

# The Music Box

an international magazine of mechanical music

THE JOURNAL OF THE MUSICAL BOX SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN

Volume 8 Number 3 Autumn 1977





# Christie's

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# The Music Box

an international magazine of  
mechanical music



THE JOURNAL OF THE MUSICAL BOX SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN

## The Editor writes. . .

OVER the past few months, selling prices of musical boxes have demonstrated, in Britain at least, a continuation of their meteoric rise. If one were to prepare a price index for, say, Nicole Freres boxes, one would undoubtedly find that the increase was far and away greater than that for any other commodity.

In times of accredited world recession, when money is becoming harder to obtain and possesses a lowering buying power, mechanical music prices have continued unabated.

It is almost as if instruments have become endowed with the same sovereignty as currency which must serve as a warning for historically this is only one step short of their becoming objects of barter!

At the Annual General Meeting in June, the auction proved that even within our own Society, prices fetched can be very high. Later in the same month a new world record price for a musical box was reached at a London sale. And a provincial sale saw a particularly rare type of revolver box — it had four cylinders complete with their own bedplates and combs — withdrawn just short of a £15,000 reserve.

This trend is particularly disturbing for their now exists a very real danger that many types of mechanical musical instrument are becoming out of the price capability of many of the younger collectors.

The exotic boxes which still turn up are either being absorbed into the collections of the very wealthy, or are being acquired by museums. Of these two courses, the latter is

## Volume 8 Number 3 Autumn 1977

<i>Contents</i>	<i>page</i>
<b>Mentmore's Orange Tree</b> <i>by Peter D Ward</i>	102
<b>Blessing and Weisser</b> <i>by Jac Gerssen</i>	104
<b>Hofmann &amp; Czerny</b>	108
<b>De Vere Green collection unveiled</b>	109
<b>Two Early Disc Musical Boxes</b> <i>by Graham Webb</i>	110
<b>Thoughts on a new Musical Box</b> <i>by "Endless Screw"</i>	112
<b>Utrecht buys Plerodienique</b>	112
<b>David Cadet</b>	113
<b>Hohner's Magic Organa</b>	114
<b>Today's Technology meets Yesterday's</b> <i>by Durrell Armstrong</i>	115
<b>Church Music and the Barrel Organ</b> <i>by Roger Booty</i>	117
<b>Repairing Book Music</b>	119
<b>Full Orchestre</b>	122
<b>The Bonny English Rose</b> <i>by John L Hammond</i>	123
<b>An Unusual small Musical Box</b>	124
<b>The Dutch Carillon Museum</b>	126
<b>The Carillon of the Oude Kerk, Amsterdam</b>	130
<b>A Big Bruguiet</b>	131
<b>Society Meeting Report</b>	133
<b>The Era of the Cafe Piano</b>	134
<b>Members in the News</b>	134
<b>Record Reviews</b>	136
<b>Book Reviews</b>	138
<b>Letters to the Editor</b>	140
<b>List of Members</b>	144

**Cover picture:** A star item in the British Piano Museum, Brentford, is this 1926 Steinway pedal-electric Duo-Art, formerly the property of Princess Beatrice at Kensington Palace.

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probably preferable accepting that whichever applies, it represents the creaming-off of superlative items. This still leaves a large assortment of other instruments continually being turned over at ever-higher prices in a market one sector of which is fostered into the belief that these devices make first-rate objects of cash investment.

However one looks at the situation, it is not an altogether happy one. Without injecting new blood into the collection of mechanical musical instruments, a society such as ours must be doomed into journeying through its life in a state of increasing senility until, in the way of things, the lifespan of its membership is exhausted.

There is no sure answer to the problem. Recently, during a radio phone-in programme in which I took part, I was asked by one man how much he would expect to have to spend in order to "start collecting". This is one question which I could not — and still cannot — answer.

Even dilapidated items today are suffered to fetch high prices in the shops and salerooms. This guarantees their preservation and ultimate restoration, yet smacks of the new dictum — "If it's musical and mechanical, then it's expensive".

There is no escaping the fact that he who wants to start collecting musical boxes today needs both money and impeccable judgement. As novices, we could all afford the odd bad buy occasionally. These days, though, such indiscretions can cost heavily.

As far as this aspect is concerned, the future of the musical box and its followers could look somewhat bleak.

ARTHUR W J G ORD-HUME

# MENTMORE'S ORANGE TREE

by Peter D Ward

DURING the closing weeks of May, Lord Rosebery's palatial home in the Chiltern Hills, Mentmore Towers, was denuded of its entire rich and irreplaceable contents in one of the most spectacular auctions for many a year. Sotheby's, the auctioneers, masterminded the sale of property which had been offered to the Nation for £2m in settlement of tax dues. The total realised was a staggering £6,389,933. Apart from making headlines almost the world over, the sale broke record after record — more was realised on French furniture in one season than ever before, the highest price ever paid for a clock, for Sèvres porcelain, a piece of Victorian silver, and so on. But one item, the automaton orange tree, exceeded expectations by so vast a margin that its final hammer price is best left until later to reveal. Peter D Ward was asked to examine the piece prior to the sale. Here is his story —

MENTMORE Towers, true to its name, is easily visible from miles away over the rolling Buckinghamshire countryside. The elegant spires stand out from a massive beech wood which conceals, from a distance, both the village and the house of Mentmore.

One cold, bright day last February, I parked my rather battered Ford beside some rather more



picturesque chariots, made my way rapidly past the Securicor man by uttering the magic word "Sotheby's", and was conducted by a highly attractive and intelligent young lady to the object of my visit — an 18th century singing bird automaton of exceptional interest and quality — which I was to examine and catalogue.

The object was in the form of an orange tree standing about two feet (.6m) high and growing out of a square tulipwood tub mounted in ormolu which was chased with flowering scrollwork. On the tree, which was of metal with trunk, leaves and fruit enamelled in natural colours and embellished by white Vincennes porcelain orange blossom, were perched two feathered birds.

So far, so good. Obviously a very interesting and unusual piece, but the object of the exercise was to discover (a) what state the mechanism was in, if indeed there was any mechanism at all, and (b) who made it. My guess was that it might have been made by Jaquet-Droz, but as events proved, I was wrong.

I looked the thing over long and carefully but could see no means either of winding it or setting it in motion after winding. One had to be rather careful because some of the oranges appeared already to have broken off and fallen into the tub. I was informed that the piece had not been known to work within living memory.

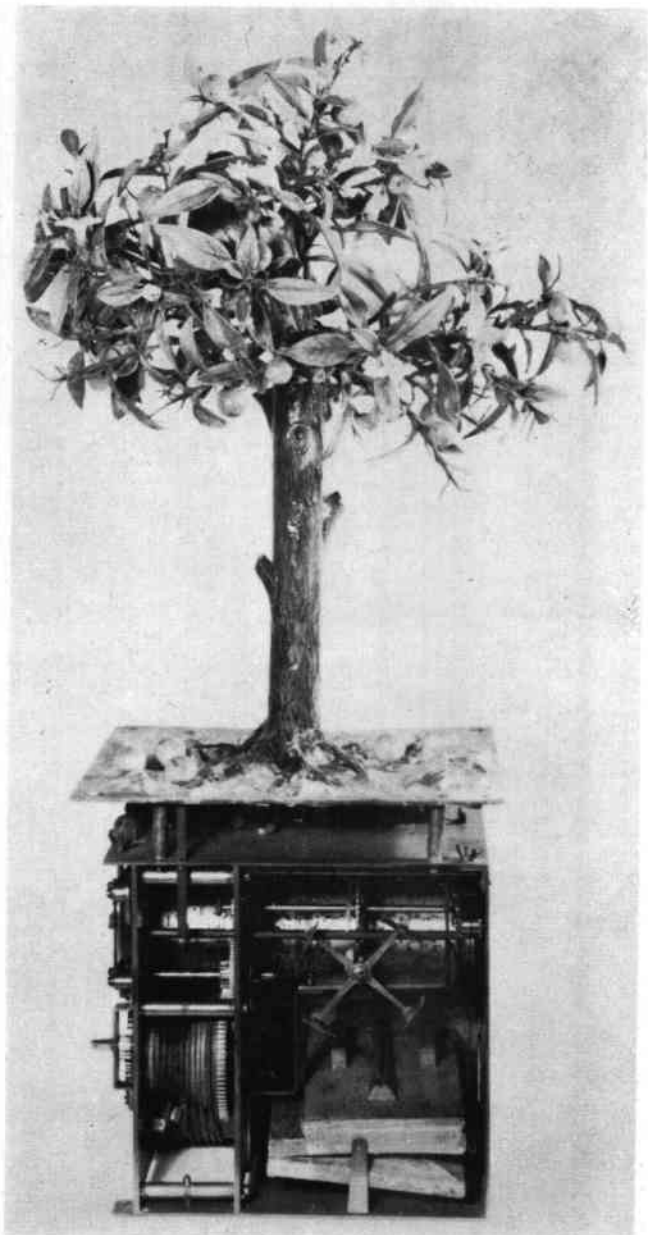


The ormolu decoration around the base was held on by hundreds of tiny ormolu screws and I viewed with some dismay the prospect of dismantling even one side in the hope of getting at the interior, but there appeared to be no other way of achieving this. After considerable nervous deliberation I had a brainwave and boldly grasped the trunk of the tree and gently but firmly lifted. Whereupon, to the accompaniment of a gasp of astonishment from the assembled spectators, the whole mechanism rose out of the base and there was revealed a perfect specimen of a small 18th century pipe organ, absolutely Jaquet-Droz in appearance, but clearly and beautifully signed RICHARD RUE DES PROUVAIRES PARIS 1757. At the same time, many other things were revealed.

The winding hole was the first to be found, cunningly concealed behind a piece of ormolu. Then there was a small draw containing the key — even more cunningly concealed behind more ormolu.

But the most ingenious of all were the controls. These were, in fact, the fallen oranges which I had assumed had been broken off the tree. Each of the four oranges controlled part of the mechanism.

So the next excitement was to wind it up and, very gingerly, to try it out. This was done and, to everyone's amazement, not least the owner's, it burst into song, albeit slightly haltingly and noisily.



My first feeling on hearing this was one of panic as I remembered a morning at Sotheby's many years earlier when I had catalogued an exceptionally rare and valuable singing bird, not in working order, which was to be the showpiece of the sale. Having a few minutes to spare, I had a closer look at the mechanism and saw that the stoppage was due to something very minor and easily rectified. This, unbidden, I did and the bird burst into song. When, later that morning, the owner returned to discuss a reserve, she was so astounded and enchanted with the bird, which had been silent in her family all her life, that she withdrew it instantly from the sale. I was not popular.

But, to return to Mentmore, fortunately the same calamity was not repeated. On closer examination the movement showed few signs of having been damaged by insensitive or unskilled repairers. The delicate lead pipes were un battered, which is unusual in a movement of this age.

The four controls were :

1. On/off, with the usual facility for continuous operation or automatic stop;
2. Repeat or change tune;
- 3 and 4. Bass and Treble pipe stops.

A great deal of research has failed to unearth much information about Monsieur Richard. It seems likely that he is the Richard described in *Les Mondes des Automates*, volume II pp. 85 and 289, and *Les Automates*, p. 99. He apparently invented a mechanical orchestra (human, not monkey) automaton of which all that remains is an engraving by d'Eisen dated 1769. This singing bird

**Top left : the orange tree showing the fallen-orange controls.**  
**Lower left : the mechanism.**  
**Above : side plate showing name and date.**  
**Right : Detail of mechanism which produces birdsong from pinned barrel and pipes and thus pre-dates the single whistle with sliding piston.**  
**Note the four-armed fly with pivoted vanes.**

automaton would, on the presently available evidence, seem to be his sole remaining work.

**Postscript.** A singing bird orange tree is the subject of a colour plate, number IX, facing page 176, in Chapis & Droz *Automata* with text and detail on page 205. This piece is credited to the hands of Carl Fabergé, jewellers to the Russian Czars. From what we know of Fabergé's work, though, it would be more likely that he bought the mechanism from an acknowledged craftsman and his skill and expertise went into the creation of the orange tree. The Mentmore piece is certainly clever enough to have come from the Fabergé workshops. Were this the case, however, then singing bird mechanism and casing could not be coeval, since Fabergé did not establish his famed workshop until 1870 or thereabouts.

And what of Richard? There was a famed watchmaker of La Sange named Daniel John Richard. He died in 1741 leaving five sons who were certainly talented watchmakers accustomed to fine automata work. And it was a Christophe Richard in Paris who repaired the clock on La Samartaine somewhere between 1750 and 1789, all of which gets us no closer to identifying the true maker.

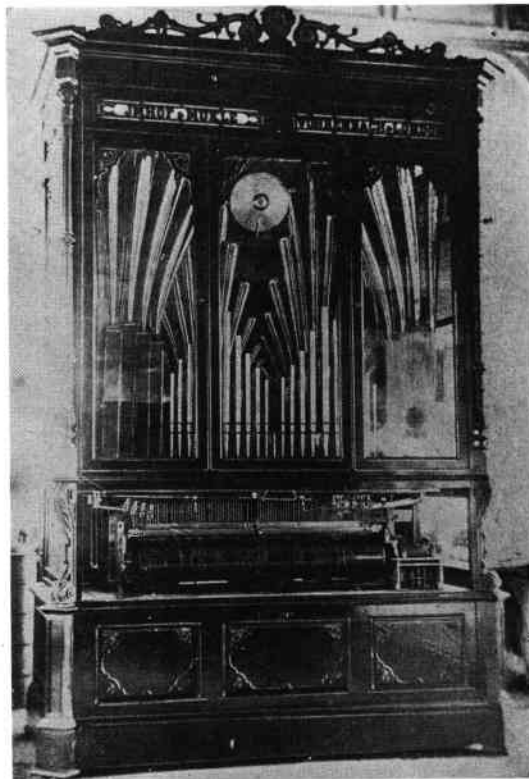
The price realised by this unusual piece? The London-based Persian collector Farroukh Nazerian acquired the orange tree automaton for the highest price of the sale — £90,000.

Final comment from Lord Rosebery was that the orange tree was the one piece he regretted selling. "I would like to have kept that piece". Everything, it seems, has its price. *Editor.*

# BLESSING AND WEISSER

*The little-known story of an Unterkirnach family of orchestrion builders*

ONE of the most illustrious names in the history of orchestrion-building is that of Blessing for it was Jacob and Johann Blessing who were among the earliest makers of this type of instrument. Almost all who followed owed their technology to Blessing—indeed men such as Heizmann and Welte served their time as apprentices with the Blessings. The early barrel instrument by Imhof & Mukle, right, shows strongly this influence. In this article, Jac Gerssen of Utrecht traces the colourful history of a family which, once world famous, is hardly remembered today. Mr Gerssen's article is reproduced from *Het Pierement* with grateful acknowledgement. Except where stated otherwise, illustrations are from the Blessing Archives by courtesy of Dr Haspels



MANY are the stories that have been written about the manufacturers of organs and orchestrions, but not a great deal has ever been published about the world famous Hubert Blessing and his descendants from Unterkirnach in the Schwarzwald (Black Forest) in West Germany.

Can this be because of the lack of their instruments in museums and private collections? Or did the Blessing family avoid making themselves known, scorning publicity and delivering mainly to the rich? Certainly the price of these exclusive mechanical musical instruments was very high, even in those days.

It is known that before 1800 the Blessings already worked with *spieluhren*, musical clocks. The History Museum in Furtwangen possesses a *flötenuhr* (flute-clock) made by Karl Blessing in around 1820. In memory of Karl Blessing a stone had been erected behind house number 66, opposite the Blessinghof, on the road from Unterkirnach to Vöhrenbach. For it was Karl Blessing who built into the now-preserved Black Forest clock the first orchestrion ever to be manufactured in the Schwarzwald.

Karl Blessing was born in 1769 and died on March 17, 1820. The two sons Jacob (1799-1879) and Johann (1803-1872) followed in the footsteps of their father. These two achieved great admiration through their draughtmanship, genius and spirit of enterprise.

Practically all their work went to Russia, England and America. Such men as the illustrious Michael Welte from Vöhrenbach, and Tobias Heizmann from Villingen, began as apprentices with the brothers Jacob and Johann Blessing; Welte settled later in Freiburg i.Br.

The factory, which was also their house, was in Döbele. It was here that Hubert Blessing (1823-1866) was born to the wife of Jacob. Hubert got acquainted with the techniques of music at an early age, and when he was 16

he founded a musical society: the Unterkirnacher Musikverein. All the musicians worked for Jacob Blessing. Hubert did not make it easy for himself and demanded 100% loyalty and concentration from the musicians, which resulted that the music of Kirchnach was widely known in those days.

1849 brought a lot of changes for Hubert. He bought the inn "Wirtshaus zum Felsen", married Fridoline Moser, daughter of the Rössle landlord-to-be, and became an independent musical instrument manufacturer.

After the inn had been run for another year by Fridoline, the whole house was put to service of the factory. Hubert's thorough apprenticeship now paid dividends and many valuable and beautiful works left the house "Zum Felsen" for their various destinations.

At the exhibition for trade and commerce at Karlsruhe in 1861, these works of art were awarded the Gold Medal, which Duke Friedrich von Baden had made available. This resulted in many orders from, for instance, St. Petersburg, Moscow, Odessa and even Bombay in India.

In 1862 an orchestrion was developed with the latest novelty: Hubert's own invention, a revolver-system with three cylinders. This big orchestrion was, according to stories, visited by thousands of people from far and wide, before it was sent to Russia.

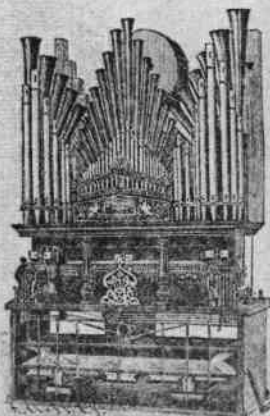
Again, in 1866, a big orchestrion



The front of Ambros Weisser's patent number 94772 dated January 15, 1897.


**Illustrierter Katalog**  
und Preis-Courant über  
**Musikwerke & Orchestrions**  
neuester und bester Konstruktion.

Fabrik mit Dampftrieb gegründet 1849.  
Export nach allen Ländern.




General-Vertretung für Russland:  
In Moskau von Moser & Blessing.

ORCHESTRION-FABRIK  
von  
**Ambros Weisser**  
vormals  
**Hubert Blessing**



in **Unterkirnach** im badischen Schwarzwald.

Illustrierter Katalog und Preis-courant  
über  
**Orchestrions**  
neuester Konstruktion.



Gegründet 1804.  
Diplom I. Klasse.

Silb. Medaille  
Kalkutta 1883-74.

**Sigmund Heizmann**  
Orchestrion- und Orgelfabrik  
Vöhrenbach (bad. Schwarzwald).

**Ambros Weisser's catalogue of barrel-operated orchestrions from about 1875, left. Above is the front of Sigmund Heizmann's catalogue.**

was made, but this was to be Hubert Blessing's last work. After a serious illness, which lasted seven weeks, he died on May 30 of that year. He was only 43 years old and a great many people mourned his death. During his lifetime he achieved great heights in orchestration construction, not only with improvements and new developments, but also with regard to the musical-technical side. It is not known if this last work of his was originally meant for the big Hotel-Restaurant Ermitage in Moscow, but this is where it is now.

In 1862 a "music-machine" was delivered to the king of Spain.

#### Where are they today?

Are all these orchestrions still present in many palaces and villas? We know of at least one example with the Fürstenberg, which has been confirmed in Donauschigen.

The widow Fridoline Blessing-Moser was left with three sons: Robert-Oskar (1856-1945), the Waldkircher branch, Rudolf (1865-1920) and Ernst (1863-1917). They continued the business aided by their grandfather Jacob Blessing.

On July 6, 1871, five years after the death of Hubert Blessing, Fridoline married Ambrosius Weisser.

He, as a thorough "music-manufacturer", entered automatically into the existing business, and changed the name from Hubert Blessing into "Ambrosius Weisser, previously Hubert Blessing". This name was to stay until the death of Rudolf Blessing in 1920.

Of the three sons Blessing, Robert-Oskar tried his luck in Moscow, where a branch with a staff of 10 had already been set up under the name Moser-Blessing. Edmund Moser was a brother of Fridoline and married to Bertha, elder sister of the three sons.

The business dealt mainly with repairs, maintenance and the erection and delivery of orchestrions which were sent by Ambrosius Weisser.

Every year the Moser-Blessing family spent their holiday in South Finland. Their Russian period was very prosperous, which also shows through the correspondence they sent from the various countries they visited, of which ephemera a part remains.

Sadly, the first World War finished their activities, various members of the family were exiled or imprisoned, but the last Blessing returned to Kirnach around 1970.

In the 1870's Ernst and Rudolf also entered the Weisser-Blessing company, they were welcome, because both men were very competent musically as well as technically.

There was plenty of work in Kirchnach and many orchestrions were sent all over the world.

#### Weights, spring and water

Among the various methods used to drive the instruments were weights, springs, water pressure and later, around 1910, with direct-current motors, which were delivered by Kalb & Company, Nachfolger, Electrotechnical Manufacturers, Böhlitz-Ehrenberg, near Leipzig. This firm made "Special Electromotors for the Driving of Musicworks". The very latest in orchestrions that Weisser-Blessing put on the market at the turn of the century was a "New Hydro Pneumatic Orchestration", which cost according to the finish of the



**Christmas-time marked by good wishes — and a reminder that Weisser would like to do more business in the coming year. Below, from Jac Gerssen's archives, is a letterhead showing the factory and an orchestrion.**

fulfil the duties of that office besides his own busy job until his death.

In 1897 he married Jenny Krasselt, daughter of the well known concert-leader Alfred Krasselt from Baden-Baden. But after two years Jenny died. A few years later Ernst married Bertha Reiss from Phillipsburg.

A similar fate happened to Rudolf. He first married Bertha Ambrustus, and later Sophie Hermann. Of the triumvirate it is known that they were very active and, looking for export contacts, travelled all over Europe.

Apart from the mentioned representatives, the names of others are known through catalogues and correspondence: the French representative Leon Appellath, whose name is engraved in a brass plate on the pianos, 8 Rue Louis Braille, Paris: in Stettin H. Lorenz, probably the son of orchestrion manufacturer Lorenz, who became conductor of the Kirnacher Musik after Hubert Blessing's death.

