant lands and in no time at all the idea of using tuned reeds of steel had been adapted to serve a variety of purposes: it mollified the young; it proved an excellent somnolescent and as an effective sales agent for the ice cream industry it proved without equal; it found its way into other objects such as clocks, pictures, jewellery boxes and cuff links, all of which are apparently vital to the well-being of the species. It grew in size and



shape. Tuned reeds gave way to bars, pipes and strings. Instead of thumbs, a variety of mechanical plectra evolved and with this multitude of innovations, all somehow yet possessed of an ethereal, hypnotic quality came *Hominis Musiboxicus*.



Historians have yet to date the precise onset of the development of the cult of musical box collecting. However, early in the twentieth century it was known to exist through the writings of one of the first of the species, known affectionately to his colleagues as Clarkie of Malden. From him, much of the early history of the cult has been learned and through him, much of our first real insight into the eccentric habits of *Homini Musiboxi* has come to light.

In numbers, they appear to be not great but recent evidence suggests the cult has been gaining in strength and indeed researchers such as Hathaway and Bowers would have us believe has reached epidemic proportions. Geographically, the collector is to be found on nearly every continent. Even in such remote places as the Outer Hebrides he is likely to be found. The greatest concentrations however are most frequently encountered in those areas bounded by Pelham, Pinner and Petticoat Lane. The true collector, *Hominis Musiboxicus*, is not readily identifiable, taking a variety of forms. One must take care not to be misled by his second cousin, *Horrificus Hordus*, who bears many family characteristics but several essential differences.



I should like to highlight these differences for they may shed some light on the future development of the species.

The true collector might be described thus: On the fairest of days he is to be found in the basement workshop; on bank holidays invariably window shopping; he never talks of trading, excepting his car, wife or best suit; he never misses Opera News and is always home early for the post; he always reads the adverts first and the obits second; is always flaked out on Sunday mornings from overdoing it in the workshop on



Saturday nights; generally develops eyestrain at an early age; has a phenomenal memory for serial numbers and never has enough money for the next box. He sees women in terms of teeth, pins and combs and houses as receptacles for musical boxes; children as potential hazards and pets as trading stock. He generally has a far off look in his eye, brasso under his fingernails, and oil stains on his tie. He responds best to the familiar phrase 'What am I offered?' and can never be reached at the office after three. He generally has a half dozen music books overdue at the library, a neglected wife; the addresses of antique shops, dates of auctions or jumble sales on his person at any given moment; he vacations in Switzerland, is allergic to electric guitars, swears by Araldite, molybdenum disulphide and the efficacy of wet or dry glasspaper for honing. He is never content with what he has or what he has done;

never doubts the next find will be better; is ever prone to ask a total stranger what he's whistling; recognises hollywood only as a decorative treatment for lids; mildew, woodworm or even the suggestion of a run might send him to hospital with an anxiety reaction.



What of *Horrificus Hoardus*? First observations of this strange planet world showed that the species *Horrificus Hoardus* is less rare than the true *Hominus Musiboxicus*. He is the strangest of creatures. He collected musical boxes of all shapes and sizes; some whose clashing cymbals and drums would frighten Beelzebub himself. Well, this doesn't matter anyway. *Hoardus* rarely listens to his boxes. He collects for several reasons: Collecting as an investment was frequently noted. Hoardus pays high prices even for boxes of little intrinsic value, and observers fear this could even kill off the more numerous *Hominus Musiboxicus* who is truly a lover of musical boxes but is becomingly unable to compete with Hoardus' price raising.

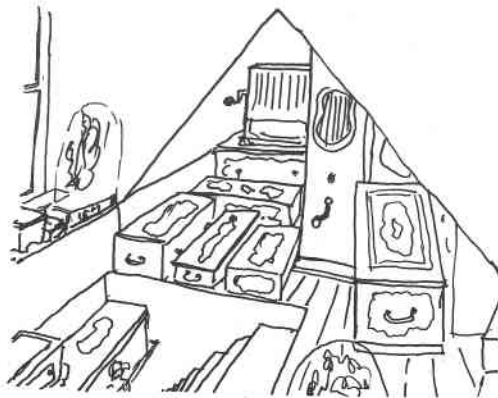


- The Liar -

Collecting by Aspiring Museum Keepers was also seen. Observers were at first perplexed to identify this group from those described above. While they protect and research their collections with care, they sometimes delegate the maintenance and repair of their boxes to others of dubious skill, such as the local garageman.