The firm Theodor, Import-Journal, in Athens, sought contact with Weisser-Blessing and talked about 10% commission. Literally and figuratively speaking, a great representative was Jacob Wasser from Crefeld (now Krefeld). He usually conducted his business with messages scribbled in pencil on the backs of picture postcards. These mention information regards sales and repairs. No complicated administration in those days! A few of these cards survived.

product from Mk. 2000 to 14,000, which for that time was very high. The catalogue gives a detailed description as well as the price of the music rolls per running meter from Mk. 1.35 to 2.40.

According to this catalogue they were enormous machines, which, even then, were much better than the instruments manufactured by Phillips-Brockenheim in 1919, not only as regards the machinery inside, but also the size.

Imagine: 4½ to 6 meter high, a width of 4 meter and a depth of 1.80 meter. Inside this hydro-orchestrion were 563 pipes, brass instruments with crescendi, and percussion instruments such as bass and small drum, kettledrum, cymbals, triangle and carillon. The rewind system for the music rolls was patented: Patent No. 94772, in the name of Weisser-Blessing, Patent Office C. Kleyer, Karlsruhe, granted on November 3, 1897.

The catalogue offers further: "Bigger instruments can be made to order. If no water is available,

they can be fitted with a different form of power plant. These patented musical machines come in nine different models".

Many of these instruments found their way to, for example Fiume (this town now lies in Yugoslavia; it belonged till 1919 to Hungary, and till 1947 to Italy), and Beeskerek (in Yugoslavia, and now called Zrenjanin), where Adonis Weisser looked after the business there as importer of Weisser-Blessing. Instruments were also exported to Rumania and Turkey, where one of the representatives was Karl Kopp, "Piano Musique & Instruments, Grande Rue de Pera 453, Pres de l'Ambassade de Russia, Constantinople".

Ernst and Rudolf Blessing, being musically talented, belonged to the Unterkirnacher Musikverein, Rudolf as conductor and Ernest, as in their business, looked after the arrangements. Ernst meant much to Unterkirnach. He was elected to mayor, and he would

**ORCHESTRION-FABRIK**  
mit Dampfbetrieb  
gegründet 1849.

**Ambros Weisser**  
vormals Hubert Blessing.

Unterkirnach, den 1892  
(Bad. Schwarzwald.)

**Auszeichnungen**  
GOLDENE PREISMEDAILLEN  
KARLSRUHE 1861.  
NAPOL 1861.  
Verdienstkreuz vom  
Zähringer Löwenorden.  
1892.

Rechnung für

A.W.	Sandte Ihnen für Ihre werthe Rechnung u. Gefahr per			
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Whenever Jacob Wasser came to Kirnach, there was something of a party, because he was a sociable and humorous man, who made contact easily with people.

A picture shows Jacob Wasser and Rudolf Blessing in a sledge pulled by Blessing's own favourite horse Fanny. In the winter this was a usual sight in Kirchnach, because Wasser was always fetched from the station.

For almost 50 years Adrian Keller worked as an orchestrion-builder in the factory, he really knew his business. His son Oskar Keller married a daughter of Jacob Wasser and became service engineer in Germany.

Business was still good until 1914, then the war broke out and Germany's economy went down. In 1917 on November 11, Ernst Blessing died, in 1918 the factory burnt down and in 1920, on July 13, Rudolf Blessing died. This closed an era when man was not yet industrialised and computers had yet to come.

In 1920 the three sons of Rudolf worked for "Weisser, previously

Hubert Blessing". After the death of his father, Albert Blessing (1897-1977) continued the business, first under the name "Albert Blessing i. Weisser-Blessing", later as "Albert Blessing Musikwerke".

He was a qualified pneumatic-engineer and he refined the models of the electric pianos built after 1920.

#### Belgian move, then war . . .

Because there was not enough work in Germany, Albert decided to settle in Belgium, where that sort of music were getting popular. His choice of Belgium was influenced by his contact with Alexander Cornant, son in law of the well known Pierre van Roy in Aalst.

After many temporary addresses Albert Blessing opened a workshop in Antwerp-Borgerhout, and soon afterwards his brothers Oskar and Robert came over. A few Belgians also worked in that workshop and they specialised in maintenance, repairs and delivery of new instruments. But "Albert Blessing,

Musikwerke" ended forcibly when in 1940 the brothers were called up for the German army. Robert died of his wounds. Albert and Oskar returned alive to Kirnach. Because of the growing popularity of the jukebox and other forms of music, work on electric pianos was history.

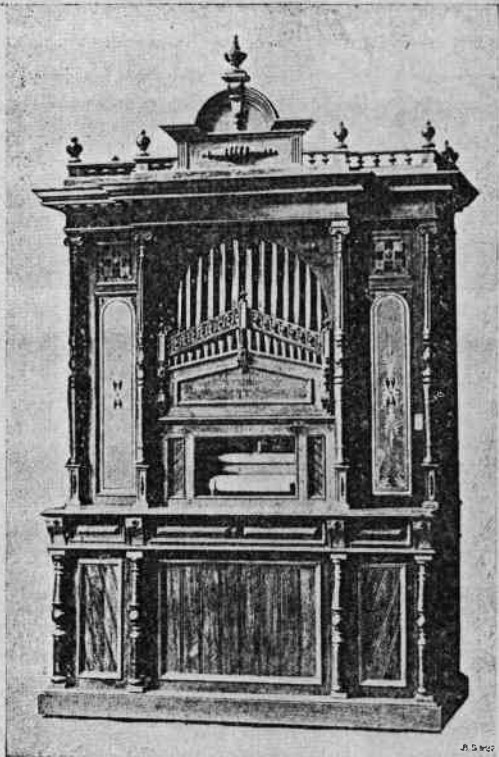
Albert Blessing, also called *Felsen-Albert* because of the house in which he was born on April 9, 1897, would have become 80 years old this year. After writing this article but before going to print, the author was told that after an illness of eight weeks, Albert died on February 6, 8p.m., in the Villingen hospital. On the 8th he was cremated in Schwenningen-Neckar.

Regularly he visited the Gasthof Rössle-Post, which was so closely connected with the history of the Blessing family. Right up to the present time the inn is still owned by the Moser family. The chairs there were made by Weisser-Blessing, and it is clear that there is music in them: a lyre has been carved in the backs. Albert Bless-

Mit Ausgabe dieser Preisliste werden die früheren Ausgaben ungültig! April 1906.

**Amb. Weisser vorm. Hub. Blessing**  
 Unterkirnach (Bad. Schwarzwald)

Gegründet 1849 • Orchestrion-Fabrik • Gegründet 1849.



Sensationelle Neuheit!

Empfohlen für: Privat-Salons, Restaurants, Gasthäuser, Konzert- und Tanzsäle.

NEU! **Piano-Konzert-Orchestrion** **GERMANIA** NEU!

In 9 verschiedenen Grössen und Ausführungen (s. anders.)

Gegründet 1849 **Orchestrion-Fabrik** Gegründet 1849

**Ambr. Weisser vorm. Hubert Blessing**  
 (Unterkirnach (bad. Schwarzw.) u. Moskau)



Vergoldene Medaille  
 vom Züringer Löwen  
 Goldene Medaille  
 Karlsruhe 1861.

Deutsches Reichspatent  
 Verdienst-Medaille  
 Neapel 1881.

Above is the cover of Weisser's orchestrion catalogue of about 1900 which shows his address as Unterkirnach and Moscow. The style is delightfully *art nouveau* in the German idiom. Left is a page from the April 1906 catalogue showing the pneumatic-action *Germania* orchestrion which was newly introduced. Both are from the Jac Gerssen archive.

ing visited the museum Speeldoos tot Pierement (Utrecht) in September, 1973, and the following year he donated the greater part of his well kept documentation (with regard to the firm), for exhibition in the museum. This has yet to be displayed.

#### Archive material

To describe all the remaining documentation would take too long, so here follows some brief details:

Catalogue with 12 piano-orchestrions named and priced as follows: "Fidelio" Mk. 2700; "Tancred" Mk. 4500; "Venezia" Mk. 4440; "Aida" Mk. 3184; "Oberon" Mk. 6400; "Semerimis" Mk. 7200; "Egmont" Mk. 12000; "Iris" Mk. 4200; and as No. 12 Violin-concert-piano "Tua" Mk. 4200, which included a "violin solo with tremolo, a.s.o."

Leaflets from around 1912: Favorit No. 2 and 2. Favorit No. 1: piano with electrical operation, automatic rewinding of music rolls, and, if wanted, with harp. Favorit No. 2: electrical xylophone-piano with automatic rewinding music rolls, visible xylophone and built-in harp.

Picture of orchestrion "Euterpe", no details known.

"Illustrated catalogue and price-list about musical machines and orchestrions; the latest and best constructions"—dating from c. 1880. This catalogue contains 9 models, Nos. 0 to 8, and of each model full details and prices, included cylinder—these are all barrel-operated—and outside structure.

Illustrated catalogue of around 1908, containing 10 different models including the piano-concert-



Jac Gerssen took this picture of Albert Blessing in his home in 1974. Born April 9, 1897, he died February 6 this year.

orchestrion "Germania".

Recommendations to "Ambros. Weisser, previously Hubert Blessing", such as: "Cross of Merit" from the Zähringer Löwenorden; German State Patent; gold medals from Karlsruhe 1861, Napals 1881 and Neuss 1907. In this catalogue no details, just a list of possibilities and execution on the first page.

A leaflet from 1908 shows, as above, the orchestrion "Germania" in nine different sizes and styles. The prices vary according to size and execution from Mk. 2000 to 4435; music rolls from Mk. 1 to 1.20. "These orchestrions come in veneered walnut or oak, and if wanted spotlighted. Telephone No. 21." They used the telephone of the Gasthof Rössle; in 1970 the number was 2021 and in 1975 54521, so that the old number of

around 1900 is still present in the new one.

Leaflets of around 1905: the mandolin-orchestrion "Germania" was then still barrel-operated and 51 keys, bass and small drum, cymbals and triangle. The piano component comprised for the greater part 3 and 4 strings per note; the percussion instruments were separately controllable, no price is mentioned.

The existing documentation contains also many picture postcards from Edmund Moser and his wife Bertha, business as well as personal.

#### Letters and postcards

There are also letters written to Hubert Blessing's widow Fridoline in the years 1867 and 1870; envelopes and postcards from Moscow, amongst which a fold-out panorama of Moscow in 1904.

Registered letters, such as from the Wolkow & Co. Bank in Moscow: payments of 500 Rouble to Weisser-Blessing—Unterkirnach. And more picture postcards with orders, complaints and sales from representatives and clients in Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, Greece, Austria, Turkey and Russia, and a letter from the Fürst von Fürstenberg.

The author wishes to thank the Unterkirnacher Musikverein, Paula Blessing, daughter of Mayor Ernst Blessing, Hermine Blessing, daughter of Rudolf Blessing, but especially Albert Blessing, who in the first instance provided the documentation and sources.

Much was noted down during the holidays that were spent from 1965 in Unterkirnach.

*continued on page 151*

## Unconsidered Trifles

### HOFFMAN & CZERNY

THIS important firm of mechanical instrument makers will be abundantly represented at the Leipzig Fair this year. They will show a self-playing harmonium with cylinders and a keyboard, so that it may be played in the ordinary way; also a self-playing piano with the patented segment action, which the makers claim to be the best instrument of its kind operated by cylinders. In addition, they have mechanical pianofortes with mandoline, xylophone and trumpet effects. A special feature of their exhibit will be a large military band orchestrion.

*Musical Opinion, September, 1912*

THE Viennese company Hofmann & Czerny (notice correct spelling) was known as the Continental Musikwerke located at XIII/4

Linzerstrasse 176/80 and XIII/6 Hiezingler-Kai 119. It was established in 1902 by Julius Carl Hofmann and became the Austro-Hungarian distributor of instruments from H Peters of Leipzig.

At the close of 1902, the company began marketing its first product, a large piano orchestrion with keyboard. The business blossomed

### DUTCH STREET ORGANS IK VERGIS ME!

OWING to an unfortunate caption transposition in the picture feature on Dutch street organs on page 92, Anton Puer was credited with the organ in the Nationaal Museum. The two captions on the left hand side of the page should be transposed.

Versta u me goed?

very quickly into one of the most important musical instrument factories in the country. Its main product line was pianos (including pianinos) and harmoniums.

The factory in the Linzerstrasse, specially erected in 1903, produced many thousands of instruments which included (in 1910) a barrel-operated harmonium as mentioned in the news clipping above. Whereas by this time most mechanical harmonium makers had changed to other forms of musical programme such as the perforated cardboard book or the paper roll (or Nyström's disc, and related systems), Hofmann & Czerny remained with the pinned barrel which was mounted at the top and back of the instrument with a key linkage at the bottom directly con-

nected to pitmans. This construction was exactly the same as used in the powerful-sounding Austro-Hungarian street barrel organ wherein the barrel is situated above the keyframe.

However, Hofmann & Czerny developed the ordinary harmonium into an instrument with quite an impressive specification. From the basic single-rank model, the company moved on to manufacturing more and more complex instruments which mirrored somewhat the development of the genus American organ. At the Leipzig Fair, mentioned above, the company revealed a mechanical harmonium having two ranks in sep-

arate pans plus doubled bass octave reeds affording a choice of a 4ft, 8ft and acoustic 16ft stops. "Six airs may be produced by the mechanical action", reads the notice on the exhibit, indicating that the barrel would play six tunes. The limited mechanical repertoire suggests the close-spacing of the keyframe keys, so it may be that the instrument was fully chromatic but this is not certain. No surviving examples are so far known and this would obviously be a most interesting and important instrument to be able to locate today.

The company also made a range of unusual hand-played instruments including pianos with violin-toned

pipe accompaniment. Its orchestrons were first marketed somewhere around 1907/8 and were stylistically removed from the German format, bearing a stronger external relationship to the current Eastern trends in furniture design.

During the 1920s period, Hofmann & Czerny became the equivalent of a limited company, trading from then onwards as Hofmann & Czerny A.—G. as piano makers. The business survives today although on a slightly smaller scale than in the years preceding the first World War. It is still in the Linzerstrasse, but only in part of its former premises — No. 174. (Editor)



## De Vere Green collection unveiled

**Cyril de Vere Green speaking after having cut the tape to open the exhibition. Bertha de Vere Green and Dr Haspels are to his left. Below, sitting in the organ room.**

THE first part of the C de Vere Green collection was officially opened at a ceremony held at the Nationaal Museum van Speeldoos tot Pierement in Utrecht on the evening of Tuesday, June 7, 1977.

The opening ceremony, which took place before a visiting delegation of American and British members, was performed by Dr Cyril de Vere Green and his wife, Bertha. The tape closing off the room was cut by Dr de Vere Green using a pair of hedge shears.

In an address to mark the occasion, Dr Haspels explained that the proportion of the collection, which was acquired for the Dutch museum at the end of last year (see page 30), to be displayed was limited by space presently available. However, with the acquisition of additional rooms currently used by the adjacent clock museum and soon to be vacated, it would be possible to show much more of the collection.

Dr de Vere Green, having cut the tape, spoke of his delight at seeing so many of his former pieces on display and restored so beautifully. He presented the museum with a set of gramophone records which he had made of the collection from 1964 onwards.

Society president Arthur Ord-Hume, speaking in Dutch, voiced his sadness at seeing so fine a collection leave the shores of England, but he rejoiced in the fact that the collection would be preserved as an entity and was in such very good hands. He commended the museum for its approach to mechanical music which ensured that the musical boxes, far from being preserved in a silent mausoleum, were in a living museum where they would play on for the benefit of future generations. He then proposed three toasts—one to the collection and to the museum, one to the long and happy retirement of Cyril and

Bertha who celebrated their 43rd wedding anniversary on June 9, and finally a rousing Dutch "Happy Birthday" to Cyril whose birthday was to follow on June 11.

Entertainment for the rest of the evening included the *Romke de Waard Serenade* by Carl Frei on *De Schuyt* (the Carl Frei concert organ), a "participation grind" with the *Dubbele Bifoon*, and some rousing marches on the Hooghuys. A beer and cheese dinner, specially prepared by the museum staff, was enjoyed by all.



# TWO EARLY DISC MUSICAL BOXES

by Graham Webb

WE all know that the disc musical box as we know it began life when Paul Lochmann of Germany and Ellis Parr of England patented the idea almost simultaneously. Whether we should believe their story that they both came to design the same machine at the same time, each without knowing of the existence of the other, is another matter. There are perfectly sound public relations reasons for giving out the story . . . and where, by the way, was Paul Ehrlich at the time?

## Card disc musical box

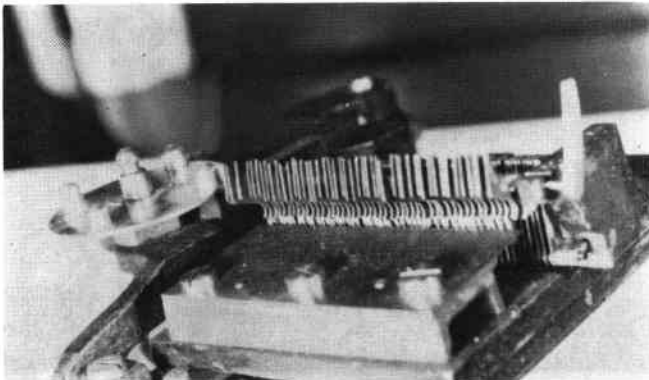
The illustrations show an extremely rare and interesting musical box which uses a card

of the levers to protrude above the surface of the plate under pressure from springs. At a glance the mechanism on view is very similar to that of the Ehrlich Ariston cardboard disc organette.

When the disc is placed on the machine, the levers are all held down by the surface of the disc. When a slot in the disc comes directly over one of the levers, the lever is allowed to spring up, allowing a shaped damper positioned opposite each tooth in the comb to come into contact with the tooth tip and so ready it for playing. As the disc continues to revolve, the beak of the lever is pulled forward and pushed downward at the same time, and

this allows a point near the centre of the lever and just above the damper to pluck the tooth downward to sound the note. The lever then returns to its original position, held down by the surface of the disc.

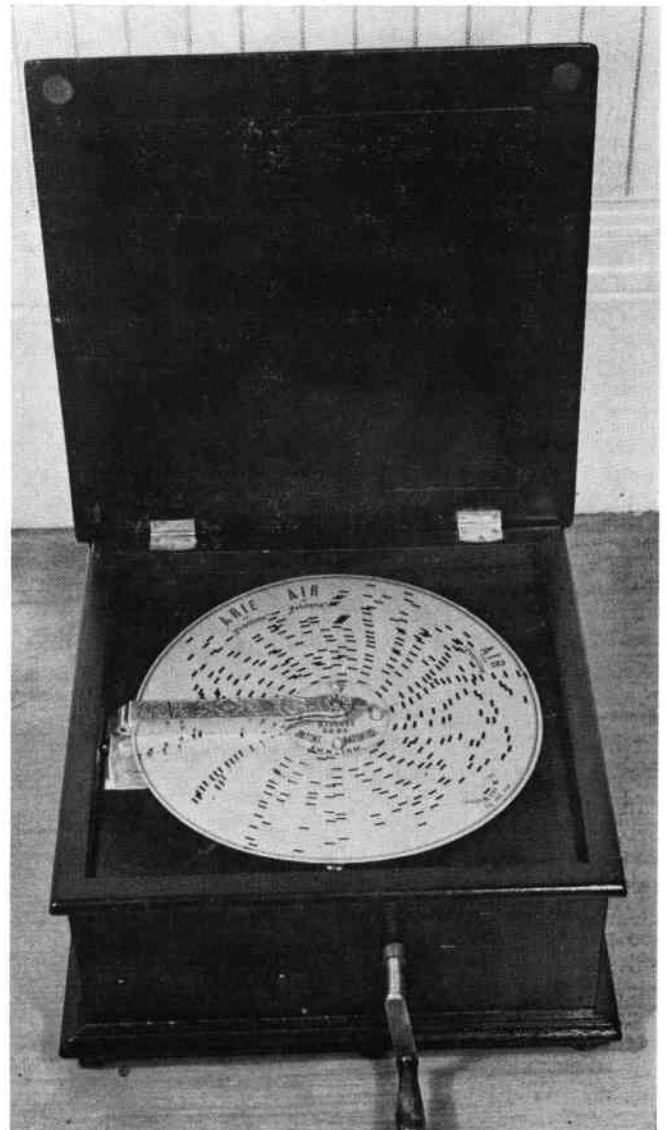
A report in the magazine *Invention* for 10 December, 1887, makes it evident that a disc musical box with star-wheels had been manufactured by that date, so it would seem likely that this type of movement dates from before then. The report in *Invention*, together with a machine owned by the author identical to the one described in the article, predates the patenting of the star-wheels designed by Paul Wend-

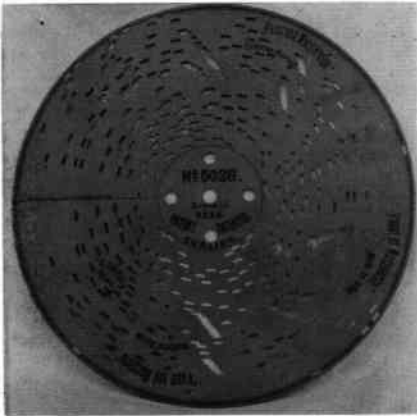


disc to activate levers that pluck the comb. Because of the absence of star-wheels and the use of this card disc, the machine is believed to be an early one. The only identification to be found is the name Ehrlich, which appears on the disc. No mark of any kind is to be seen on the movement or the case.

The case is in softwood finished in black. The comb and the lever mechanism are covered by a brass plate with slots to allow the beaks

**Above: Detail of the Ehrlich comb-plucking mechanism which is made in general accordance with British Patent no. 6391 of May 12, 1886. Right: the instrument in the playing condition.**





The cardboard disc used on the Ehrlich lever-plucking musical box. Although at first sight similar to the disc used on the Ariston, the perforations are closer spaced. Obvious "waterfalls" suggest questionable durability.

land by almost two years, and leads one to suppose that Wendland's were an improvement on previous star-wheels rather than wheels of original design.

The use of a disc obviously made by Ehrlich, and the even earlier reports that a square card disc was used for an experimental model (perhaps the Herophon "square disc"), together with the obvious similarity between later Monopol disc boxes manufactured by Ehrlich and those of Symphonion, lead one to suppose that

there may well have been more contact between Ehrlich and Lochmann than has been so far discovered.