Then there are the Squirrel Nutkins: They start collecting musical boxes and keep collecting musical boxes. "I want an attic full of them", one was heard to say.



Friend Impressor Hoardus was the most deadly of the species seen. One was observed in action, ogling at a particularly fine overtone box in the home of a friend. Within a fortnight, said friend was invited to a cocktail party given by Hoardus. Sure enough, prominently displayed for all to see were not one, but two, overtone boxes!

A number of explanations have been offered for all this erratic behaviour. None however, has fully satisfied the latest team of researchers Hume, Harding, Webb, Tallis and Associates. While they feel the species is not doomed to extinction as were the dinosaurs, they are concerned with the direction it has taken of late. Is this a viable adaptation to the needs of the twentieth century culture out of which it sprang? Perhaps the archetypal strains of the Sanza bird did indeed soothe the savage brow and in some fashion could make life more bearable, even among the later twentieth century savages. Who knows? And now, as the strains of the Sanza fade into the distance, let us leave our world of fantasy and return to London. I hope the little trip we have taken has helped us all to see ourselves in a somewhat different light. I guess what I've really tried to say by all of this is that the fullest possible enjoyment of a musical box comes not with collecting it and putting it on a shelf to be listened to once in a blue moon. The real enjoyment of collecting comes with sharing with others all of its facets, its music, its history, its industry, its mechanical peculiarities and intricacies, its furniture, its decorations and its pleasures . . . with some similarly inclined and hopefully with many who have yet to value it as we do.

OBITUARY

It is with deep regret that we report the death of member Ferrand Moltzer of Bennekom, Holland. Mr. Moltzer will be well known to many for his excellent and humorous talk given at the 1972 Annual General Meeting.

Mr. Moltzer, who was 59, was the Director of the Kuken Luister Museum which has a good collection of mechanical musical instruments.

From the report on the 1972 AGM comes the following: " . . . Mr. Moltzer charmed us with a mastery of the British sense of humour which is a rare find in one who is not a native, or indeed any public speaker." A fitting epitaph for one who will be sadly missed.

OBITUARY

Mr. Emile Eugene Favre for many years associated with the Bornand Music Box Company of Pelham, N.Y. died on June 7th at the age of 88.

He was a descendant of Antoine Favre credited with making the first music box comb; his family for many generations were, and still are, watch manufacturers in the town of Chaux-de-fond, Switzerland. He often worked with Thomas Edison in the little shop he had in Orange, N.J. In later years he worked with Joseph Bornand in Pelham; and he also worked on the first helicopter made at the Sikorsky plant in Stratford, Conn.

BOOK

REVIEWS

VICTORIAN SHEET MUSIC COVERS

by Ronald Pearsall David and Charles,
10 inches x 7½ inches, 112pps. £3.25

Most of us today appear to be divided into two camps: those members who, not having acquired enough boxes, stand helpless and aghast at the huge rise in prices; and those who have a good collection obtained when prices were young (and small for their ages) and now have difficulty finding something that will fit into their collections. Both of these camps may well consider that an inexpensive way out of their dilemma might be the collection of some of these pretty and colourful covers.

If one is lucky enough to have a special "Musical box room" then attractive additions to the collection might be framed sheet music covers which are from tunes played on some of the boxes displayed. If the odd box is placed about the sitting room then a search for a particular cover to hang on the wall over the appropriate box might well provide both interest and decoration.

Ronald Pearsall's book is full not only of information about sheet music covers and their artists, but of the fully valid but hitherto undiscovered pieces of information which have become his hallmark. The book is, I feel, an interestingly different present in search of a donor.

THE "PIANOLA" PIANO — NEW "DUO-ART" MODELS

Reprint of a 1922 catalogue, published by
Arthur Ord-Hume, London. 9¼ inches
x 7½ inches. 75p.

This useful addition to the steadily growing library of reproduced ephemera is from a new source. To start off his new publishing house Arthur Ord-Hume has chosen a booklet which will be of interest to those whose bent is toward the player piano.