### An early Symphonion

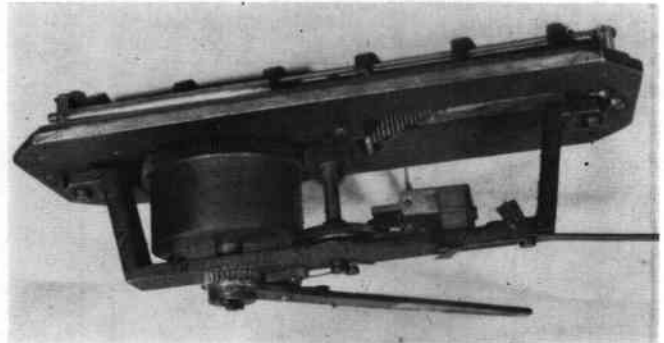
The photographs shown are of an instrument such as is described in the article from *Invention*. The instrument has a diagonal bed-plate of a type that was used for several years in some Symphonion models. One of the most interesting and readily seen of the special features is the legend PAUL LOCHMANN'S AND ELLIS PARRS PATENT, which appears on the centre drive wheel. This legend links the instrument very nicely to the one shown in the article as having been "invented and improved by Mr Ellis Parr and Mr Lochmann". Another feature of the instrument is that it lacks the normal dampers. In their place are, for the bass comb, dampers similar to those used on a cylinder box but more robust; while on the treble comb the damping is obtained in a very simple but not very accurate way by using a strip of felt cut into "fingers", one for each tooth. When the star-wheel is turned, it presses the felt on to the tooth to damp it ready for playing. The star-wheels are braked by strips of shaped metal beneath the gantry. The strips are shaped in



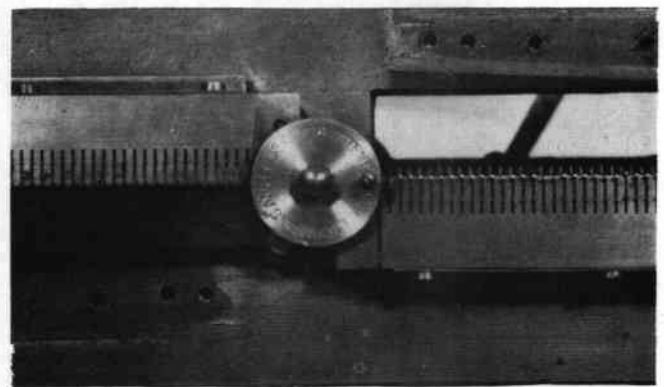
The metal disc used on the early Symphonion, lower left. This features easily damaged and crushable simple single projections punched three sides as usual but bent 90deg and left unsupported.

such a way as to cup the bottom tooth of each star-wheel, and when the star-wheel is made to revolve, the next tooth takes its place in the "cup" of the strip.

The disc also bears witness to the primitive stage of development of the machine by using only a single tongue of metal for its projections. The later type of projection uses two tongues of metal cut from the surface of the disc, one to support the other, and the best known projection of all is of one tongue of metal curled over to



Left: the early Symphonion metal-disc-playing musical box. Note the two pairs of disc guide wheels and compare with the picture on page 153 of Volume 7. Above: the simple lever-wound motor and bedplate assembly with cylinder box-type governor. Below: star-wheel supports with combs removed showing inscription on single-drive dog turntable.



form a "bridge" for strength. In this particular machine it is obvious that the true form of projection was yet to come, the early form here following the design of the cylinder box pin.

One more indication of a natural evolution from the mechanism of the cylinder musical box is the motor. In the illustration it can be seen to have a cylinder movement type of governor complete with end-stone and a two wheel train, and an extremely primitive stop/start lever. The fineness of the wheel teeth also testifies to its ancestry. It would have been a sensible and obvious move for the makers of the new musical box to use parts that were readily available.

A review of the activities of makers of mechanical instruments, published in November, 1888, gives Kuhno, Lochmann and Co. third place after Paul Ehrlich and Co, and Ch F Pietschmann in size of output. 15,000 Symphonions were made per year by a workforce of 180 men. But what of Paul Ehrlich with his 300 men and 30,000 instruments per year? Both firms in Gohlis, Leipzig, both in mechanical music, just how much collaboration was there?

**Editor's Comment:** Graham Webb highlights a number of unusual features of the disc musical box and its early history in the foregoing article. There is no doubt that the accepted date of the invention of the disc-playing musical box, namely 1885, is at least a year earlier than the first patents for

the instrument as ultimately produced. In 1886, we still find patents for stationary programmes and revolving comb mechanisms. Then come the first attempts at uniting the stationary comb with a programme source evolved directly from the contemporary state-of-art organette.

From this it becomes more than ever apparent that the first production musical box to play metal discs did not emerge until 1887—a date supported by the article referred to by the author in *Invention* which is to appear on a later page.

The astonishing similarity between the Symphonion and the Monopol which extends not just to disc interchangeability but to comb tuning and mechanical details remains to be fully explained. Strong links existed between Polyphon and Ehrlich and Lochmann was in the middle. Much history has yet to be written about this decade in Leipzig's musical box history.

## Thoughts on a new musical box

by "Endless Screw"

*In this comment piece, our contributor "Endless Screw", who has written many articles for The Music Box, particularly in the early days, voices his own personal feelings on the vexed subject of New Musical Boxes.*

IN June of this year I was at the Society meeting at the Kensington Close Hotel and, along with many others, waited with bated breath for the unveiling of the New Musical Box.

You can imagine my disappointment as Mrs de Vere Green drew off the Union Jack drape to find that beneath it was no superb new creation representing the marriage of musical box lore and later ingenuity, but just another Polyphon—albeit a *new* one and a marvellous replica, but still a Polyphon.

Now I am not decrying the enormous ingenuity which has been put into creating this. As our President said on the occasion, Mr Keith Harding and his team of artisans have exceeded our wildest hopes of skill in putting back into production an exact copy of the long-lost product of the City of Lime Trees.

But the fact remains that with all that undeniable expertise, wouldn't it have been nicer if it had been applied to the creation of a completely *new* machine in the best of the *old* tradition!

Mr Harding has certainly made for us a marvellous machine and netted for Britain the "blue riband" for producing the biggest musical box in the world. After

all, the Americans have done just the same thing with the Regina, only they were smaller models.

Maybe my words may shock some, but all I am really trying to suggest is that this very great talent is now available to be applied to something *really* spectacular. The new Regina and the Polyphon are but testers to show that the skills exist once more.

What have I in mind, you say! Well, for a start, why do we have the disc as a programme source? Polyphon, Symphonion, Regina and others discarded it for their "high-technology" boxes when played

from book music so giving longer playing times. Besides, book music is easier to make than discs and the mechanics of the playing system are not so complicated.

So what would I like to see? I think the answer is anything that displays a sympathetic reappraisal of all the know-how that went into that all-too-brief 15 years of disc machine development.

First, an acoustic cabinet made of good piano sound-board technology, for you cannot skimp on the musical box case—it is the

*continued on page 116*

## Museum buys Plerodienique World record auction price

STAR item of the Sotheby's Belgravia sale on June 9th, 1977, the PVF nine-cylinder Plerodienique (see pages 56 to 59) was sold to the Nationaal Museum van Speeldoos tot Pierement in Utrecht for a total of £14,300. This sets a new World record price for a musical box.

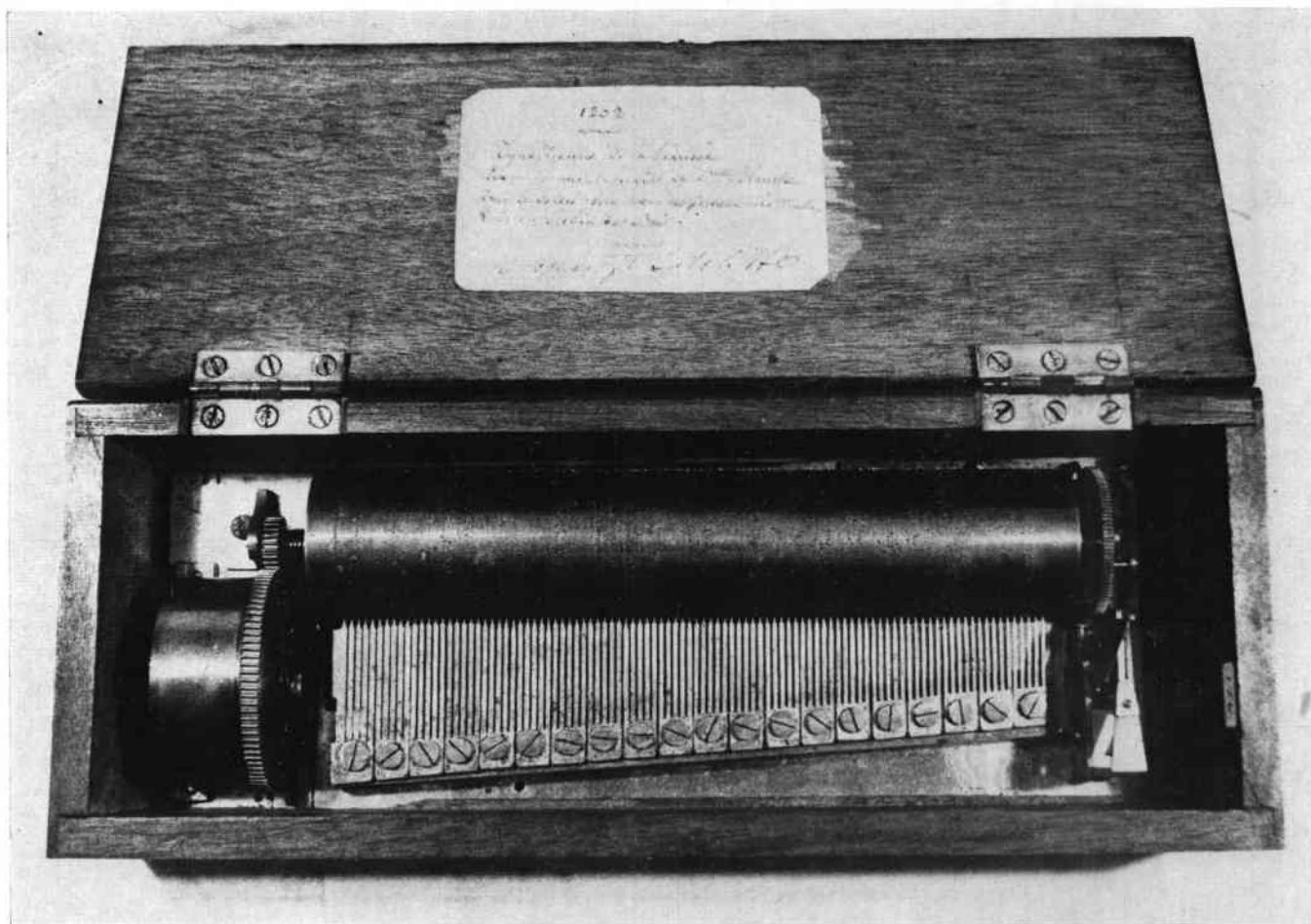
The piece, an outstanding specimen of the best type of Plerodienique, quickly reached £10,000 and then moved in £500 increments up to the hammer price of £13,000. On top of this sum went Sotheby's ten per cent buyer's premium.

Our member Dr J-J L Haspels, director of the museum, says that the box with its decorated and inlaid stand will form a centrepiece of the new musical box room to be established at his world-famous museum.

Fresh auction records were established earlier at the Christie's South Kensington sale held on May 18th.

A Mills Violano-Virtuoso complete with instruction manual and two rolls made £5,900 and a Weber Grandezza with drum, cymbal and accordion upperwork, complete with nine rolls, made £3,000. An attribution to Bacigalupo probably contributed to pushing the price of a 42-key eight-air street organ with four stops including 10 trumpets to £2,600. Biggest item in the sale, an Aeolian Orchestrelle Model W with 76 rolls, made £700. These prices are net: Christies do not operate a buyer's premium at South Kensington.

The Mentmore sale is referred to on page 102.



## DAVID CADET

ACCORDING to researches, David Cadet was a watchmaker from Sainte Suzanne in France. If that is so, then neither Britten nor Baillie knew of him, for they do not list him. Apparently he went to Geneva in about 1820 and began making musical boxes. John E T Clark tells us that he made a four-comb musical box with sectional comb in groups of five teeth in 1840. Called the *Quatuor*, this was probably the first four-comb box to be made. He is also said to have made movements in the Viennese style, i.e. base teeth on the right. That, sparse as it is, is the only historical data on record about the strange Mr David Cadet.

John Cowderoy has sent in these pictures of a box belonging to Patrick McCrossan and which advances our knowledge of this maker slightly.

The piece is a four-air keywind musical box bearing the serial number 1202. This number is stamped upside down — probably an accident rather than a stylistic trait — in the extreme left hand corner of the bedplate, and also on the end of the case next to the hole for the key (see bottom picture). The lid hinges are not original.

The comb has 100 teeth in groups of five and the cylinder is 7.9ins (20cm) long. The bedplate is stamped DAVID CADET next to the governor which has a jewel-less steel top plate.

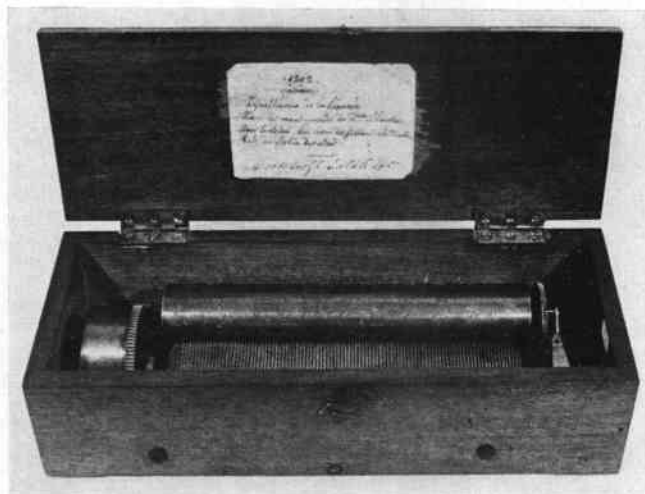
Written on thin parchment are the titles of the tunes which are as follows along with dates :

Tyrolienne de la fiancée (Auber, 1829)

Choeur des montagnards de Dme. Blanche (Boieldieu, 1825)

Amis le Soleil, soir choeur des pecheurs de la Muette (Auber, 1828)

Valz du Robin des Bois (Weber, 1821)



# MAGIC ORGANA HOHNER

Accordéon pneumatique

**Tout  
le monde  
accordéoniste**

\*



Figure I (modèle fermé)

**grâce à  
l'accordéon  
pneumatique**

**Construction  
simple,  
Solidité à toute  
épreuve,  
Reproduction  
intégrale de  
toute musique  
exécutée par  
les meilleurs  
Accordéonistes**

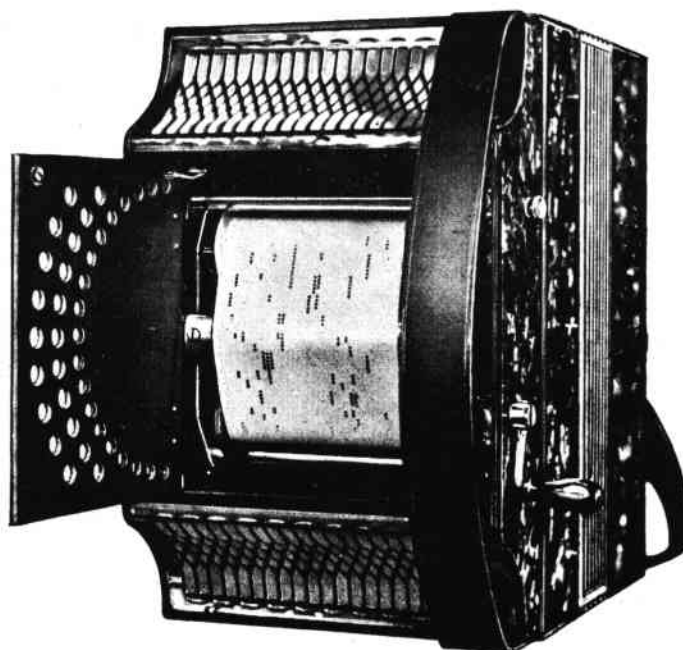


Figure II (modèle ouvert avec le rouleau mis en place)

**Tout ami de la  
musique joue  
de suite, et  
sans difficulté  
sur le Magic  
Organa Hohner  
sans avoir la  
moindre notion  
de solfège**

Demandez s. v. p. le prospectus spécial qui sera distribué gratuitement à chaque intéressé par les

**Etablissements Hohner S. à R. L.**

24, Rue des Petites Ecuries

**PARIS X<sup>e</sup>**

This self-playing roll-operated accordion was introduced by Hohner in 1931 but seems to have been sold only on a limited scale. This page comes from the French catalogue of that year; the instrument appears in no other Hohner literature. Vacuum was supplied by tubing from a separate pump.



# TODAY'S TECHNOLOGY MEETS YESTERDAY'S

by **Durrell Armstrong**

President: Player Piano Company, Wichita, Kansas

TWO schools of thought persist among player piano enthusiasts. One says that rubber was originally used and should be used in rebuilding. The other is firmly wedded to modern technology and plastics. The Editor has always advocated rubber, partly on the grounds of originality and partly because he felt that plastics were too new a commodity group to guarantee performance and durability. Here, in an astonishingly frank article from one of America's top player piano sundries houses, comes not only evidence to gladden the hearts of the traditionalist, but news that top quality rubber cloths are once more to be available

TALKING to an "old-timer" (meaning a person old enough to have been involved in the player business in the 'twenties), I was told Aeolian had tried to select such materials as tubing and bellows cloth on the basis of durability rather than cost. Accordingly, Aeolian paid a premium price. In the case of tracker tubing, the industry was generally paying one-half cent per foot for the smaller size, while Aeolian paid three times that amount. The same was probably true for the bellows-covering cloth. This would have added only a few dollars to the total cost of the product, but represented insurance toward their future reputation, which at the time was justifiably high.

The same gentleman told me the merged Aeolian-American Corp. used a leftover supply of this good 1920's technology rubber-cloth for the few players remaining to be assembled through the 'thirties. Most of the bellows cloth — other than that used on the rotary pump — used in the Ampico during the 'twenties was long gone, but there are examples of all materials in some model "B" Ampicos still being in perfect condition to this day.

## Defying deterioration

I am sure many besides myself have noticed that these foresighted yet self-imposed penalties in higher cost, unappreciated at the time, have come to be something of an amazement 50 years later as we finally observe the deterioration. Most of these materials should be replaced now, but it is astounding to see that a few isolated examples of Aeolian rubber goods are still

defying a lifetime of waiting for the ultimate crystallization.

When I acquired my own 1924 Weber Duo-Art grand in 1966, the stack pneumatics' original cloth still evinced live, supple rubber. I watched them start to go in 1969. By '71, two-thirds of them had changed from this condition to complete crystallization of the rubber — yet adjacent pneumatics were still good. At this point the mechanism was given a more-or-less complete restoration, using Perflex pouches, Polylon and "artificial leather" valve facings. However, I left few sections of the grey tubing (in easily-accessed places) plus the pneumatic motor and the rotary pump untouched. I guess I did this as a matter of stubbornness. I wanted to satisfy my own curiosity regarding how long these particular parts would continue to last.

I took the rotary pump apart in 1976, to again inspect and service it. I checked the life of the grey rubber between this pump cloth by shaving a sliver of rubber only from a glued or stationary part and stretching it to see when it would snap. I did the same to some new stock material which was the best contemporary equivalent. The 50-year-old rubber broke only with the same amount of stretch required to snap the Neoprene of the new material. Next, I took a sample sliver from the same type of Neoprene pump cloth I had installed in another instrument twenty years ago. Although it hadn't yet begun to leak, in twenty years it had lost all its strength. It almost crumbled.

The lesson to be learned is that

Neoprene, while superior to contemporary European rubber goods I'd tried (which turned stone-hard in five years), still did not measure up to the natural rubber found in the Duo-Art pump cloth. Here it was, 50 years later, and still going strong.

Anyone can put out a product and make claims or projections, but nothing is as convincing as "seeing is believing". I had seen, and I believed that natural rubber such as Aeolian had used was worth the trouble to research. I located the company that made it in the 'twenties — still in business. I was informed there were no employees left who had experience with the application of natural rubber. "Why would you want that put on, anyway? Everyone uses synthetic materials now, and what's wrong with Neoprene?", they asked. I explained, and was told they could use natural rubber if I insisted, but there would be no guarantee as to getting the right mix, formula or process that had resulted in the phenomenon of the 50-year-plus longevity.

## Long-lost formula found

I persisted, and was told one day that the formula-process had been located in some records and notes from some very ancient files. I placed an order with great anticipation, selecting cotton goods as close as possible to the quality of the original and faithfully duplicating the same rust-colored dye on the exterior layer of cloth.

When the goods arrived from the manufacturer, I was elated! It looked identical, and the rubber had more stretch than I have ever seen. This .035 inch thick pump cloth matched my original sample perfectly. Later I was told about thicker samples of Aeolian pump cloth, but I had only duplicated from what I had. This stock Number 55 material has been well received by our customers. Recently I have done the same with the thin "tosh" pneumatic cloth, single-coated with a black-pigmented natural rubber — our stock Number 50.

My present plans are to replace

all bellows cloth goods stocked by Player Piano Co using natural rubber instead of Neoprene, as various stocks are depleted. Good quality natural rubber has not been used in player cloths, to my knowledge, for at least the 25 years I've been in business, nor has a synthetic equal to it been available.

## Product tests

SINCE the above was received, *The Music Box* felt that the comments of Durrell Armstrong should be substantiated if possible and he was invited to forward samples of his new rubber cloths for testing.

Three samples representing the basic grades of bellows coverings normally used have been received of materials produced, says Mr. Armstrong, to original specifications. The thinnest, stock number 50, is a 0.005in thick black rubber tosh suitable for pneumatics and

other small motors. Unlike the materials already available (in Europe at least), this is semi-polished, evenly coated with rubber on a cotton base. Whereas new stock rubber tosh from listed suppliers, when held against a 100w light bulb, displayed on average something like two to five pinholes per square inch, the sample of new material (2.36 sq. ft) displayed no pinholes at all.

The middleweight material, number 1052, is 0.011in thick and is described as a wine-coloured motor cloth comprising a laminate of black cloth and wine cloth of fine-weave soft cotton with a rubber between. It was not possible to perform any comparative porosity test, but the sample was made into a diaphragm and sustained a 15in water gauge vacuum without apparent leakage.

Thickest of the three is a fleecy-backed heavy bellows cloth 0.040in thick. This is a heavy cotton twill

bonded to a brushed cotton fleece cloth with a thick layer of rubber. In quality, it appears superior to available grades that although of similar thickness, it is somewhat heavier due to the natural rubber content. It would appear highly suitable for reservoirs and exhausters and a boon to restorers of large reed organ (*Orchestrelle*) reservoirs where corner folds are subjected to severe fold friction.