Originally published by the Aeolian Company Limited, the booklet contains nothing of a technical nature. It's interest lies in the illustrations of the various models of Duo-Art pianos available at this time and in particular the prices. Since the cheapest model shown is a Farrand upright pedal machine at 200 guineas and the dearest a Steinway grand electric at 1050 guineas, one can see that even at today's prices we are getting a bargain when we buy such a machine. Another point of interest is the list of artists who had

made record rolls for Duo-Art at this period. It is most impressive and gives some idea of the genuine admiration which many of these artists had for the medium.

G.W.

NORFOLK POLYPHON CENTRE

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CYLINDER BOXES ORCHESTRIONS
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WOOD FARM BAWDESWELL
NORFOLK

Telephone: Bawdeswell 230

WANTED in good condition, a few 15½ inch discs for Polyphon, also musical clock. R.P. Parkinson, 41 Sun Street, Waltham Abbey, Essex. Waltham Cross 23331.

WANTED: Damper assembly for 11¼ inch Britannia, or scrap movement, or scrap complete machine. Thompson, 35, Boultham Avenue, Lincoln.

WANTED: Collector requires one copy of each of the following books on mechanical musical instruments.

1. Automata (English edition), by Alfred Chapuis and Edmond Droz. 2. Music Boxes, by Helen and John Hoke. 3. Fabulous Phonograph, by Ronald Gelatt. 4. From Tinfoil to Stereo. Norman Brown, Beech Lodge, 42, Dumgoyne Drive, Bearsden, Dunbartonshire.

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENT CHARGES:

since it truly costs your Society more to print advertisements than we charge, your Committee has announced that the charge in future will be 2 pence per word.

**From miniature 1/18
to magnificent 3/72
movements**

Hundreds of tunes, thousands of movements in stock

Complete boxes from £2 to £350
Also Singing birds and Automats

Send for our price list and tunes list to:—

SWISSCROSS LTD., 109 NORWOOD HIGH STREET, LONDON, SE27 9JF.

Sole British Agents for Reuge, S.A.

Telephone: 01-761 0428

IMPORTANT!!

GOOD REWARD OFFERED

Please search your spare parts for two cylinders.

NUMBER ONE

Nicole Freres Number 40726. Twelve Air 2 per turn CYLINDER ONLY, about 12 inches by 3 inches diameter.

NUMBER TWO

B.B. & C. Number 21659. Four Air CYLINDER ONLY, about 8 inches by 2 inches diameter.

The numbers will be scratched or stamped on the ends of the cylinders. Both cylinders will be without their arbors.

Attempts may have been made to start re-pinning them.

I have the boxes in otherwise complete condition.

Please Contact: Patrick McCrossan,
6, Mill Gap Road,
Eastbourne,
Sussex.

Telephone: Eastbourne 35478.

S.O.S.

HELP!!

FORTUNA DISCS

**26 INCH FORTUNA, COMPLETELY
REBUILT BY PROUD OWNER FOR
OWN COLLECTION, DESPERATELY
NEEDS A FEW DISCS.**

**WILL BUY OR SWAP WITH THE
FOLLOWING:**

**27½ INCH REGINA 17¼ INCH STELLA
141/8 INCH POLYPHON (BELLS)
177/8 INCH SYMPHONION**

OR WHAT DO YOU NEED?

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8, THE OVAL
HARROGATE
YORKSHIRE HG2 9BA.**

TELEPHONE HARROGATE 2287.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Member David Evans of Sussex writes:

In the course of my perusal of the trade directories in search of the lever watch makers of 19th century Liverpool, I have found the following entries:

VERLEY, Daniel (John Daniel from 1839)

Manufacturer of Musical Snuffboxes etc.

Manufactory: 10, Parker Street, Liverpool

(Gore 1834, 1837)

19, Park Street, Liverpool

(Gore, 1839-49 inc.)

In Gore's Directory for 1834, Verley advertises:

'D. Verly (sic)

from Geneva,

No. 10, Parker Street,

LIVERPOOL

Respectfully begs leave to acquaint his friends and the Public, that he Makes and Repairs all sorts of Fancy LOCKS (means CLOCKS, I think, in view of subsequent ads.); Lever, Horizontal and Duplex and other WATCHES; French and English Repeaters, etc. etc.; likewise Musical Boxes, Birds, Seals, etc. and confidently trusts from the long experience he has had in the above branches, that he will be able to give the fullest satisfaction to all who may please to favour him with their commands. D.V. has on sale a large quantity of Elegant MUSICAL BOXES, from 3 to 12" long. D.V. is the only PERSON from GENEVA in the above mentioned business.'