In summary, Durrell Armstrong's comments appear substantiated by the high quality of material which he is offering.

The final words come from a packing note which Durrell Armstrong forwarded with his samples. This reads:

I WAS surprised to see Altrincham Rubber listed as a source of rubber-coated colths in the last *Journal* (page 43). As far as I know, this concern does not stock any material, but rather makes it upon order, involving larger quantities than any of the readers could possibly handle. Therefore, if this is the case, it is highly misleading. In the past, I have had some runs of material made by Altrincham—both the tosh and the "double". The "rubber" was the poorest quality I have ever seen. Fortunately, this bad experience is 15 years behind me, and I prefer to forget I ever sold any such, as it disintegrated in two years—the rubber, not the cloth. I have subsequently picked up samples of new material from European sources: Fletcher & Newman, Laukhuff, etc, which stood this short time test no better. Therefore, I am highly suspicious—and you know all this already from your own experience. P.S. I find no fault with the Polyurethane, but I believe that Neoprene, even the best quality, can be exceeded by going back to natural rubber.

## Paillard's 'Gloria' box



Patented in 1889 by Eugene Tuller of St Croix, Paillard's *Gloria* offered an improved system of interchangeable cylinder movement wherein although motor and governor were at opposite ends of the bedplate, removal of the cylinder did not pose power-locking problems. A drive shaft passed beneath the bedplate uniting the two components and so leaving the cylinder as an independent driven component. The stopwork is operated by the drive wheel on the layshaft used to engage the cylinder which is 9in (22.8cm) long. Picture courtesy of Christies South Kensington (sold May 18, 1977, £1,400).

*continued from page 110*

## New musical box

amplifier and loudspeakers of your whole system.

Then how about a multi-combed mechanism to work like a twin- or three-disc Symphonion? You could mount the lot in a straight line and play a *sublime harmonie* set up with the three comb sets playing from the one music book as "part A", "part B" and "part C" like the Eroica disc arrangements. And there would be no complications in getting the three mechanisms working together.

Appearance. I do not advocate a G-plan (modern furniture) cabinet, but an artistic melange of a case which would blend well with the old.

Name? What about *The New Orpheus*?

*Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose?*

# CHURCH MUSIC AND THE BARREL ORGAN

by Roger Booty

"MUSIC of all kinds never was brought to the great perfection, or was even so much in vogue, in this nation, as it now is; that most noble instrument, the organ, having not only made its most magnificent appearance in Cathedrals and Churches in London, and other of our cities, but also in the Churches in many of our Market-Towns throughout this nation; which is now brought to such a great perfection, that I have seen some advertisements in the news-papers of Church organs, of the machinery kind, which are so contrived as to play (having barrels fitted to them for that purpose) a set of Voluntaries, also most of our ancient psalm-tunes, with their givings-out and interludes, &c. which are very commodious for Churches in remote country places, where an organist is not easily to be had or maintained, and may also be played by a person (unskilled in music) who is only to turn a winch round,

which causes the barrels to play the tunes they are set to; which organs also generally have, or should have, a set of keys to them, that a person might play on them at pleasure, notwithstanding the barrels, etc. Chamber-organs of this kind are now also very much in vogue, a great many gentlemen having them in their houses, which generally play a set of concertos and other grand pieces of music; and to those, who are desirous of having either Church or Chamber organs of any kind, I hereby recommend Mr Parker, Organ-Builder, at the lower end of Gray's-Inn-Lane, Holbourne, as very eminent in his profession: There are also organs of a very small structure, commonly called box organs, which are likewise of the machinery kind, and generally play a set of Minuets, Marches, Country Dances, and other short pieces of music, with barrels as before recited. Some of these box-organs

have four stops, and some six, and may be had of the organ-builders, also at most music-shops in London, from ten to fourteen guineas price; they are very much used in a great many gentlemen's houses in the country instead of a violin, when a musician is not to be had; of this kind, as well as of the large organs, you may have tunes of your own choosing set upon the barrels, and as many barrels with different sets of tunes, (made to put in and take out alternately) as you please."

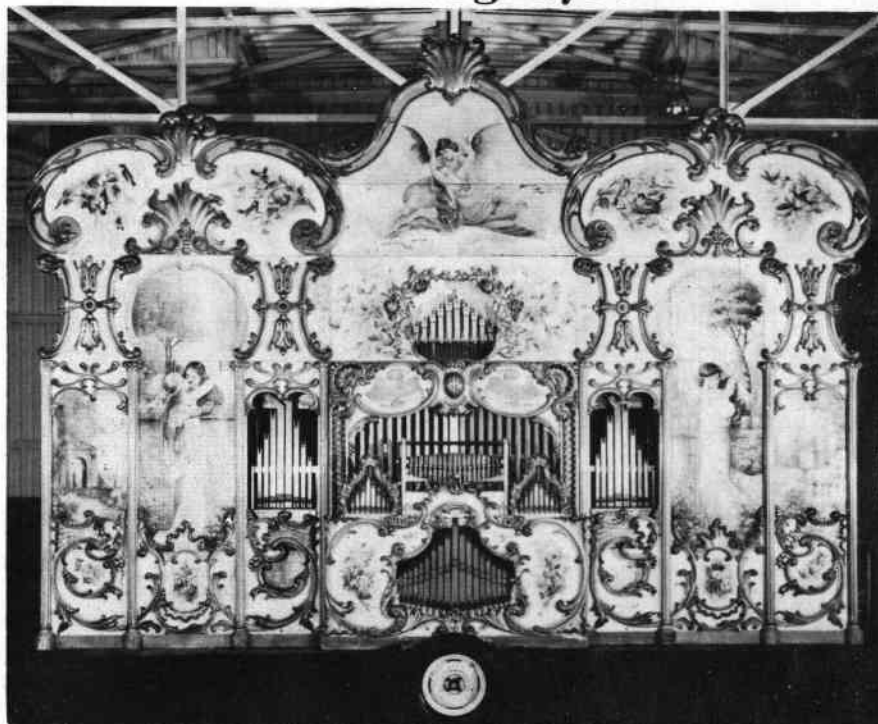
So wrote John Arnold of Great Warley, Essex, in the fifth edition of his book *The Compleat Psalmist: or the Organist's, Parish-Clerk's and Psalm Singer's Companion* in July, 1761. Another builder of organs of all types, a Mr Crang, is also mentioned but no address or further details are given. It is interesting to note the mention of country churches as by 1761 the Industrial Revolution was under way and it wouldn't be over long before workers started leaving the land for what would become the squalor of the town. Essex, however, was then, and still is now, chiefly an agricultural county.

Arnold also gives prices for the following available in London; church organs at 200-1,000 guineas, chamber organs at 50-500 guineas and harpsichords at 25-90 guineas. Mention is also made of other instruments and the following is written on the bassoon and its use for accompaniment in churches:

"The bassoon being now in great request in many country churches, I presume therefore, it will not be improper for me here to acquaint my reader, that it makes an exceeding good addition to the harmony of a Choir of Singers, where there is no organ, as most of the bass notes may be played on it, in the octave below the bass voices: The bassoon requires a strong breath to blow it, but is not at all difficult to learn to play upon, all the instructions, belonging to it, being only a scale of its notes."

Despite the fact that John Arnold says the bassoon is easy to learn we find a letter, nearly 100 years later, being sent to *The Chelmsford Chronicle* on June 1, 1855. Part of it ran as follows:

## What houses a Hooghuy's?



The answer, as far as Ted Bowman of Clophill is concerned, is a very large garage! This 70-key Hooghuy's bears the factory number 595 and formerly belonged to John Boutwood who acquired it from Courtrai in 1959. The mandoline stop (see page 13) was removed in 1914 because of tuning problems. Ted Bowman hopes to restore it — if he can get details (see his letter on page 141).

“ Allow me to call your attention to the miserable state of our church music in some of the Essex parishes, notwithstanding the general improvement recently effected. In some of our churches the music (so to speak) is shocking; no time, tunes at least a century old.”

The following extract seems to me to fully describe the present state of affairs in some villages:—

“ A choir (consisting frequently of the most drunken reprobates of the parish) bawl out the anthem, which they sing in parts, i.e., in a complicated kind of discord. No other music varied the service except the singing of a metrical psalm, from which the poetry had been previously extracted by Tate & Brady. The instrumental accompaniment of the performances was the squeaking of a cracked fiddle, and the growling of a base viol.”

The writer proceeds to say music is now on the road to amendment ! Unfortunately the writer of the letter doesn't let us know from where he got his extract so we will

never know what the musical amendments were. By this time barrel organs were in position in many Essex churches so it seems perhaps a little unusual that a writer at this time makes no mention of them being in use. Maybe his dislike of Tate & Brady extended to the barrel organ !

#### Rustic atmosphere

To go back into the first half of the last century in Essex is to find a county of small agricultural villages with parish churches attended on a Sunday by the workers of the village. As parishioners they would be straightforward, with beliefs in witchcraft and would attend church to sing the hymns they learned by heart. Most would have no ear, or time, for music and because the hymns had to be learned slowly parrot fashion, it is unlikely there was much enthusiasm to learn fresh ones. It must have been harrowing getting the congregation to memorise two verses only to find at the end of

the second that old Absalom and Annie at the back had forgotten most of the first !

The orchestra would do its best with accompaniment, but as the writer above said, it would be a case of squeaks and scrapes rather than music. The barrel organ, therefore, would definitely be a step up from the band, or should I say orchestra, of probably self-taught country bumpkins doing their best to oblige with the required music. A manual organ would be too complex for a small country church and the only member of the congregation who could perhaps make use of it would be the reverend gentleman leading the service. If the money was available a barrel organ could be purchased and everyone, we assume, would be happy.

#### Tale of a lost F sharp

In 1916 Augustus V Phillips of Chelmsford wrote to the Essex Review:—

“ Musical Tales of Long Ago. In the present day, the good singing and up-to-date organs in our churches cause us to smile at the condition which existed in the time of our grandparents.

In one country church in Essex in the '30's an accordion was played to accompany the choir. But in many churches the 'ecclesiastical orchestra' led the singing. The choir generally consisted of the village lads and lasses. It was the duty of the church clerk to act as conductor, and everyone was proud of the performance. In those early days, musical expression was not studied, and everybody sang and played as loudly as possible. In one Essex church it is related that an instrument lacked the F sharp note, and can we not imagine the jar on the musical ear ? Eventually the barrel organ made its appearance in the singing galleries, and caused the dissolution of the village orchestra. Many an instrument was hung up in the owner's home as a memento of those enjoyable times. The duties of the clerk also changed from conductor to organ grinder, as he was the only person who could turn the handle.

Many amusing stories are told of this period, as at a church in Huntingdonshire, when, after the Psalm had been announced by the clerk, the congregation were surprised to find that no sound came from the organ. In a few seconds the clerk addressed the vicar thus: “ She 'ont speak.” At

## Bendon bells and bangers . . .



George Bendon & Co, with its distinctive tune sheet bearing the Royal coat of arms lithographed by a A Haas, Geneva, is known as manufacturer of quality musical boxes. In truth it was probably a St Croix-based exporter for the British market, for their is scant evidence of manufacture. This full orchestral box with 30-note organ was sold at Sotheby's Belgravia for £480 on June 29 this year.

a Yorkshire church the organ suddenly stopped during the singing of a hymn, when the clerk's explanation was delivered in a loud voice to the Vicar, "Please, Sir, the 'andle 'as come off." In course of time the harmonium supplanted the barrel organ and consequently the dignity of the clerk was somewhat injured. He had lost his position of conductor and organ grinder, and now another person (generally the village school-mistress) was appointed to play the harmonium.

### Errant barrel organs

The comment about the harmonium is interesting as I find it often happens that churches with barrel organs have now a harmonium, if not actually in use, then still *in situ*. Another story I recall having read, possibly in a back number of *The Music Box*, concerned a barrel organ that wouldn't stop playing at the end of a hymn. The confused congregation were obliged to keep singing until the errant instrument was bodily removed to the churchyard where it was still merrily playing while they bade their farewells. This tale is a little thin though, because as far as I know all church barrel organs were hand cranked, so all that had to be done was — stop cranking.

### Postscript

To finish, a few words on how this article came to be written and how, I hope, other members may feel inspired to put pen to paper for the journal that keeps their Society together. The *Essex Review* piece, for which I thank Hervey Benham for authority to use, I discovered while hunting around in my local library. The *Chelmsford Chronicle* letter I came across merely by chance and copied it out for possible use. The piece by John Arnold proved a job to track down after I first found a reference to it. It involved a visit to the British Library (same building as the British Museum, home of the musical nef and the remains of Bridges *Microcosm*, both of which have featured in articles in past journals) all worthwhile and interesting. Much of the infill I gleaned while inquiring about barrel organs in Essex churches. So although this article is rather rambling it does show what can be assembled from a few notes and queries. More power to the pens of the silent majority.

## Technical Topics

# Repairing Book music

THE owner of a fair-organ, street organ or dance organ will be only too aware of the fragility of the perforated cardboard books of music which form the staple (?) diet of his instrument.

So often, books wear out through sheer old age. Occasionally, a book is torn through a jammed key in the keyframe, or a large book fails to fold properly, binds against part of the organ and is buckled and broken.

The peripatetic organ enthusiast who is privy to keyframes up and down the country will have seen enough "repairs" to make him aware of the fact that the techniques of book-patching are as ineffectual as they are legion. The ubiquitous sticky transparent tape (which eventually comes off, leaving its adhesive behind), gummed brown paper, office staples, zinc-oxide sticking plaster, the edging off sheets of postage stamps, thin string — all have been pressed into service to try to get a broken book to pass through the keyframe. What usually happens, though, is that part of the "repair" such as a loose intercostal strip of cardboard, the edge of a bandaid or the knot in the string, catches in the keyframe and a small and easily repairable break becomes a long, large and impressive shred. The next stage is to cut out the damaged length of card, and glue the next adjacent folds together with more sticky tape. *Poet and Peasant* now misses three bars, performs an instantaneous tonal modulation in mid-bar — catches the new repair in the keyframe and wrenches another couple of bars of music into oblivion.

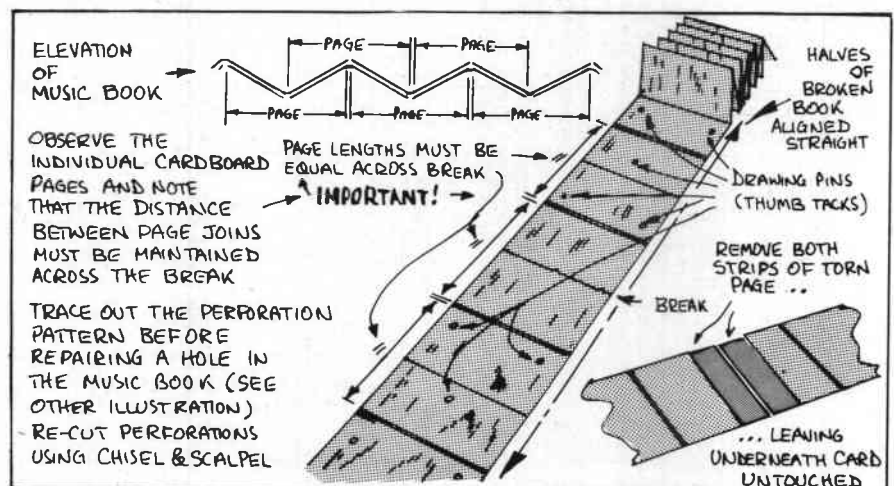
The author once heard an unintentional medley of two marches on a fairground Gavioli indicating the remedy to the problem of a broken half of one book and a tattered second half of another. No doubt the perforations appeared compatible when viewed by the musically incautious owner faced with a Bank Holiday crowd, a silent merry-go-round and a natural desire to get back into business.

### As good as new

Book repairs are, needless to say, time-consuming, but for the private owner who is not subjected to commercial pressures, repair is practically possible and the result is definitely as good as new.

There are three types of damage to be discussed, each of which involves a similar approach which can be summarised as (a) the replacement of the damaged portion, and (b) the consolidation of the remainder.

A pre-requisite for the job is a supply of book music card of the right thickness (this means *half* the thickness of the finished page since the book is made up of single pieces folded in half and glued together into a laminated sandwich), a broad-bladed sharp knife, a straightedge, a supply of hot brown "pearl" glue, a couple of large "G" clamps, some pieces of clean wood to use as clamping cauls, a piece of thin plastic sheeting, a book-punching machine (ideally, otherwise you can use a sharp modelling knife), and a supply of shellac liquefied in methylated spirit (denatured alcohol).



The simple break where the book is in two halves will be described first. This type of break invariably happens at a fold and, unless it has come about as the result of some serious accident, it is usually indicative that the book is fairly old and the other folds are weak and likely to follow suit. However, it may be that just one fold has torn, perhaps through incorrect folding.

### Locating the torn sheet

Note that the fold represents one panel of card equal to the width of the open book. This means that the torn piece is the *inside* part of a fold, the outside being the natural gap between the two mating inner folded sheets—the diagram shows what this means. The repair must therefore involve the removal of a portion of that inner sheet, now torn in two. In practice it is not necessary to remove the whole half-sheet, and so long as the inner sheets are undamaged (i.e. not torn—if they are crumpled it does not matter since they will be re-consolidated in the work to come), all you need to do is to delaminate a strip a few inches wide on each side of the tear.

### Aligning portions

Begin by laying out the book on a clean workbench so that three or four feet are opened out flat each side of the break. Position it so that the torn sheet is uppermost—a careful look at the break will show which side is which. Carefully align the book so that (a) the break is together without any gap or overlap, and (b) that the sides of the book are in alignment otherwise the repaired book will not fold straight nor will it track the keyframe properly. Pin through the book in several places using drawing pins (thumb tacks) to preserve the position. Do not be afraid to pin through the card—it will not harm the book in any way

Separating the laminations of the book is done using the broad bladed knife which must be honed to a good edge. The early music books are easier to delaminate than the newer ones, partly because the card has a greater density making the glue line less obvious. Shredding to the glue line is a task involving care and patience. Avoid cutting into the card laminate beneath as this will mean that when you clamp the new piece of card on top there will be a hollow filled with too much glue. This can affect the durability of the repair as the thick glue will ultimately crack out and leave a weak spot. Similarly, avoid any high spots as these may cause keyframe jamming, improper folding and related problems—accurate tracking is largely dependent on the equal pressure of the keyframe pinch roller and if the book thickness varies, this can throw out the tracking accuracy.

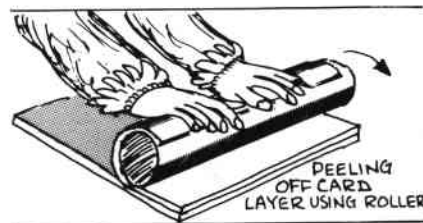
Begin by ruling off, say, three inches (75mm) each side of the break. Using a sharp knife, and considerable care, cut down through the top layer of card with the straightedge as a guide. At this stage it is better to cut too little than too much. Repeat the procedure at a distance of about  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch (5mm) closer to the break and peel off a strip of the card. The reason for this is that the gap produced provides a natural “stop” for the peeling procedure which must now start from the break and work outwards. It ensures a clean, undamaged edge to the top layer.

Now peel off the card using knife and thumb. Closely-placed perforations may call for some skill to get the card even in thickness.

Finish off the process by scraping the underlying layer of card to remove any high-spots.

Another technique which is possible to apply and is particularly suited to unperforated ends is to start the peeling process with the

knife and then roll the peeled edge around a piece of round rod and then roll off the layer by pressing on the rod with both palms and pushing away from you.



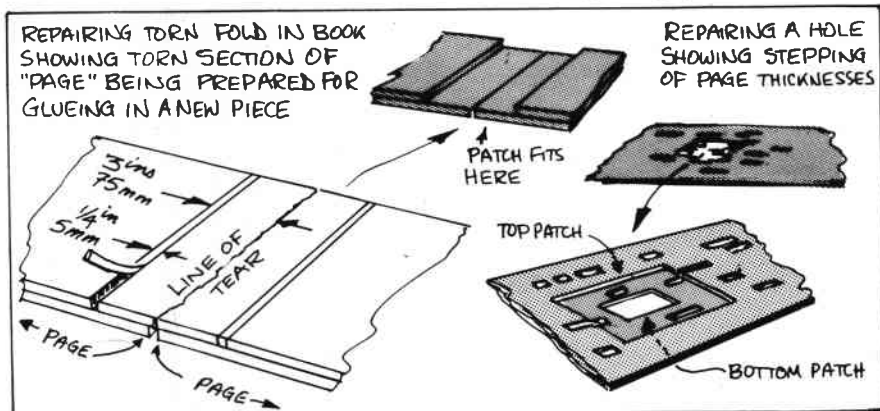
Select a piece of replacement card of the proper thickness and slightly oversize. Using a straight-edge, divide this into two halves with a pencil line—this will be the new fold. The card *must* be pre-folded before glueing into place and this is done either with the back (i.e. blunt side) of an old table-knife, or with some other suitable blunt, smooth instrument by pressing into the card and drawing back against the straight-edge. Take care not to tear or otherwise damage the surface of the card, only to make a deep, smooth indentation. Now fold the card and flatten the crease by squeezing it in a vice.

Open out the newly-folded piece of replacement card and place it over the delaminated piece of the book. See that the crease is absolutely in line with the gap—if in doubt check the position of the halfway point between the folds on either side. Now mark the card to the exact width of the gap. Do not worry about the length (i.e. the width of the book) but leave the card rather full at each end. Cut the card to the precise width.

Prepare your “G” clamps to the proper width and select your caul blocks, for the next stage must be done quickly without pause otherwise the glue will get cold.

Heat up the glue pot—you should use a double-boiler glue pot which will keep the glue hot with no fear of burning it—and slide the piece of plastic sheet under the repair area. Paint a coat of hot glue on the thinned card of the book, do the same on the underneath of the repair piece, letting the glue work well into the surface. Now paint a good full coat (not thick) onto the repair area, position the patch over the top, see that the edges do not overlap, place the other half of the plastic on top, put a caul block on top of that and clamp up the repair really tightly.

Leave for at least 24 hours before unclamping. If you have a proper



book-punching machine available, so much the better, and the next stage is to turn the book over, select a punch the exact size of the slots in the book, and punch these through, using the slots in the half thickness which survive as a locating guide. If you do not have a punching machine, then do this job carefully using a sharp bevelled-edge chisel the width of the slots and a knife for their length. Chisel and cut onto a smooth, hardwood or plastic surface. Finally trim the edges of the book to size and finish off with very fine sandpaper to remove any notches where the change of card is — properly done repairs should not have any!