In the same directory, Rosetta Hess, Chronometer, Patent lever watch and clock manufacturer, of 36, Pool Lane, advertises 'Importer of Musical Boxes', whilst Gore in his Directory for 1837, includes:

'W.B. PROMOLI (Late Thos. Woodfield).

Gilt, Bronze, Alabaster, Porcelain, &c. clocks and timepieces, from £5 - £120 (French) and Geneva Watches. Several very fine Musical Boxes, playing the most celebrated Overtures, price from £5 - £50.'

Promoli and Hess were undoubtedly agents, but Verley certainly implies that he manufactured something, though it probably was not the English Musical Box. Is anything known about any of these people, particularly Verley, whose 'long experience' in Geneva must have been with some fairly eminent musical box maker or watchmaker?

May I take this opportunity of congratulating you on the high standard of the Journal and conveying my best wishes for a successful future for the Society?

Dr. Peter Whitehead of Yorkshire writes:

May I say how delighted I was to see in the Autumn '72 issue of THE MUSIC BOX a really down to earth and practical article - 'An Organ Box Repair', by Bernard Nichols - which is I feel of great help to amateurs like myself. I liked 'Bowers in Britain' for its sheer readability and I am not at all surprised at his reception by the Keith Prowse firm, which reminds one definitely of the seaside cafe waitress who coughs asthmatically and grunts 'Chips is off, dearie'!

Might I suggest that you get up earlier in the morning on Sundays for your famous Visits in order to reach the Chilly North on occasion? Not, definitely not, I might add for a free advertisement for myself. (I can almost hear the muttering of 'The Provinces are revolting again'). As a fresh idea - has anyone ever approached Letraset to see if they will produce sheets of Polyphon Lady transfers? Surely anything Rolls-Royce can do the M.B.S. can do (except, I hope, go bust). As a matter of interest, the average signwriter does a very good job of copying missing 'Polyphon Musik Automat' or 'Symphonion' labels on coin operated boxes, and I would imagine could also copy a specialised 'Penny in Slot' label. Ours locally usually takes about a week for most items of work.

Finally I hope to send photographs of my latest acquisition for the next issue. As a clue I can say that I am writing on it at this very moment.

Editor: We have received many favourable comments on Bernard Nichols' article. It is hoped that this venture into writing by a practical Member will encourage others to attempt to give us some of their ideas and practises. Regarding the 'Sunday Visit' series, we would be most happy to learn of any Exhibitions or Museums which has not yet been covered. We will shortly have to move on to Continental Europe (topical at least) to continue the series.

Member David Swan writes:

I have in my possession a 6 air hymn box by Brugger & Staub, in need of overhauling, and while checking it for identification marks and numbers I found that, where I would expect to find both a serial number and a gamme number, I discovered that the same number was apparently used for both.

The number, 1607, is written on the tune sheet, stamped on the winding lever, the great wheel and the base of the comb, and is also scratched on the left and end of the cylinder and the base tuning weight. The latter two positions being where one would

normally expect to find the separate gamme number.

Did some makers not use a gamme number, using only the movement serial number?

Perhaps some members would like to comment.

I also have an extremely badly damaged P.V.F. mandolin box, and I have been gently considering the possibility of making a completely new comb. (There are tooth groups marked on the comb base and enough teeth remain intact to enable me to sort out the tuning).

Has any other member attempted this job, and if so, what is the correct sequence of events, relating to the following stages?

Soldering steel comb blank to brass base.

Shaping of tooth undersides.

Cutting teeth and tips.

Tempering the steel.

Fixing and cutting lead for tuning weights.

Checking and adjusting register.

Also, is tool steel a suitable material for an entire comb?

When soldering the steel comb to the brass base, how does one overcome the tendency to distort due to the different coefficients of thermal expansion (contraction) of steel and brass?

Any comments would be welcome.