Last job is to brush a good thin coat of liquefied shellac over the book on both sides of the repair and to stand the book on edge in an "opened" zig-zag position to dry.

#### Tear repairs

The second type of repair is the tear, a form of damage which may occur in the middle of a book through a sticking or badly-adjusted key, or on the edge due to a torn perforation snagging in the pinch roller and ripping back the book edge.

Repair techniques here are virtually identical. If the tear is through both upper and lower layers of card, it is usually only necessary to replace one layer since the other may be straightened out, laid flat and, when impregnated with glue under pressure, will be as good as new. However, once in a while a keyframe disaster results in a hole in the music which defies this approach.

The saving grace here is that the book usually remains in one piece so that both sides of the hole can be worked on since there is no call for the book to be pinned down to the bench. Start by determining the notes that are damaged. Lay out the card pieces and make an accurate tracing of the damaged area *and the music slots for several inches around*. If this approach is not possible, the chances are that the missing piece might just be a thematic repeat of another part of the book, so hunt carefully through the book to see if it is possible to match up a similar piece.

Start as before by defining an area of the repair on one side of the book. It should be appreciable larger than the actual size for reasons which you will appreciate in a moment. Allow, say, three

inches (75mm) all round. Mark this, cut out a narrow strip as before, and now delaminate the card. Check that your tracing of the area covers a sufficiently wide area, and now take your knife and cut away the underneath layer allowing a difference of about 1in (25mm) all round. This means that the patch on one side will be larger than the patch on the other, so that it is adequately supported.

Cut a piece of new card to fit the hole in the lower layer of card, creasing it if necessary as mentioned earlier. Cut a piece for the upper layer. Now glue as before, seeing that the patches are properly aligned and the edges do not overlap. Clamp up, leave for a day, unclamp, position the tracing over the top and re-punch or perforate as before.

The third type of damage is where the card has not torn, but it has been crumpled in the key-

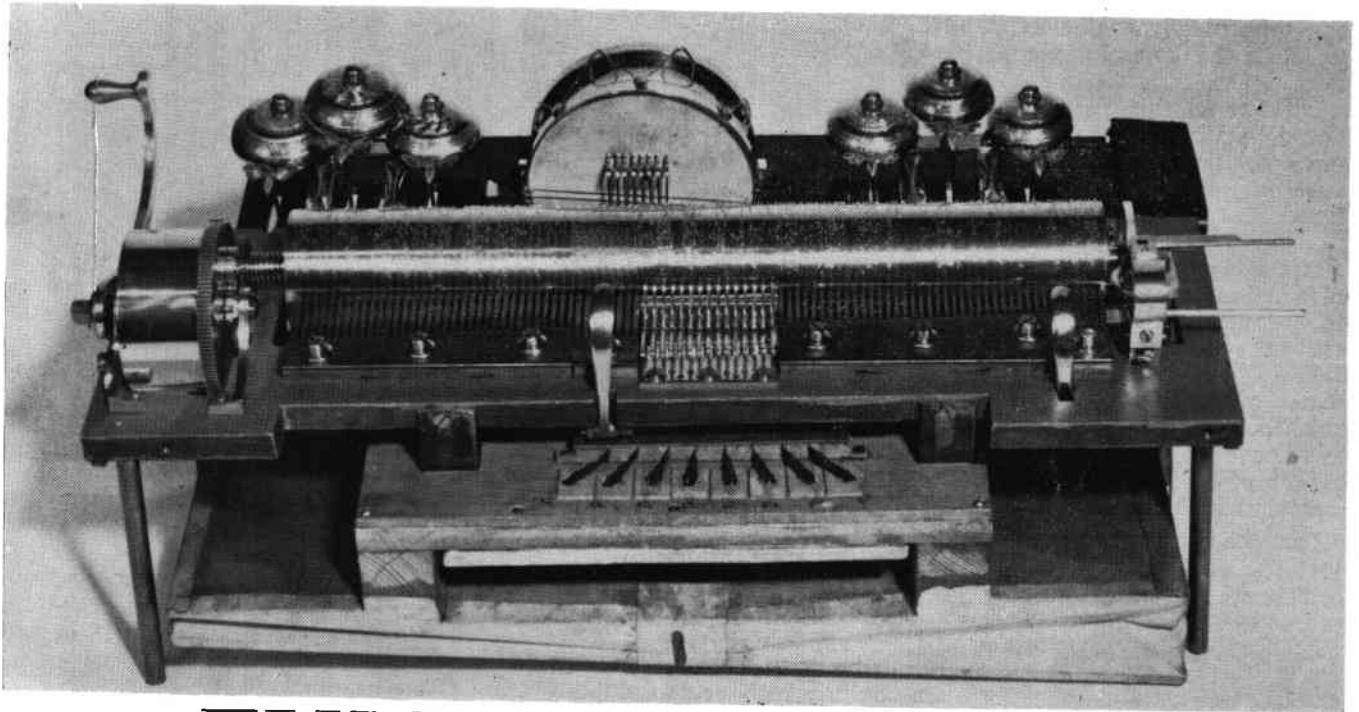
frame so that it has lost its stiffness and is going to tear. Catch this type of damage early enough, and you can save yourself time-consuming extra repairs. Delaminate using the knife, *but do not cut the card itself*. Force hot glue into the gap produced and clamp up as before. This will reconstitute the fibres and re-stiffen it.

The maintenance and repair of book music is not just a rewarding task enabling damaged books to have a renewed lease of life: it is sound economic sense today with the high cost of new music and re-perforated music. Books should be examined regularly and early signs of damage watched for. Key-frame maintenance is, of course, a preventative measure for note-shredding which is always caused by sticking keys. And a regular re-shellacing of a book will extend its life by stiffening up wear-softened music slot edges.

## Bells and Drum in sight . . .



Long after Nicole Freres had ceased to manufacture musical boxes on their own account, and after the company had been moved to London (see page 294 of Volume 7), musical boxes, both cylinder and disc, were sold bearing the Nicole Freres label. These were bought in from Switzerland by Charles Brun for the UK market. In many cases, their original manufacturer is impossible to determine. Such is the case with this *Bells & Drums in Sight* with 16in (41cm) cylinder, twin co-axial spring motors, and other features which point somewhat to Mojon, Manger & Co. The case is in burrwood veneer with tulipwood, brass and mother-of-pearl inlay. Sotheby's Belgravia sold this on June 29 this year for £620.



## FULL ORCHESTRE

IT IS strange that, having started life, according to the documentation of Favre) as a "carillon without hammers", the musical box progressed from being just that into a complex piece of equipment which rapidly re-acquired all the trappings and spaciousness of the instruments it sought to replace.

Of course, there was an undoubted something to be said for owning a musical box which jangled as it rattled as it plucked as it struck. If the colour television became the symbol of having made it in the 1960s, then the orchestral musical box, the linguistic mongrelism *Full Orchestre*, was that of the 1860s onwards.

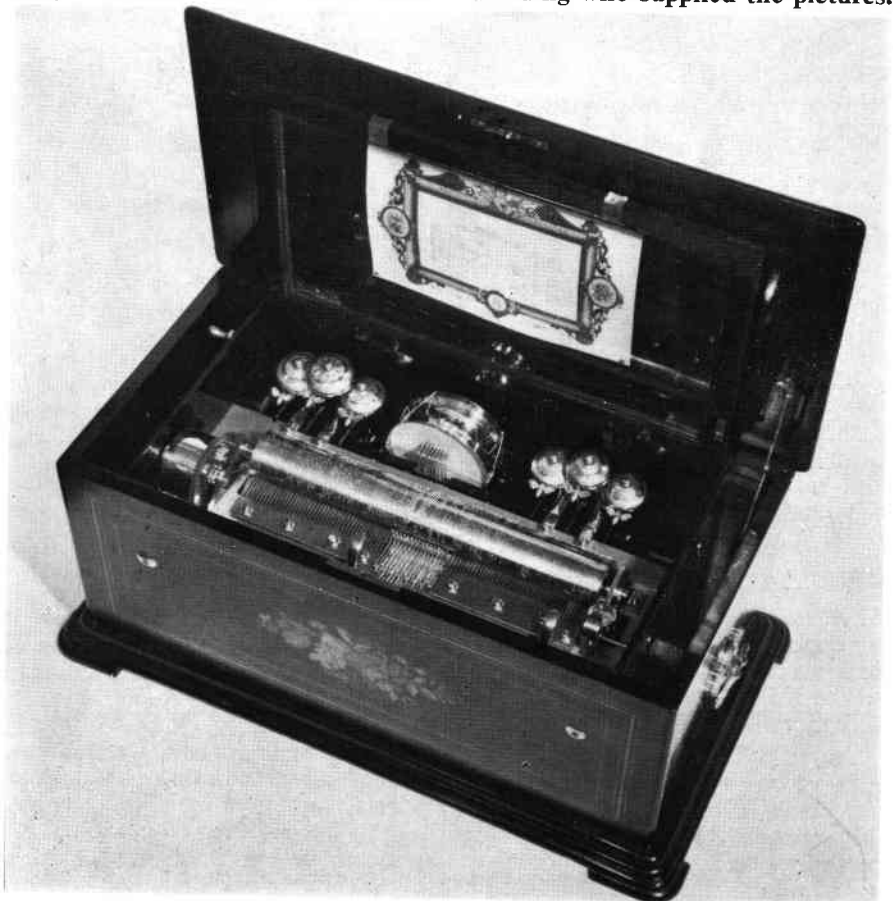
The Paillard, Vaucher Fils *voix-celeste* orchestral box seen here is a splendid example of the early form of the species. Early characteristics are the single, heavy spring barrel (later replaced by the far more efficient and more practical co-axial twin motor and the twin co-axial twin motor with four springs) and the external pallets of the reed organ accompaniment. Later reed organs, instead of having concertina-type rocking pallets mounted on the top of the wind-chest, used proper harmonium-type hinged pallets mounted inside the chest and depressed by wire stickers which passed down through the top board.

Although the mechanism of these musical boxes was still secured to the case by two screws through the front and two at the rear which passed through the

wooden case into the bedplate, it was necessary to provide fixed legs to support the movement in the case and to allow it to be worked upon without damage to the mechanism. The four steel legs screwed into the underside of the bedplate were first featured on the early hidden drum and bell

mechanisms and were to remain with the orchestral type of movement through to its end.

This musical box was sold at Christie's South Kensington on December 12, 1976, and has subsequently been restored by Keith Harding who supplied the pictures.





# The Bonny English Rose

by John L Hammond

ABOUT two years ago, along with several other society members, I attended an auction sale at a country farmhouse in the Midlands featuring a collection of perhaps 20 musical boxes. As is my wont, I made descriptive notes of some of the more interesting lots and copied a tune sheet or two.

On the day of the sale I was not the only member to acquire a "lot" and left the sale clutching my expensive prize accompanied by my wife swathed in curtains, carrying other miscellanea and carefully balancing a dinner service of goodness knows how many pieces.

Someone had evidently marked me during the sale and subsequently an approach was made to me and I was able to acquire one or two documents relating to the musical boxes.

One of the items acquired by a fellow-member was a Nicole Frères standard 8-air 13in (33cm) key-wind cylinder box serial number 32599, gamme number 619. According to my notes, the tune sheet reads as follows:

Home Sweet Home

The Rose will cease to blow

Oh dear what can the matter be  
The brave old Oak

Victoria over Bonny English  
Rose

My Heart and Lute

The Pope leads a happy life

Tyrolliene de Gme Tell

Among the papers I acquired were several sheets of folded lavender-blue paper bearing verses

in neat copper-plate handwriting which, upon examination after careful unfolding proved to be the words for most of the popular tunes on the above Nicole box.

Some of the verses will be familiar to many but for the benefit of overseas members I will append all of them.

Before reading them, picture the Victorian family at home about the year 1860 with Nicole Frères box as the centrepiece on the table, the box fully wound and set on "repeat", faces alight, eyes on verses and listening eagerly for the click as father moves the stop-start lever . . .

Finally it may be that underlying the sentimentality of a bygone age there is indeed a message for us appropriate in this Jubilee year of our Queen Elizabeth II.

The verses are given in the order written.

## The Bonny English Rose

1st

Old England's emblem is the rose;  
There is no other flower  
Hath half the beauties that adorn  
This beauty of the bower  
And England's daughters are so fair  
As any but that blows  
What son of hers who has not loved  
Some bonny English Rose.

2nd

Who hath not heard of one sweet  
flower,  
The first among the fair  
For whose welfare a British heart  
Hath breathed a fervent prayer?  
O! may it never be her lot  
To lose that sweet repose—  
That peace of mind—which blesses  
now  
The bonny English Rose.

3rd

If any bold enough there be  
to war 'gainst England's isle,  
They soon shall find, for British hearts,  
What charms hath woman's smile!  
Thus nerved, the thunder of their arms  
Would teach aspiring foes,  
How vain the power that defies  
The bonny English Rose!

4th

Now Heaven's decreed her to the  
throne,

'Twill be the nation's prayer,  
That in each joy she yet hath known  
Her heart may ever share;  
That health may long light up her  
brow;

And, as time onward flows,  
It still may be our pride to sing—  
"The bonny English Rose."

5th

Beneath her sway may ever land,  
Where she dominion holds,  
Be happy as the glorious Isle  
Where Freedom's flag unfolds,  
From sea to shore, from shore to sea,  
The song of gladness flows,  
And, O! may heaven for ever bless  
The bonny English Rose!

## My Heart & Lute

I give the all I can no more,  
Though poor the offering be;  
My heart and lute are all the store  
That I can bring to thee:  
A lute, whose gentle song reveals  
The soul of love full well,  
And, better far, a heart that feels  
Much more than lute can tell.

2nd

Though love and song may fall, alas!  
To keep lifes cloud's away,  
At least will make them lighter pass,  
Or gild them if they stay.  
If ever Care his discord flings  
O'er life's enchanted strain,  
Let love but gently touch the strings,  
'Twill all be sweet again.

## The Pope

The Pope he leads a happy life,  
No care has he nor wedded strife;  
He drinks the best of Rhenish wine,  
I would the Pope's gay lot were mine  
He drinks, etc. (*overleaf*)

## Who was Romano Bilotti?



FROM the Dekyndt collection of ephemera comes this very old faded sepia photograph showing the workmen of Romano Bilotti standing and seated outside their workshop. Presumably the corpulent gentleman in waistcoat and trilby is none other than Signor Bilotti himself.

Only one problem eludes immediate solution! Who was Romano Bilotti, where was his workshop, and when was the picture taken? The inscription on the window would suggest Italy or Spain.

There was once a street piano manufacturer of similar name in Alessandria. This was Ditta Bellotti who was established in 1868 at Via Savonorola 17/19. He was also to be found at Via Alessandria 3 in near-by Alqui.

If anyone can shed some light on the matter, or if anyone has a Bilotti piano, send details to the Editor.

2nd  
 Yet all's not pleasure in his life,  
 He has no maid nor wedded wife;  
 No child has he to bless his hope,  
 I would not wish to be the Pope.  
 No child, etc.

3rd  
 The Sultan better pleases me,  
 He lives a life of jolity,  
 He has wives as many as he will,  
 I would the Sultan's throne then fill.  
 He has wives, etc.

4th  
 Yet even he's a wretched man,  
 He must obey the Alcoran,  
 He dare not touch one drop of wine,  
 I would not change his lot for mine,  
 He dare not, etc.

5th  
 Then here I'll take my lowly stand,  
 And live in German father land,  
 I'll kiss my maiden fair and fine,  
 And drink the best of Rhenish wine.  
 I'll kiss, etc.

6th  
 And when my maiden kisses me,  
 I'll fancy I the Sultan be;  
 And when my cheering glass I tope  
 I'll fancy then I am the Pope.  
 And when, etc.

**The Brave Old Oak**  
 A song to the oak, the brave old oak,  
 Who hath ruled in the greenwood long,  
 Here's health and renown to his broad  
 green crown,  
 And his fifty arms so strong,  
 There's fear in his frown, when the sun  
 goes down,  
 And the fire in the west fades out,  
 And he sheweth his might on a mild  
 midnight,  
 When the storm through his branches  
 shout.  
 Then here's to the oak, the brave old  
 oak,  
 Who stands in his pride alone,  
 And still flourish he, a hale green tree,  
 When a hundred years are gone.

2nd  
 In the days of old, when the spring  
 with gold,  
 Had brighten'd his branches grey;  
 Through the grass at his feet, crept  
 maidens sweet,  
 To gather the dew of May.  
 And on that day to rebec gay,  
 They frolic'd with lovesome swains;  
 They are gone — they are dead — in  
 the churchyard laid,  
 But the tree it still remains.  
 Then here's, etc.

3rd  
 He saw the rare times, when the  
 Christmas chimes

Were a merry sound to hear;  
 When the squire's wide hall, and the  
 cottage small,  
 Were fill'd with English cheer.  
 Now gold hath the sway — we all obey,  
 And a ruthless King is he;  
 But he never shall send an ancient  
 friend,  
 To be tossed on the stormy sea.  
 Then here's, etc.

**Home! Sweet Home!**  
 Mid pleasures and palaces though we  
 may roam,  
 Be it ever so humble, there's no place  
 like home.  
 A charm from the skies seems to  
 hallow us there,  
 Which see thro' the world, is ne'er met  
 with elsewhere.  
 Home! home! sweet, sweet home!  
 There's no place like home! there's no  
 place like home!

2nd  
 An exile from home splendour dazzles  
 in vain —  
 Oh! give me my lowly thatch'd cottage  
 again;  
 The birds singing gaily, that came at  
 my call;  
 Give me them, with the peace of mind,  
 dearer than all.  
 Home! home! sweet, sweet home!  
 There's no place like home! there's no  
 place like home!

*A non-descript varnished nursery toy is opened to reveal*

# An unusual small musical box

THE increasing popularity of the musical box in the final quarter of the nineteenth century brought with it a realisation that, while there was obviously a lucrative market for the large and expensive

musical boxes which might serve as musical interpreters in the home, there was if anything a far larger market for the cheaper musical box aimed at the younger generation.

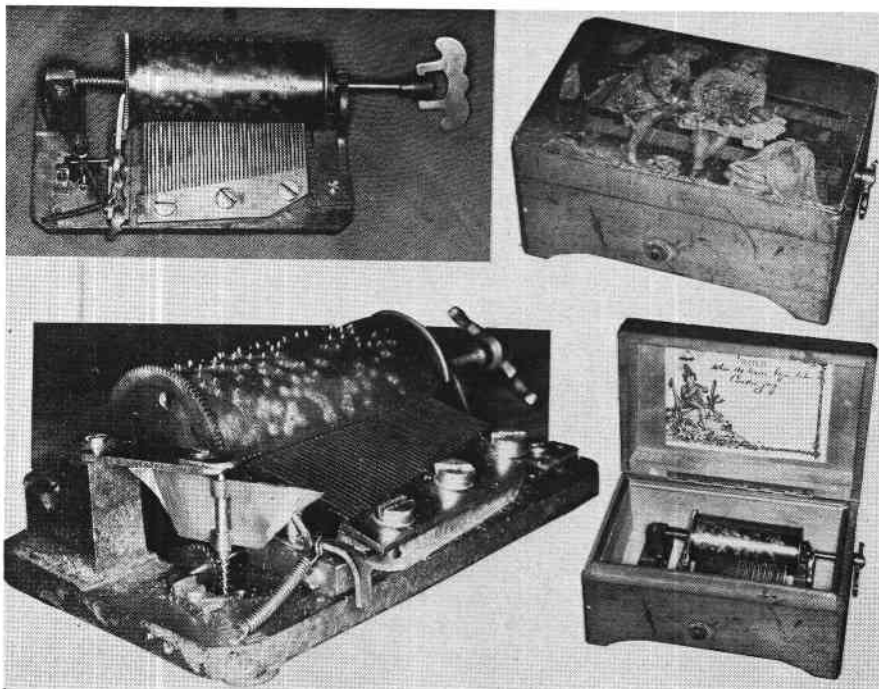
It could be argued that, while

this low end of the musical box market would involve the making of large numbers of cheap instruments, the operation would lend itself to some measure of mass-production. Indeed, if the components could be simplified and their number reduced, it could be a worthwhile commercial proposition.

The re-design of the basic cylinder musical box was a goal tackled by a number of inventors between the late 1870s and the turn of the century. The prize was ripe as had L'Epee prove so dramatically when he introduced the manivelle in 1857. The story of the manivelle and its incredible success which necessitated the expansion of his Saint Suzanne manufactory, is related on page 67.

Very many musical boxes were made in later years which displayed radical rethinking of components with an eye to the reduction in the number of pieces, the elimination of close-tolerance parts (in particular those where the tolerances of inter-related parts could tot up to yet harder tolerances to be held by the assemblers), and rapid, cheap production.

One such attempt was the subject of an article starting on page 226 of Volume 7. This outlined the developments of Mermod to devise a cylinder movement which, among other things, completely rethought the system of snail change

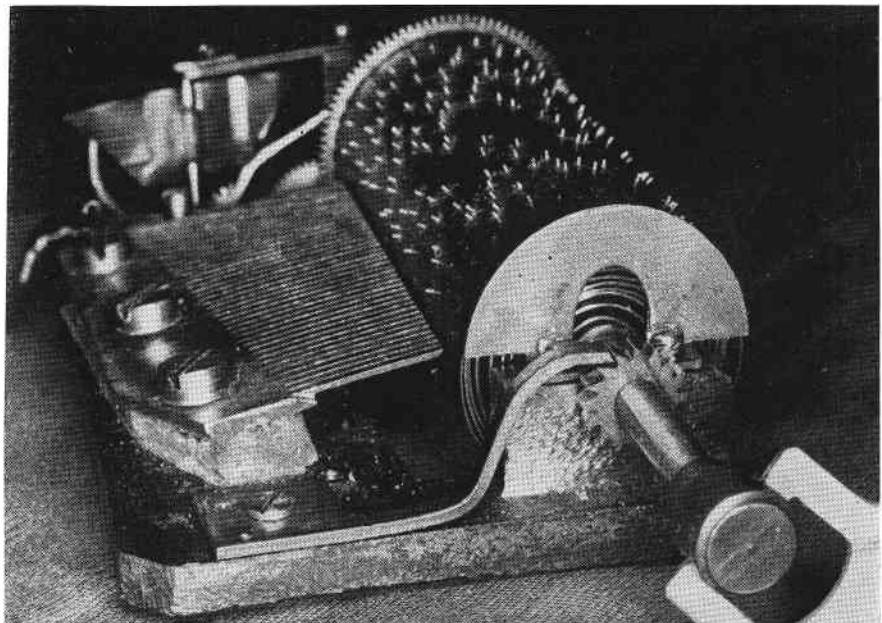


and evolved a very simple and effective system.

Another, and earlier attempt, aimed solely at a low-cost musical box for children, is the subject of the pictures on this and the facing page.

In the de Vere Green collection, now on exhibition in Utrecht (see page 109), is a small varnished wooden box with a colourful picture on the lid. A strange, clock-type winding key protruding from the right end and a sliding button on the front are the only outward indications that the piece might be musical. Opening the lid reveals a simple coloured tune-sheet and the titles of the two tunes played, *When the leaves begin to turn*, and *Cuckoo song*. The musical movement, though, is so unusual as to warrant special and detailed examination.

First the bedplate. Of broad U-planform, this is of cast iron and embodies all the component locational points. The base of the U is so shaped as to provide added clearance for those teeth of the comb which carry lead weights. It also has three supporting bosses to allow fitting into a case—with three “feet”, the mechanism can be sure of sitting evenly in the box since tripods cannot rock. The



arbor supports for the cylinder are also cast in as is the base for the comb. The outcome is a bedplate which requires the minimum of machining and the minimum of jiggling for that machining. In terms of today's automatic production methods, this would be termed a “one-pass” operation.

Next is the cylinder, outwardly normal, but internally containing the driving spring, so saving space and at one stroke eliminating all separate motor parts and their

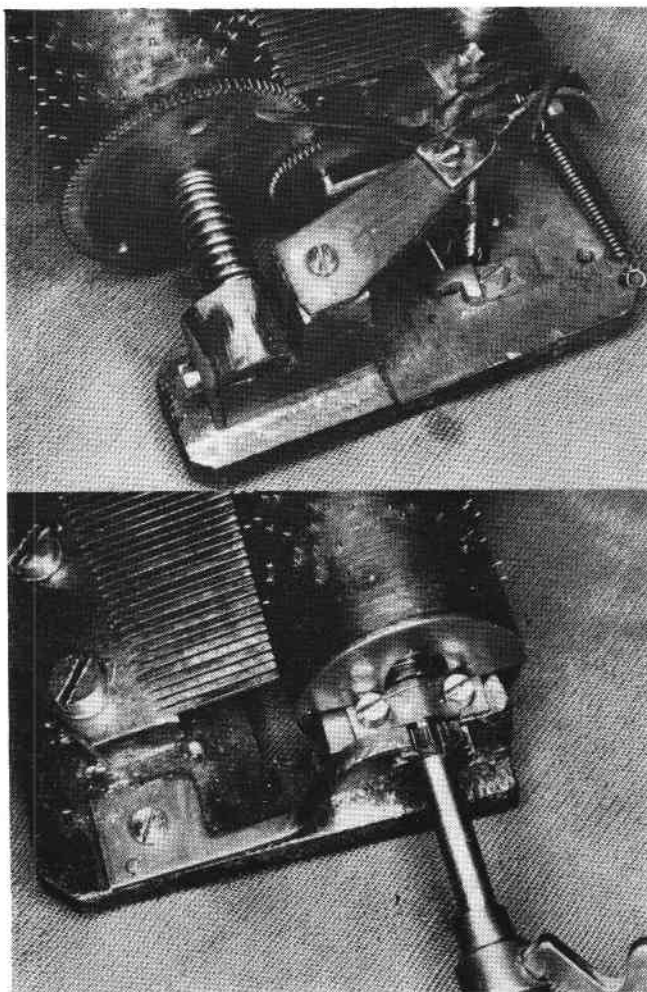
relationship tolerances. The click spring for winding is nothing more involved than a piece of bent steel screwed to the bedplate and curved over and into engagement with a simple ratchet wheel which also serves to locate the cylinder laterally and regulate endplay.

At the other end of the cylinder, the governor is a simple gear train block and the cock for the endless is a plain, straight steel bracket screwed to a cast extension of the cylinder arbor support. No end-stone is used, just a steel cap plate exactly as used in the earliest days of musicwork. The lower bearing for the endless is contained in the bedplate and variable second-wheel depthing is achieved by a simple sliding bearing for the outer end of the second-wheel arbor.

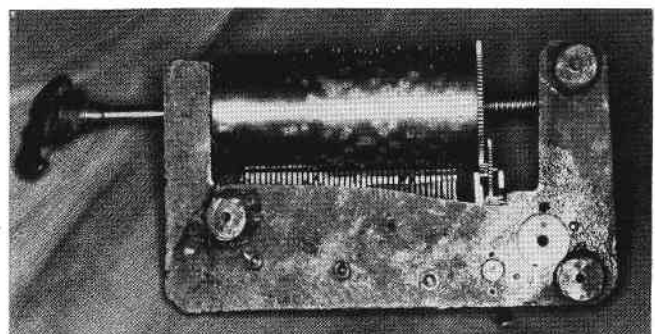
The comb has broad-ended teeth — another aid to eliminating close-tolerance fitting as is the wide-cut gap between teeth. It is positioned without dowels and represents the only skilled assembly operation.

Automatic-cam tune-changing is used, the cylinder moving against a long spring on the lengthy arbor extension provided so that the blades of the fan clear the end of the cylinder.

The inventor of this mechanism was E K Hoffman who was granted a British Patent, number 3241 of August 7th, 1880.



**Facing page :** general views of the complete box and, lower right, of the attachment of the governor showing the adjustable depthing device. **This page, top :** detail showing the spring in the cylinder end and the winding ratchet. **Left :** the stop/start control and straight cock bracket. **Lower left :** winding ratchet detail and square-ended teeth.



# THE DUTCH CARILLON MUSEUM

IN Southern Holland is situated the province of North Brabant. Here, some 12 miles East of Eindhoven is the small township of Asten. It is distinguished by its high-spired church, its nearer Belgian than Dutch architectural styles, and a rather remarkable museum which is largely the work of one man, André Lehr. In a modern, single-storey wooden building tastefully set in a garden through which one walks on soft paths of chopped bark, is housed Holland's Nationaal Beiaardmuseum — the museum of carillons

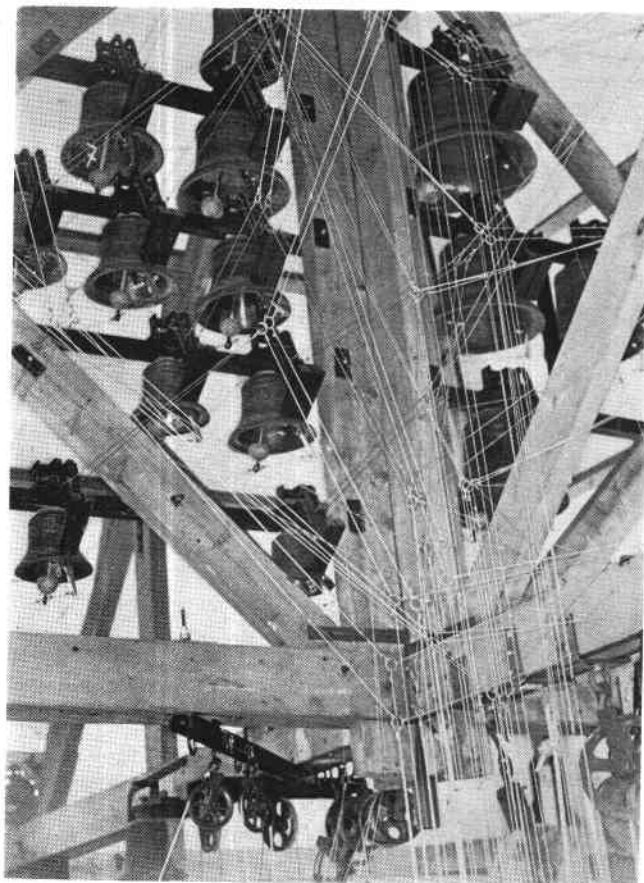
HOLLAND'S contribution towards the history of mechanical music is at least as manifest as that of, say, Switzerland. In many ways it is more so, since the use of the pinned barrel as a programme source was widely developed in the Low Countries as the means of playing a tuned set of bells.

Bells have their origin far, far back in pre-history. Two prime types were to be found — cast (meaning those formed in a mould from molten metal) and uncast (meaning those folded up or bent from sheet metal). Cast bells offered advantages in that they could be made larger and produce louder sounds. By the year 2000 BC they were in use in China and

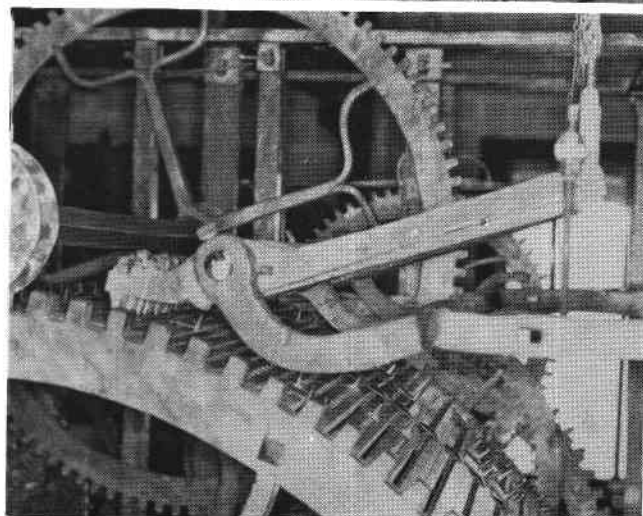
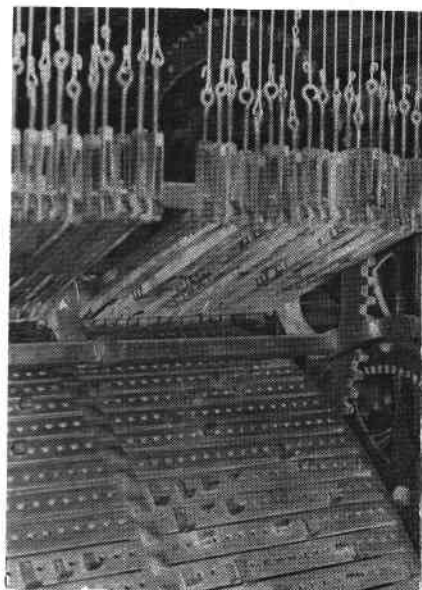
the Romans invented a means of advising the time of day by sounding a bell. Their introduction into the Christian church took place either about the year 400 through Paulinus, Bishop of Nola, Campania, or in about 699 by Pope Sabinianus, and the Venerable Bede brought a large bell from Italy in the year 608 which he installed in the Abbey of Wearmouth. By the ninth century, bells cast in musical intervals were installed in a tower of Sancta Sophia, subsequently destroyed by the Turks. Clocks with bells, a much later union, came to England from the Low Countries and gave us the word "clock" from the Flemish word for "bell".

As industry assumed a greater importance and working hours regularised, the demand for defining the hours of the day arose. Originally, a man had ascended into the church tower and blown a horn: later he was employed to strike the bell with a hammer. In the year 1354 it is recorded that a man was assigned to this task and styled *campanaris* or *klokkenist*. Known as the *town Johnnie* he would ascend the tower at regular intervals and sound the hours. For the rest of his time, he would sweep the streets and was classed as nothing but a menial servant.

By the latter half of the 14th century, though, developments in the design and realisation of the weight-driven clock had reached the stage where it became feasible to use them in towers. The time



**Left: roof-mounted carillon of 1635 showing the *broekverbinding*. Right and below: details of a carillon barrel made in 1627. Unusual forged spokes absorb expansion in the heavy rim.**



was then visibly indicated by the use of automaton figures. Dials with hands had yet to appear on this form of public clock, so the sounding of the hours by puppets or jacks was resorted to.

It was usual for jacks to operate in pairs striking upon two bells. The number of bells was increased to four until in France the term *carillon* was derived. According to Larousse, the word is derived from the low Latin *quadrinio* meaning a group of four. Tyack<sup>1</sup>, however, derives it from the Italian *quadriglio*, a dance measure from which comes the English word *quadrille*. Whatever the derivation, from those early times forward, any assemblage of tuned bells, chromatic or semi-chromatic, has been termed a carillon regardless of their number. However, it is generally implicit that the bells be fixed stationary and produce their sound by means of a hammer or as an adjunct to a clock.

In time the number of bells had increased to six or eight and the Flemish created a word for such a set-up — *beiaard*. This term, according to Price<sup>2</sup> has since been applied to the larger carillon which developed in the country north-east of France and to which the French more specifically designate as a *carillon de Flandres*.

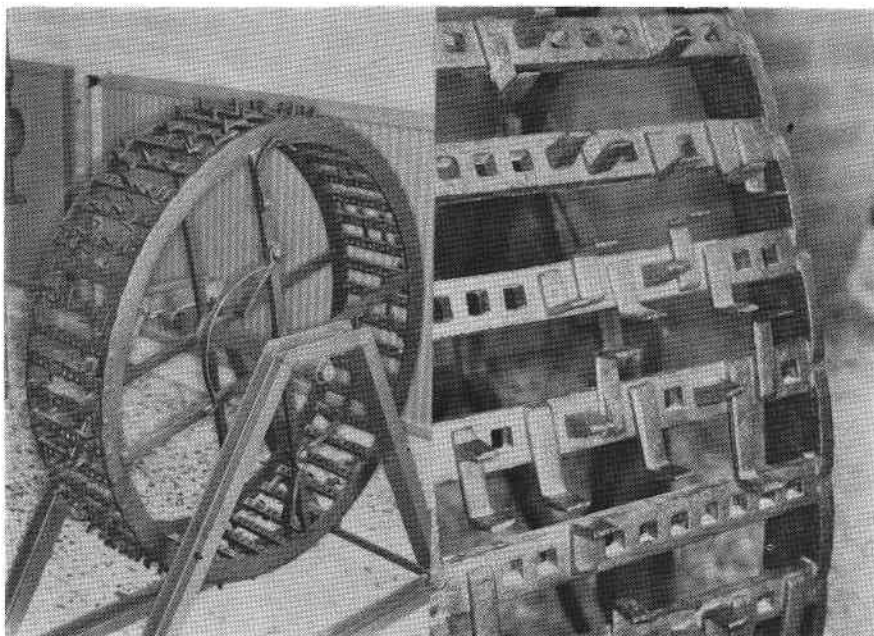
#### Terminology derived

Meanwhile, *beiaard* with its specific meaning has been used in a limited area. In Holland the instrument is called *klokkenspel*. *Beiaard* is from the Netherland-German word *beieren* which means to play on two or more bells. In more Frenchified form, the *bayard* was an old Flemish dance.

As more and more bells were employed to sound the hours, the use of jacks was discontinued and in its place came the mechanically-played tune called the chime. This was at first only played before the hour, its purpose being to call the listener's attention and to warn him to count all of the following single-bell hour strokes, not missing the first. This stems from the earlier practice of sounding the bell once to draw attention to the clock, and then to strike the hours. This was called the *voorslag* or fore-stroke. So eminently practical was the method that it was also incorporated in the half-hour, followed eventually by the tolling on a bell of higher pitch than the hour bell a thirty-minute warning

<sup>1</sup> Tyack, G. S.: *A Book About Bells*, London, 1898.

<sup>2</sup> *The Carillon*, Frank Percival Price, Oxford University Press, 1933, p. 13.



Deeply rust-pitted and showing its almost 400 years of age is this, the oldest museum exhibit. The last surviving portion of an ancient carillon, it was made in 1580. Note the slender and far from robust bracket-shaped pins, particularly the double one, and the poorly-designed forward-facing ones.

of the oncoming hour. Soon the terminology was not precise enough: the word *voorslag* came to be applied to the complete set of bells, so the word *voorspel* was introduced to indicate the foreplay, and the word *klokkenspel* for the bell-play.

The bell-play was achieved by the use of a rotating iron drum<sup>3</sup> into the surface of which could be set at intervals different types of steel pegs which could engage, as the drum rotated, with levers which in turn would cause the bells to be struck by their hammers. Today we call this a carillon mechanism, yet the carillon proper did not really materialise until about 1480 when a manual was added so that the bells could be played by hand as well.

In truth, then, the mechanical operation of bells by means of a rotating pinned cylinder should be called by the only name which it at first had — the *voorslag*, pronounced *fore-slagh*. However, by common acceptance, this is now called by the name given to the later and improved mechanism — *carillon*. And the person who plays a set of bells manually is properly termed *klokker* in Holland, *beiaardier* in Flanders, and *carillonneur* in France. In England, we have adopted the last-mentioned term.

To be able to produce melodious music on a set of bells demanded the utmost attention to design, manufacture and tuning of the bells. The mid-17th century Dutch bell-makers Francois and Pieter

Hemony, gained wide acclaim for their ability to wring superlative overtones from a carefully-tuned bell and although other carillon-makers have come close to the Hemony's art, very few have equalled it. The Dutch poet Vondel was inspired, upon hearing a Hemony carillon, to write: "Hemony makes the most heavenly bell-music"<sup>4</sup>.

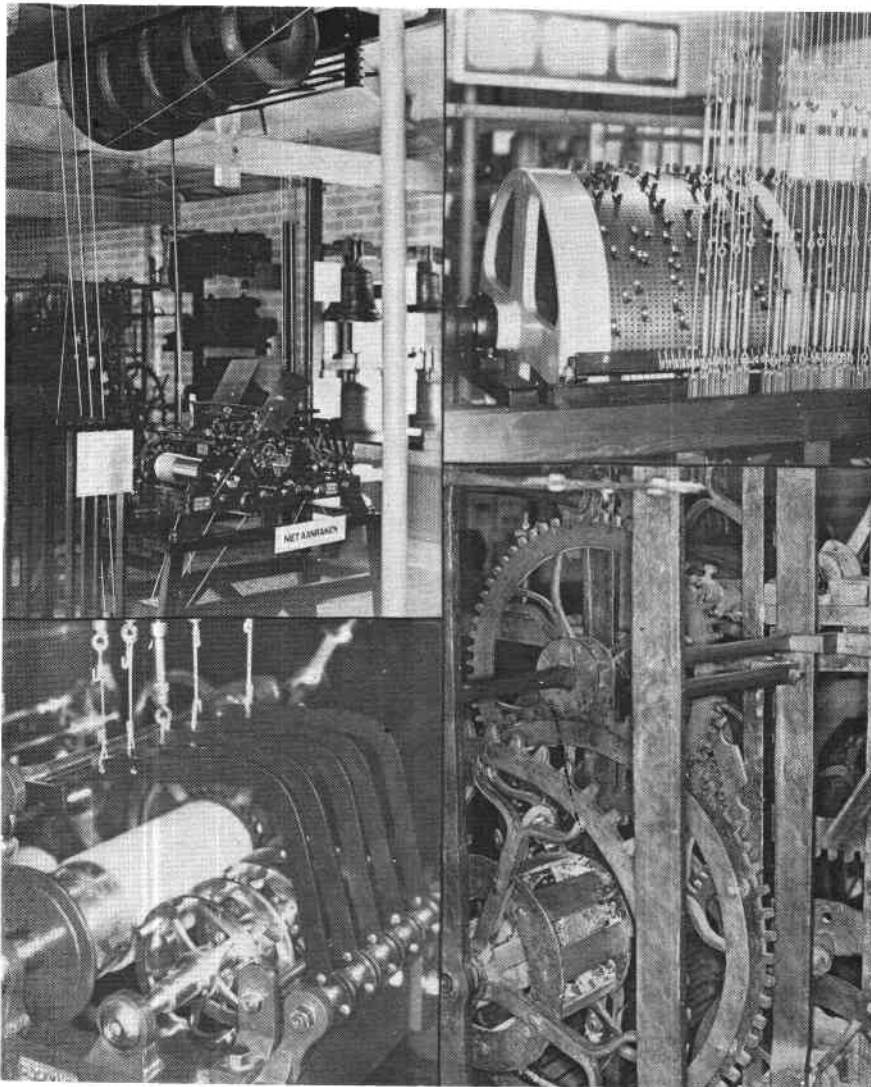
The first tower bells to be equipped with an automatic device appears to have been those in the Sint Nicolaas-kerk in Brussels installed by the year 1381. Within half a century, many other churches had similar mechanisms.

#### Earliest surviving parts

One of the earliest carillon-playing mechanisms is on view today in the Nederlands Goud-, Zilver-en Klokkemuseum in Utrecht. This was made in 1541 and, along with other, later, mechanisms on show at André Lehr's Beiaardmuseum, show clearly how the music was transferred from engraved score into pegs with a spanner. The drum of the famous Mechlin Cathedral carillon, made in 1736, has a diameter of 15 feet and a length in excess of six feet. It operates on 90 levers and plays eight times during the hour, each tune calling for only a small amount of revolution, one full turn of the drum representing all eight

<sup>3</sup> By the middle of the 17th century the drum was usually made of bell-metal.

<sup>4</sup> *Hemoni speelt een hemels klokmuzijk*.



**Top left : general view of the London-made chiming mechanism with its large saucer-shaped bells in the roof. Below left : the simple wheel-operated Mears & Stainbank Westminster chime whose cams strike the five pull-down levers. To right : the 1939 perforated-grid-surfaced barrel mechanism used to play the roof carillon seen on page 126. Below right : fine mediaeval wheelwork of the 1627 clockwork.**

tunes. The Mechlin cylinder can play a total of 108 bars of music and has 180 radial rows of holes around its periphery. With 90 holes in each row, this means that there are 16,200 holes for tune-setting. There are eight different types of peg plus 10 combination pegs, as shown in the illustration. The largest automatic playing drum is at Chalons-sur-Marne with about 34,000 holes. The drum with the largest diameter, namely 8½ feet, is in Salzburg.

#### **Modern technology**

Automatic carillons are still made today, only they have succumbed to modern technology. In place of the drum with its pegs, is an endless band of perforated plastic rather like a player-piano music-roll. Metal fingers running over the plastic as it is unwound make electric contact through the perforations and energise a solenoid striking apparatus. Let it be said, though, that the revival of

the Dutch carillon since 1950 has produced many fine new instruments, that at Eindhoven built by Eijsbouts for Philips being the largest in the country.

Most carillons are playable by both mechanical means and by hand. However, it is significant that the number played by mechanical means only is almost as great as those played only from a keyboard. Small carillons, namely those with from 1½ octaves to perhaps 2½, are only played by mechanical means.

The visitor to the Asten museum will find a treasurehouse of early bell lore. Apart from a large number of pre-Christian and mediaeval small bells in showcases, he will find a liberal assortment of full-sized bells (whatever that means since bells come in all shapes and sizes ranging from the giant bell of Pekin through whose crack people may walk, down to hat-sized shrill ones) which he is encouraged to

strike (with a wooden mallet) or even amuse himself by playing.