Grace Thompson of Harrogate writes:

The article by Gerry Planus about his Elves and Pixies was of great interest to me. You see, we too have an elf living in our garden. He lives in a Victorian worm hole which he says was a bit large and draughty for him during the Yorkshire winters, but now that he's had it centrally heated it's quite cosy. His name is Georgie Baker and one of his ancestors was a Troll. We can't see him too well as he's only a little fellow, but he can communicate when he chooses which is not often, because he's a bit of a recluse. When I saw that Gerry had thoughtfully printed his receipt, I was very excited and decided to show it to Georgie who is an extremely gifted elf, specialising in early languages.

His response was both dramatic and unexpected, he got very annoyed at first and said many rude things like "Rogues, thieves!" and other words of the same uncomplimentary nature. When he had calmed down a little, he said that the box had been stolen from HIS family in 1601, the receipt, (which incidentally

was dated 1523, not 1623) being inside at the time of the theft. This is an understandable mistake on the part of Gerry's friends as a five can look much like a six when the writing is so old. I pointed out to Georgie that Gerry's elves hadn't necessarily stolen the musical box, but bought it in good faith, or at least their ancestors had. Being a reasonable sort of chap really, he saw the truth in this and apologised for losing his temper; I think he regretted his outburst very much and to make up for it Georgie read the receipt out loud. It was

Puck, Flute and Bottom, Ltd. Musical Box Makers,
By Royal Appointment to
Her Majesty, Queen Titania.

To Mr. G. Baker. 8th. Nov. 1523.

Three Campanula Musical Box with Flea Strikers
Playing 12 Tunes,
Received with thanks,
Kingcup of Nectar.

I argued that although everybody knew that Campanulas were bell shaped flowers, these would be too big for an elf sized box. He regarded me with some scorn. "They were miniatures of course" he said, "You don't have church bells on your bell boxes, do you?" Humbly I agreed that we didn't.

Georgie says that if Gerry will pack the pieces in a good strong thimble case, to allow for plenty of packing material and send it to me by registered post, he will not only repair it for him, but will tell him the names of all the tunes, a copy of which has been handed down to him. He will also waive all claim to ownership of the box. This seemed very generous, as he must be right, what with the name Baker on the receipt and Queen Titania who must have been going strong long before 1623. (See Shakespeare).

When I asked Georgie how much he would charge — I always like an estimate — he said "Well, it's only a cheap box anyway and normally wouldn't be worth repairing, but if your friend Gerry Whatsit would see that I get into the Guinness Book of Records as the only living elf who can still repair elf sized musical boxes; I'll do it for a nominal sum. Let's say a small bottle of Queen Bee jelly, to which I'm rather partial" He did add, with great candour "Of course he won't be able to hear it as it's pitched for elf ears only and I can't alter that, but it would be nice for him to show to his pals".

You need not thank me Gerry, I am only too pleased to have been of help. Send the box and the jelly, carefully packed, to my address and I will see that Georgie gets on with it.

If anybody is wondering how on earth I can see Georgie at all, perhaps I should explain. I am the first child of a seventeenth child and as everybody knows this means I have the gift of twenty second sight which is magnificient.

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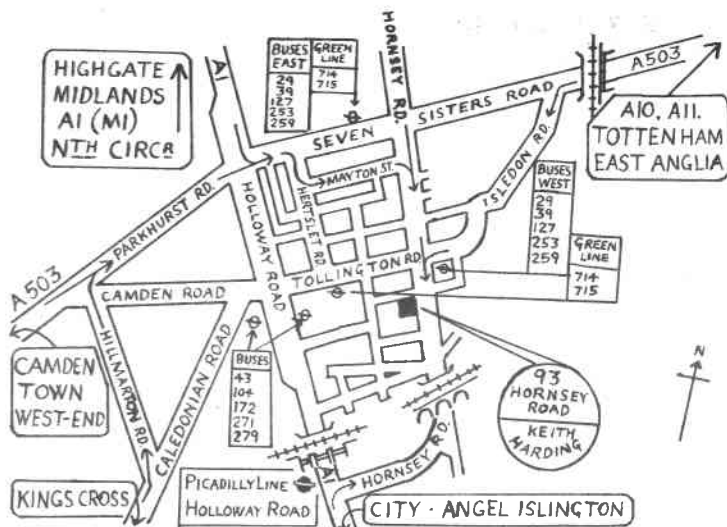
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