It is here that so graphically the visitor may understand the science and art that lies behind what may appear to be the random fashion in which bells are arranged and sounded. The three methods of arranging a bell to be struck are here set out with working models. There is the direct wire linkage with spring return, the "roller-board" levér, and the splendidly-named "trouser-work" which is the name given to the apparent tangle of three-directional wire ties which connect mechanism to bells.

#### **Ancient exhibit**

From bell-founding, the exhibition moves on the to barrel-operated carillon and starts with a heavily-rusted iron barrel with corroded pegs — the last surviving part of a clockwork musical machine made in the year 1589. The biggest mechanism on show is the complete barrel and keyframe of an instrument set up in 1627.

Centrepiece of the museum is an indoor carillon of bells founded by Hemony in 1635. This is set up in the roof of the building with the addition of one or two newly-founded bells from the Eijsbouts bell foundry which is also situated in Asten. It is played mechanically by a modern (1939) barrel mechanism or from a demonstration manual.

The importance of the brothers Hemony to the development of the carillon cannot be over-stressed. In collaboration with the famous blind carillonneur of Utrecht's Dom tower, Jacob van Eyck, they were the first to tune bells internally by indoor carillon of bells made pre- the removal of metal using a lathe, a task previously done by chipping away with a hammer and chisel all round the inside of the sound bow.

Hemony was to establish the mathematical proportions of the bell so that the various overtones, which are developed at precise and special positions above the sound-bow, could be produced. Additionally, it was the Hemony's who first

#### **London craftsmanship**

recognised the importance of the minor third.

Lest the influence of a Dutch museum appear to steal the thunder (or should I say peal the chime) from British achievement, the museum has on display a superb piece of London craftsmanship — a 1903 Mears & Stainbank church clock and chiming mechanism which plays West-

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minster chimes on five saucer bells possessed of a tone which even the most chauvinistic Briton must accede is inferior to the worst of Dutch bell-founding. Mears & Stainbank were long-established bell-makers and clock makers of Ludgate Hill within the shadow of St. Paul's.

The Dutch have always had a saying that good schools and good bells are the two signs of a well-managed city.

Founder and curator of the Aston museum is André Lehr, a director of the Eijsbouts company, a guest teacher at the Beiaard-school in Mechelen, and a life-long lover of bells. The author of a monumental work on the history of the bell and the carillon, *Van Paardebel tot Speelklok* (Zaltbommel, 1971), he has just produced a new work on the carillon (reviewed on page 142).

The visitor to Holland with half a day to spare would find a trip to the museum well worth the drive — it is about two hours from Amsterdam by road and Asten is situated on the E.3 Eindhoven-Venlo highway. The museum is normally closed on Mondays and opening hours are from 10.00 until 17.00 hrs. Admission is two guilders.

## The AAIMM

THE Association has now over 390 members, but very few in the UK. The Bulletin is published twice a year, in French only, and like our own Journal, contains technical articles and advertisements. School French, coupled with a passable dictionary if necessary, should enable you to understand most of the text. Joining in with their activities might require a more fluent command of the language.

By special arrangement for UK residents only, it is now possible to join the AAIMM with full rights for £6.00. This saves Bank charges, sanity, &c. Whilst Frank Holland of the Musical Museum fame is still a member of the AAIMM committee, George Worswick has application forms and an account for use by the AAIMM in the UK. Members joining during 1977 will receive, subject to availability, the Bulletin issued earlier this year, and the second issue for 1977 plus all circulars for the remainder of the year.

Thus membership enquiries to G Worswick, SAE appreciated, and other correspondence in English or

French to Claude P Marchal at 3, rue Gaston de Casteran, 78110 Le Vesinet, France. Mr Frank Holland will continue in an advisory capacity to the AAIMM, co-ordinating tours, &c.

Membership periods are January-January. Joint membership (one Bulletin only) is currently £8.00 for those who would wish to join the AAIMM in their activities.

G Worswick, 108/110 Station Road, Bardney, Lincoln, LN3 5UF.

## OBITUARY

IT is with regret that we have to record the death on May 27, 1977, of George Philip Eadie Radford. A collector of musical boxes since 1939, George Radford was member number 31 and was a familiar figure at many of our earlier meetings. His death followed a short illness. We extend our deepest sympathy to Mrs Radford and her daughter. He was 71 years of age.

It is understood that his collection of musical boxes will remain in the family and will not be disposed of.

# The Carillon of the Oude Kerk, Amsterdam

EARLY in June this year, a party of society members, mostly comprising those from the United States and Canada but including the society founder, Dr Cyril de Vere Green and his wife, Bertha, and the Editor, were afforded the opportunity to visit Amsterdam's Oude Kerk. The visit was arranged by Dr Jan-Jaap Haspels in co-operation with Dr B Haringsma, a prominent member of the Amsterdam local government with responsibilities for culture and antiquities.

## Wooden tower

The Oude Kerk, as its name suggests, is one of the oldest churches in Amsterdam and differs from others in that although the stonework of the base extends up to the third floor, from then on the tower springs entirely in wood. This gives a sensation of spaciousness which diminishes the higher one ascends. Those familiar with Winstanley's one-time wooden lighthouse for the Eddystone Rock and a Norfolk post-type windmill would at once have felt at home in this ancient church which stands proudly in the middle of Amsterdam's "red-light" district.

Originally, the carillon had 38 bells made in 1658 by Francois Hemony. Twenty years later his brother, Pieter Hemony, published his radical booklet at Delft with the title: *De On-Noodsakelijkheid en Ondienstigheid van Cis en Dis in de Bassen der Klokken. Vertoont uyt verscheyde advysen van ervaren organisten ende*

*klokken-speelders*. Translated, this reads: *The Needlessness and Uselessness of C sharp and D sharp in the Bass of Carillons. Shown by various opinions of skilful organists and carillonneurs*. True to the later teachings of his brother, Francois used only three bass bells, C, D, E and from thence chromatic. The entire carillon is pitched down a major second so that the lowest note actually sounds B flat.

The Oude Kerk carillon, along with others in Amsterdam, has suffered extensively from the effects of air pollution and the fact is that many of the older bells have suffered more in the past 50 years than in the previous two and a half centuries. The result of the pollution is to corrode the bells. Now since the precise thickness of the bell metal at specific points from soundbow to suspension produce the overtones (harmonics), it will at once be seen that the effects of corrosion on one bell may have marginal effect on the prime tone, but that the harmonics will progressively suffer more and more until the bell becomes virtually dead, producing nothing but its prime sound.

## Original bells useless

In 1965 it was decided to try to restore the Hemony bells. Sadly few were capable of re-use and although they all hang in place today, only 14 of the original bells still sound. Thirty-three brand new ones cast by Eijsbouts in Asten have been added to the tower, extending the compass of the



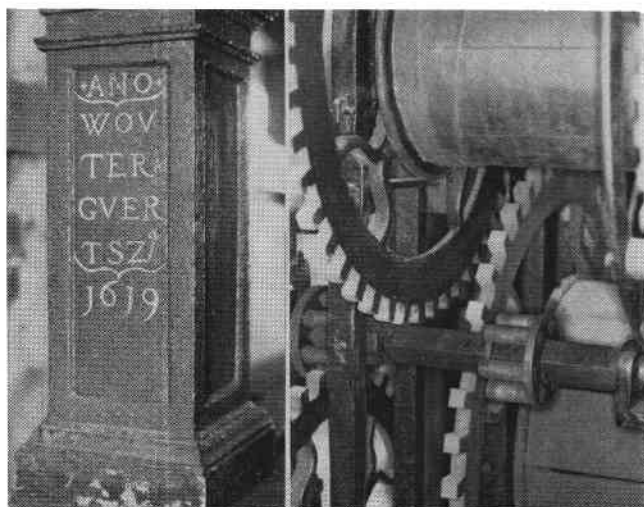
The enormous wooden tower surmounted by a skeletal crown.

instrument to C<sup>5</sup> — a total of 47 bells. This makes the Oude Kerk carillon one of the four largest in Amsterdam, all of which have now been restored and all of which now have 47 bells. These are at the Royal Palace in the Dam Square (the Koninklijk) of 1664 with 38 Eijsbouts and nine Hemony bells, the lowest note being C sounding B; the Westertoren of 1658 with 33 Eijsbouts and 14 Hemony, the lowest note being C sounding C sharp; and the Zuidertoren of 1656 with 32 Hemony and 15 Van Bergen (1959), and the lowest note, as in the Westertoren, C sounding C sharp.

## Electric barrel drive

The carillon mechanism was originally powered by a heavy weight equal to about that of two men. This had to be wound up twice a day using a built-in winch and a sliding pinion. All this mechanism survives, but the barrel is now turned by a small electric motor.

Two floors above the carillon mechanism is the small, low cabin from which the bells can be played by hand. A problem of long-standing is that the carillonneur must have an accurate timepiece with him, otherwise his playing will interfere with the regular, quarter-hour barrel performances. Now, though, the Oude Kerk has been provided with a sliding key-



Far left: on the foot of one of the four columns supporting the barrel mechanism is this inscription: Wouter Guer & Zoon 1619. Left: a view of part of the winch wheel-work which formerly wound up the weight. The winding pinion is mounted loose on the square shaft.



frame which is motor powered and can be drawn back from the pinned barrel. This allows the barrel to turn in silence if required so as not to interrupt the manual performer.

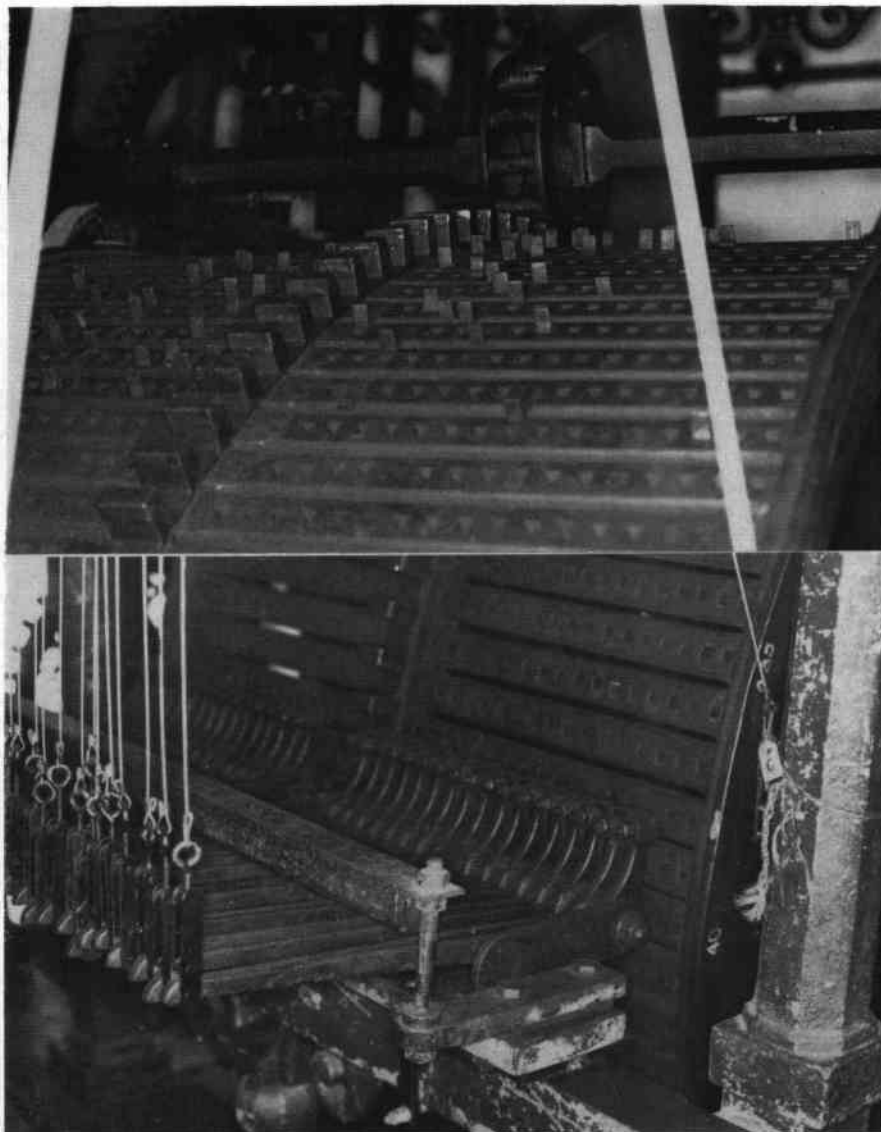
Access to the carillonneur's cabin and above that the bells themselves is gained by ascending long, narrow and sometimes near-vertical stairways but the reward was great.

Dr Haspels performed a manual recital, starting most fittingly on the day of Queen Elizabeth's Jubilee in London, with *God Save the Queen* with variations, and followed by the *Star Spangled Banner*.

### Eminent past players

In former times, the carillon was played upon by the renowned Salomon Verbeeck and performed an important part in the lore of that part of Holland. As for the brothers Hemony, about whom more can be read on page 126, they went from strength to strength. And Pieter Hemony's book, only one copy of which is known and that is in the University Library at Amsterdam, concludes with a vigorous tirade against Quiryn van Blankenburgh, official carillonneur of the Hague, who apparently had argued with equal vigour that C sharp and D sharp were necessary.

Such controversy is well in the past now. Certainly Winkel the organ-builder did not know about such matters when he made the beautiful little cabinet organ which stands today in the Nationaal Museum. This has a C sharp and a D sharp in the bass. And, of course, they are not used!



Details of the carillon drum. Top shows the tiny pinion which drives the heavy barrel by means of its central ring of teeth. Immediately above is a view of the keyframe which today can be slid back out of engagement so that the barrel may turn in silence.

## A BIG BRUGUIER

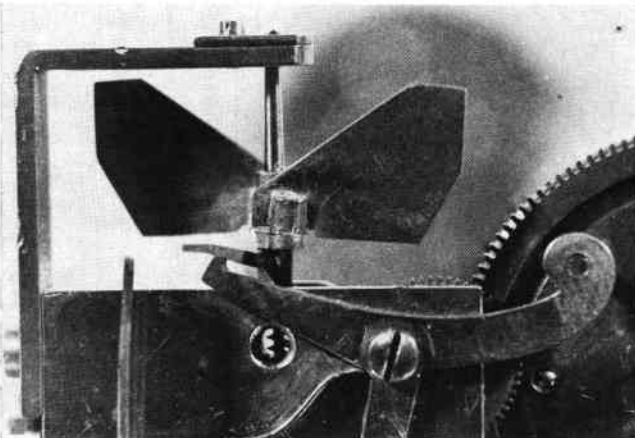


THE Bruguier family of Geneva are renowned as manufacturers of mechanical singing birds and small musical boxes. According to research by Pierre Germain, there were two Charles Bruguier — Charles Abraham senior, born 1788 and died 1862, and Charles Abraham junior, born 1818 and died 1891. The elder worked on musical boxes and automata in London and made a walking doll. About 1823, he returned to Geneva where he began making singing birds, improving on the mechanism brought to Geneva by the Jaquet-Droz and Jean Frederick Leschot. Between 1833 and 1837, Germain deduces that he may have worked with Paur at Saint-Suzanne on the strength of a surviving movement in the Horngacher-Blyelle collection

signed in two places *Charles Bruguier à Mont Belliard.*

Certainly until now the family has not been associated with the manufacture of large musical boxes, nor with the composition of music. Now John Cowderoy of Eastbourne sends pictures and details of a full-sized Bruguier cylinder box in the collection of Patrick McCrossan.

At a quick glance this box appears to be a typical plain fruit-wood cased six-air key-winder of the 1840-45 period. However, closer inspection reveals several interesting features. No fewer than 12 airs are listed on the black bordered thin paper tune-sheet, and it is in fact a two-tunes-per-turn mechanism, but using a normal diameter cylinder. Cramming 12 tunes in two-per-turn format onto a two-inch diameter cylinder has not, though, resulted in drastically abbreviated melodies. The cylinder is geared to revolve at only half the normal speed, and the tunes are of normal average length. This must have placed correspondingly greater demands on the accuracy of marking out and regulating the cylinder.

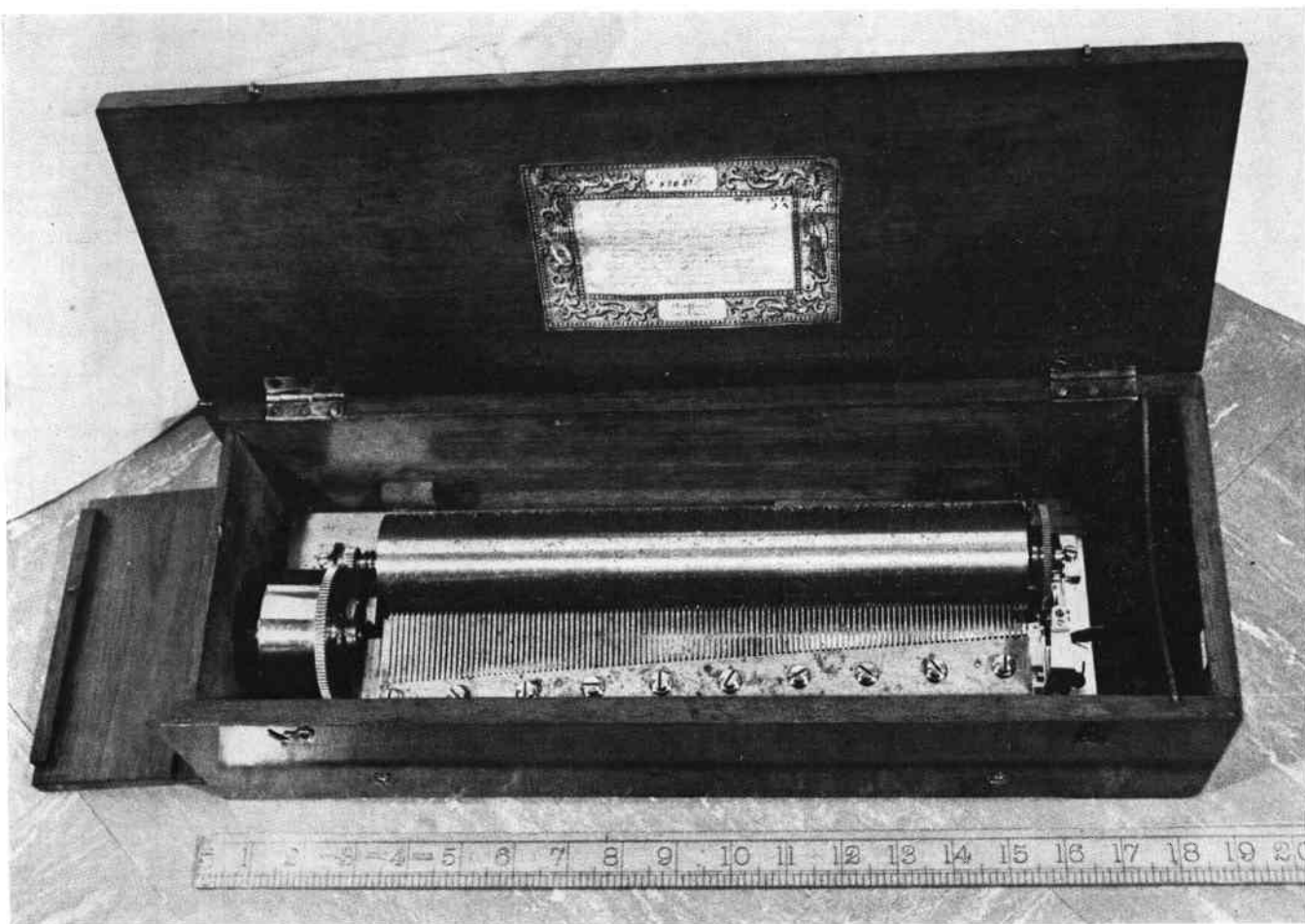


Stamped on the bedplate in front of the comb base, and visible through the teeth of the comb, is C. BRUGUIER A GENEVE. The cylinder is 11.9 inches long with a comb of 114 teeth. The programme is of mainly operatic nature with the exception of tune number eight which is particularly interesting as it would appear to be an original work by the maker of the box. The title is *Valse des Chas. Bruguier.*

The fan of the governor has distinctively shaped vanes as shown in the picture above.

The style of tune-sheet is occasionally found printed in blue. Was this a standard type of tune-sheet used by other makers? Here is a new line of research for someone with a similar-looking box. Compare this with the tune-sheet on the box marked "Scriber" illustrated on page 120 of Volume 7.

The style of tune-sheet is occasionally found printed in blue. Was this a standard type of tune-sheet used by other makers? Here is a new line of research for someone with a similar-looking box. Compare this with the tune-sheet on the box marked "Scriber" illustrated on page 120 of Volume 7.



THE summer meeting of the Musical Box Society of Great Britain was held in London on Saturday, June 4th, and Sunday, June 5th, at the Kensington Close Hotel, Wrights Lane.

A delegation of more than 30 of our American and Canadian members, led by our Vice-President, Hughes Ryder, and including Howard and Helen Fitch and Mrs Ruth Bornand, attended as part of their second European musical box tour. Other overseas members included Mr and Mrs Foster from New Zealand, and Dr J J Haspels from Holland.

There were 174 registrations for the meeting which coincided with the start of Jubilee Week in London.

The first talk of the day was presented by Member Jim Colley of Congresbury, near Bristol, who gave an illustrated presentation on the Pitt Rivers museum at Oxford. Using high-definition black and white slides and taped sound, he showed some of the many fine musical boxes contained in this collection which, at present, is not open to the public.

After coffee break and the opportunity to view the many items brought along for the society auction, the second talk of the day was by Dr Robert Burnett who spoke on small musical items, illustrated with slides of some of the items from his own collection.

At 12.00, and before opening the meeting for questions on Dr Burnett's talk, President Arthur Ord-Hume announced that there was a surprise addition to the programme which he was introducing at that precise moment because the BBC was in attendance and wished to cover the event in time for the lunch-time radio magazine programme beginning at 1.00 p.m. The event was the official unveiling of the Silver Jubilee Polyphon. He spoke of the great achievement of Keith Harding and his team of craftsmen which comprised members in many parts of the country, in re-creating from scratch a brand new 19 $\frac{1}{2}$ in Polyphon. The instrument, draped fittingly with a Union Jack, stood on the platform and the President asked Mrs Bertha de Vere Green if she would be kind enough to unveil it. This she duly did and was presented with a bouquet of flowers by Mrs Helen Fitch.

A real, undecimalised Victorian penny was ceremoniously inserted by Mrs de Vere Green and the new instrument came to life with a sound perhaps more Symphonion than Polyphon, but nevertheless authentically evocative of the best of Leipzig in the 1890s.

Keith Harding thanked Mrs de Vere Green for the honour of unveiling his handiwork and described how the instrument had been built.

After the luncheon interval came the Annual General Meeting. The Secretary, Reg Waylett, reported a year of satisfactory growth and development and outlined the work which the committee had undertaken in the preceding 12 months. He made a point of offering special thanks to Recording Secretary Alan Clark who had been responsible for minuting all meetings. The Treasurer, Stephen Cockburn, affirmed that the financial state of the society

was such that it would not be necessary in the foreseeable future to consider increasing membership dues.

The Archivist, Keith Harding, spoke of the gradual building up of the society library and spelled out the mandate given him by the committee. The Editor, whose report was presented on this occasion by Vice-President Hughes Ryder, announced that he had worked out his budget for the year and this had been approved by the committee. He expressed his thanks and appreciation to the Advertisement Manager, Arthur Heap, for his sustained hard work which had not only relieved him of much work, but had contributed in no small way to the financial success of the magazine.

The President, Arthur Ord-Hume, thanked the committee for their sustained hard work throughout the year and particularly thanked Vice-President Hughes Ryder who, although residing in New Jersey, had only missed three meetings of the committee in the past year. He also thanked Committee Member Alex Duman who had provided valued and enthusiastic support to the committee and who had not missed a single meeting although living in Scotland. Other members of the committee, Brian Clegg, Christopher Proudfoot and newly-co-opted member Jim Colley were thanked.

In the absence of fresh nominations to the committee, the meeting approved the automatic re-election of existing officers for a further term.

The business meeting concluded,

Judith Howard, founder of the Mechanical Organ Trust, gave a short and well-illustrated talk of the development of the Dutch street organ and introduced the superb scale model of *De Klok* which John Maundrell built for the Trust and which won an award at a recent model engineering exhibition in London.

The raffle prizes offered a superb galaxy of valuable goods donated by Alex Duman and included a musical box, a bottle of Scotch and a fine leather jacket. The raffle brought in £200 to society funds.

Under the expert control of Christopher Proudfoot, the auction then began. This continued until well after 6.30 during which time Jim Colley and Stephen Cockburn masterfully conducted the paperwork side of a sale which totalled more than £7,000 of which 10 per cent went to Society funds.

The society dinner was attend by 95 members and guests and during the occasion, the Silver Jubilee Polyphon provided musical diversion, being fed with bright, sparkling new discs by Cliff Burnett. After dinner entertainment was provided by members Les Hinsley and Tug Wilson.

The Sunday morning practical session was devoted to a talk and practical demonstration of how to record musical boxes by Arthur Ord-Hume who demonstrated the many pitfalls which face the amateur recording enthusiast in particular when it comes to mechanical instruments. In response to many requests from those present his talk will form the basis of a forthcoming article on this subject in *The Music Box*.

The meeting was concluded at lunch-time.

## Silver Jubilee Polyphon is unveiled



**A brand new 19 $\frac{1}{2}$ in Polyphon, the creation of Keith Harding and his team of craftsmen, following the unveiling ceremony held at mid-day on the Saturday of the London Summer meeting. The unveiling was performed by Mrs Bertha de Vere Green, seen here with a bouquet of flowers presented to her by Mrs Helen Fitch. Named *Silver Jubilee*, it is the largest re-created musical box in the world today.**

# The era of Cafe Pianos

MUSIC in public places has, it seems, a history which goes right back to the strolling players and the minstrels. The arrival of the mechanical musical instrument revolutionised all that since these players did not need feeding or lubrication with the juice of the hop.

Disc-playing musical boxes were widely used in the public houses and bars, while the Low Countries in the early years of this century preferred the splendour of the dance organ in all but the smallest, meanest of bars.

But the cafe piano was a strange creature which had the ability to fit into just about any situation. Strange to say, although stemming directly from the Italian barrel piano and its clockwork variant, the cafe piano with its percussion accessories and, in later forms, pipe and reed accompaniments, was never really popular in England.

Clockwork barrel pianos, often with drum, bells, castanet and sometimes glockenspiel or xylophone, were immensely popular in France and Belgium and, although Italian in origin, were sometimes manufactured by French makers who quickly appreciated the

market potential of the instrument.

The cafe piano developed along predictable lines, ultimately becoming electric instead of clockwork, and played pneumatically with the major advantage that programme changing necessitated only fresh paper rolls instead of a new, costly barrel.

Instruments such as the Weber



Grandezza (below right) had, besides a keyboard upon which the manual performer might play, an accordion and visible percussion—somewhat fragile accessories which have contributed to the rarity of the complete assemblage today.

The two instruments pictured here were sold at Christie's South Kensington recently. On the left is a clockwork barrel piano with percussion, and on the right is a Weber Grandezza with violin pipes, accordion and percussion.



## Members in the News . . .

● Danilo Konvalinka and his Musical Wonder House mechanical music museum in Wiscasset, Maine, featured in a six-page article complete with colour photographs in the August, 1976, issue of *Down East*, the State's own magazine. Well-written descriptive text—and one of the pictures is of Danilo's Regina Sublima Drum Table.

● Jack Donovan's outstandingly successful film on his collection of automata, entitled *Princely Toys or One Man's Kingdom*, first shown on BBC Television on Christmas Eve, received its second transmission on BBC2 at 8.15 on June 22nd. Jack's shop was also featured in a recent issue of the magazine *Hi-Fi Weekly*.

● President and Editor Arthur Ord-Hume took part in an hour-long discussion and 'phone-in programme on LBC's *Night Line* on Saturday, July 2nd. LBC's switchboard was jammed with calls from listeners on the subject of musical boxes and the producer said that they had never had such a response to a programme. Arthur dealt with numerous phone calls on the air, interspersed with music from some of the boxes in his collection. His article on the mechanical organ at Waddesdon Manor, first published on page 76, has been reprinted in a special edition of the art magazine *Apollo*. He has also contributed an article on mechanical musical instruments to *Studio Sound* magazine.

● Keith Harding and the Silver Jubilee Polyphon were featured on BBC Radio 4's *World at One* programme on the day of the Annual General Meeting, June 4th. The interview, recorded at 12.15, was rushed to the studios for transmission one hour later. Cliff Burnett also featured in a 20-minute interview on LBC's programme *Christopher II*. The April issue of *Horological Journal* carried an article by Keith on David Secrett's automaton orcher.

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Members: 3p per word (bold type 5p per word).  
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Groups of figures or letters up to six characters count as one word.

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RARE Collectors quality 15½" Olympia table model in glowing original condition with double 77 tooth comb. Matching disc stand and 22 discs. Below market price. Photo on request. Robert W. Gibson, 116 N Avenue 66, Los Angeles, CA 90042, USA.

BARREL for small spanish type piano. Enrique Salva. In original packing. Unused and immaculate. 16.2 inches long, diameter 4.5 inches. £25. Tel. London 370 3089.

CAPITAL CUFF Music Box. Style B. Mahogany case. Zither attachment. Mint with 8 cuffs. \$2800. Mermod Freres longue marche cylinder music box. Inlaid case with brass handles. 2 combs. Needs danpering and 2 teeth replaced. \$1200, plus shipping. Arnold Levin, 2835 W. North Shore, Chicago, Illinois 60645, USA.

ADVERTISE your wants and your surplus items in *The Music Box*. It is an inexpensive way of contacting all members of the Society.

### WANTED

ORPHENION discs urgently wanted. 10¼", 13¼", 16", (approx. 27.5, 34, 40 cm). No quantity to small. Buy or exchange other makes. 16" machine wanted. P. McCrossan. The Stone, Vicarage Road, Hailsham, E. Sussex. (Phone 842789).

TANZBAR. The automatic concertina as shown on page 216 of the summer 1976 "Music Box" wanted by Swedish Collector Bill Lindwall, Tottvagen 14 A,S-171 35 SOLNA, SWEDEN.

WANTED TO BUY OR EXCHANGE. Hufel issued several piano rolls of sonatas by John Field. If you have any of these and don't want them, I will buy or swop. I have operatic pot-pourri and musical selection rolls, also song rolls for exchange. Ord-Hume, 14 Elmwood Road, London, W4.

DO YOU HAVE any interesting musical boxes or automata? If so, why not send details and a selection of quality photographs to the Editor at the address on the title page.

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Other interesting items at present undergoing restoration and shortly available for sale include a 24 $\frac{1}{2}$ " Polyphon self-changer, a fine style 54 24 $\frac{1}{2}$ " Polyphon, a 23" projectionless disc Edelweiss with organ, and a 25 $\frac{1}{4}$ " Kalliope (12 saucer bells) complete with disc bin and top gallery.

Among the larger items are a 47 key street organ rebuilt by Carl Frei, probably a Bruder, and a very original 33 note Pasquale street piano complete with handcart.

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## Record Reviews

TO START with this time I have a fistful of discs — some old, some not so old, and all from unusual quarters. There must, however, be something in the wind for my first two have inverted pictures on the sleeves! Have *you* ever seen a Hupfeld Phonoliszt-Violina with the keyboard at the top and the violins at the bottom? No? Then get EMI's **Musikautomaten Unserer Grosseletern** on the Electrola label, C 053-28 934. This, although the sleeve-notes do not directly state, is of instruments featured in the book *Au Temps des Bôîtes a Musique* and the instruments are those from the collections of Baud Freres (Musee de L'Auberson), Guido Reuge, Heinrich Weiss, Peter Schifferli and others. Which makes that inverted Hupfeld violin-player even more strange. Mind you, one track is titled "Grosses Polyphon, Mermod Freres, St. Croix, um 1919". Um . . . Most tracks represent only fragments of pieces, some literally only a few seconds long, which is a pity. Rarities include a Jaquet-Droz caged bird, a fine serinette, a pneumatic accordeon with drum and castanet, and, on side two, some rather nice playing

from a Weber "Prabeau" (Brabo), Maesto, the upside-down violin-player and a thing called a "Delios" which sounds like a Hupfeld Helios! Sleeve notes in English and German wax lyrical but tell you nothing about the instruments. Nevertheless it is a technically fine record and serves as a good sampler.

For an inverted picture of an orchestral musical box you must buy **Mechanikus Hangszerek Magyarországon** (Mechanical Instrument (sic) in Hungary) on **Hungaroton LPX 13702**. As expected, this is a technically superb disc with extended programme notes in Hungarian, German, English and Russian, but the disc itself bears nothing but the title. Side one start out giving the impression that we have a sound-effects disc. The twin-tone, fudged stereo track of the sonorous Rákóczi bells at Debrecen are followed by a marvellous track of the internal mechanism of the chimes at Nyíregyháza which sounds like the coming together of W Heath Robinson and Emmett. After some more clocks we get down to the serious mechanical stuff—some glorious singing birds, a musical pocket-watch and a delightfully catchy melody on a

musical painting. The sheer beauty of a very simple musical box playing *Ave Maria* on but a handful of teeth is followed by a terrible track of a bell box which is so badly recorded that the sleeve note "unknown melody" fails to serve as a challenge. Side two features a rare recording of an Antiphonel in action followed by a ciphering organette. Then comes a really fine pair of tracks of an orchestration with sleigh bells. No clue is given as to the make, but a superb bourdon almost suggests Carl Frei but clearly points to Imhof & Mukle. One gets the distinct impression that mechanical instruments are so rare in Hungary that for a recording anything will do. A mandolin piano-orchestration (called a "nickelodeon") gives an almost unintelligible performance of Lehar's *I Will Still Love You* which must have made the girl in question lift her petticoats and run a mile!

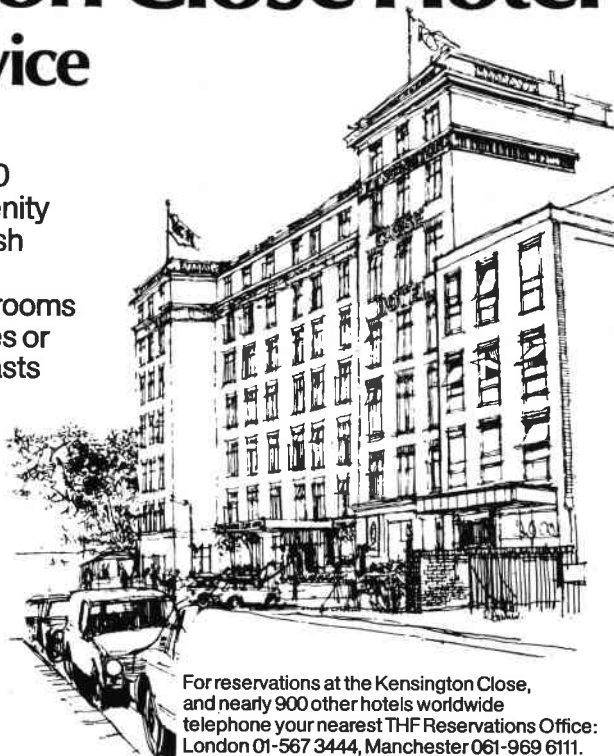
Antonio Apruzzese left his home in Italy in 1883 and settled in Salamanca where he began making street pianos—organillos as the Spaniards call them. In 1906 he moved to Madrid and the business still survives to this day in the hands of the present Antonio. The sound of the Spanish barrel piano

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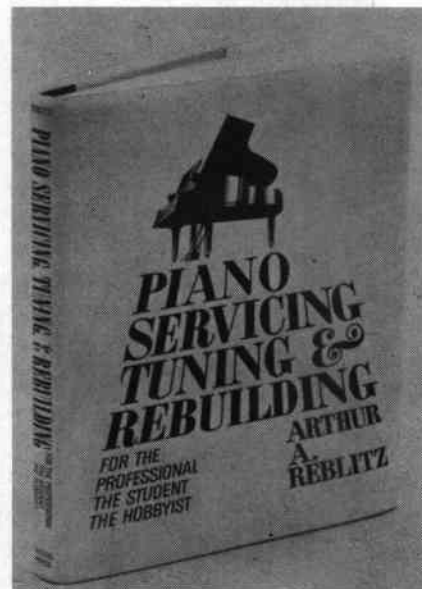
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is so different from the "tinagalary" of 'tween-wars industrial Midlands or the "piano-organs" of London's Saffron Hill. So it is a pleasure to find an outstanding record of this instrument, Antonio Apruzzese "El as del Organillo" on Ariola-Eurodisc's Vergara label 7130-Z. The sub-title translates as "The ace of the street-piano", a description most apt. There are 16 tunes on this disc, some with castanet accompaniment, others with bells. All are absolutely superb and demonstrate the mechanical interpretation of those so-characteristic broken rhythms which are a feature of Spanish popular music. Precision and perfection from the pinned barrel are to be found here. This is the finest recording of the finest barrel pianos I have ever heard.

The value of my next record, *Orgues de Barbarie* (Distribution Discodis 34503-T) is limited on most counts. In fact, it is hard to see why the record was ever made. It features several indistinct tracks of French cafe sounds with a piano orchestrion in the background. Other instruments (including street organs and Polyphon) are recorded in an echo chamber of a studio which, in the case of the disc machines, renders the music into

the sort of condition which Sotheby's would catalogue as "distressed". There are no sleeve notes, only a list of tune titles which give no indication as to which instruments are in play. Might make a malicious present for somebody who couldn't care less about mechanical music. They will certainly care even less afterwards.

If there is one thing which the British just are no good at (with the inevitable exceptions, of course!) it is tuning fair-organs. Last year a local travelling fair visited Turnham Green and I was distracted from my shopping expedition by the sound of an organ. I found a small Gavioli in play on a carousel. Distressed by the obvious out-of-tune noise it was making, I enquired gently of the proud showman when last he had had the organ tuned. He puffed out his chest and acclaimed that he "dun 'im meself" and that the organ had in fact succumbed to his ministrations only that morning. Of course anyone can knock up a few fair thirds and unison registers in the tenor and trim down the shrill high notes, but the skill comes with those deep bass pipes, and in particular the bass reeds. The Dutch have what I am told is a perfectly acceptable

term for them which I do not consider translatable for the pages of *The Music Box* but imagination will probably do the rest.

Fair on the Heath (Hallmark SHM 863) features Swales Forrest's 65-key Gavioli organ which was built in 1900 for the Hoadley family amusement business. Forrest bought it in 1921 and used it as the centrepiece for his three-abreast gallopers. In 1962 it was rebuilt by Gijs Perlee in Amsterdam and Arthur Prinsen of Antwerp produced many new books for it. On this disc, 14 of these are performed. It is a bright record and a fine thought to preserve on disc the sound of a mid-sized Gavioli, but if only the organ had been expertly serviced beforehand!

The remarks which I made about mechanical instrument in Hungary seem also to apply to Finland for it is from there that my next two discs come. *Soittorasia* (Love Records LXLP 516) feature musical boxes from the private collections of several Finnish collectors including our member Carlo Bergman who is responsible for the very extensive and thorough programme notes (only in Finnish). Items from the Kaupunginmuseon in Helsinki and the Sibelius museum

are included. The disc comes with an inner card sleeve with large illustrations of some of the instruments played. Side one is devoted to 16 discs on a small Polyphon and a miniature Kalliope; side two opens with a disc on a Junghans clock and then the complete programme on a cylinder box followed by disc boxes again. Technically some of the tracks are not well recorded and there is a lot of unnecessary mechanical clatter and recording distortion.

Also from Love Records comes **Ja Posetiivi Soi (LXLP 519)**, also produced with the aid of our member Carlo Bergman of Helsinki. With the record comes a large double spread comprising extensive notes (all in Finnish) on one side, and a series of illustrations on the other. Side one is devoted to nine melodies played on a fair-organ in the Sibelius museum. The organ sounds delightfully German although the programme notes suggest Gavioli — in which case it might be a German-made Waldkirch Gavioli. Tuning prior to recording would have improved the otherwise good recording enormously. Side two begins with nine tunes on a small Becker & Schultze street organ from Berlin. This sounds good and the operator blows the changes with sympathetic stop-changing.

A most rare instrument, again from the Sibelius museum, follows. This is a *Harmoniflute-Busson à cylindre* — a tiny barrel harmonium blown by top bellows. This is the only recorded example to survive. Two tunes on Carlo Bergman's Gebruder Bruder street organ conclude the disc. The organ is suffering from irregular wind, dreadful tuning, poor state of pinning and missing notes. Other than that, it sounds great and demonstrates very convincingly why few musicians intentionally seek the dissonance of the minor second, the flat fifth and the minor seventh.

These two discs are probably the first to have been published in Finland on mechanical music. Future releases will no doubt benefit from the experience gained with these.

Of all the Dutch street organs, the one of which the most recordings exist is without doubt *De Klok*, so frequently mentioned in these pages. Now resident in Australia and, according to the evidence of recent tapes, deteriorating rapidly in the hot and dry climate, the voice of this famous instrument lives on. **The Magic of the Street Organ (Gold Star 15-35)**

gives 17 melodies on this organ, eight of which were originally published by Basart on the Turnette label (TNT 303) along with some music from De Kaasdrager. A good recording.

Basart provides my final disc, also of *De Klok*, this one entirely devoted to the music of Carl Frei. **Draaiorgel Troeven Serie Deel (Goldstar GB 723)** gives us 14 works of this master organ-builder who was equally talented as a musician. Frei's musical compositions number many hundreds and at one time he used to compose one new melody a day. Many an organ leaving the Carl Frei workshops would be personalised by a book of Carl Frei music. Possessed of a rare facility for being able to wring the very best out of an organ, Frei's music is clever, colourful, always melodious and frequently

brilliant. If ever there was a task to be tackled by a dedicated musicologist it is the compilation and study of Frei's music, for he must emerge as a leading figure in the light music scene.

This disc — and watch that this is *Goldstar*, not Rediffusion's similar-sounding *Gold Star* label — contains many of the better known pieces such as the *Aubade Waltz*, the beautiful *Denza Serenade*, the *Pierrot Waltz* and so on. The disc is number four in a series of Basart's *draaiorgel* discs and is highly recommended both for the organ and for the music of the master himself.

Some of these discs are not readily available and may have to be ordered through the specialist record shops. In case of difficulty, try Discurio, 9 Shepherd Street, London, W.1.

## Book Reviews

**AUTOMATIC MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS PRICING GUIDE — 1977-1978.** Compiled by William H Edgerton, publisher, Connecticut, USA, 192pp, 10½ins (277mm) by 8½ins (215mm), covers. \$20 post paid.

Nothing dates more quickly than a price guide. Thanks to almost world-wide inflation, yesterday's prices serve as little indication as to what today's are likely to be, let alone those of tomorrow. When Q David Bowers produced his *Guidebook of Automatic Musical Instruments* in 1965, publication in 1967 necessitated the insertion of a price revision.

William Edgerton, who founded and successfully ran the *Newsletter* of the MBSI until recently, has produced a categorised listing of the sale prices fetched by mechanical musical instruments from 1967 until the end of 1976. His listings are broken down by type of instrument or, in the case of musical boxes, by maker. Serial numbers, though, are not given and apparently were not available. The arrangement is alphabetical rather than by type.

In his foreword, the compiler states that the contents are as taken from various price lists and catalogues which have been issued ranging from the now-legendary Hathaway & Bowers, through MacKinnon, the MMM and AIG to Christie's, the latter presumably referring to Christie's South Kensington. He rightly cautions that the prices are purely a guide and goes on to define the three "keys"

to a value estimate — identification, condition and price. The repertoire and musical merits of a piece are not considered.

The instrument descriptions, generally limited to one line (the book is printed litho from typescript), are often painfully brief as the author explains. One barrel piano for example is described as "Miniature English — \$1,000" and another as "German barrel piano, 3 barrels, oil painting front — \$1,000". Disc musical boxes fare little better. Under Kalliope, one is listed as "7in — \$225" which must number among the most unhelpful descriptions on record! Band organs, dance organs, kermisorgels — call them what you will — should always be provided with some idea how much music accompanies them. This can be a major extra cost if the owner buys, say, a 101-key Mortier without so much as a scale-book.

This book has a value to the enthusiast who is anxious to follow the rise in prices and also who needs to have a rough idea as to what his collection may be worth. It also stands as a monument to the slipshod way in which so many dealers who, after all, are handling big-ticket instruments, cannot be bothered to catalogue items adequately.

For the long-term historian, this work probably has a greater value in recording the progress of instruments. But I wonder why the compiler has chosen to include amongst mechanical musical instruments phonographs? These are not, never have been and are never likely to be, mechanical musical

*continued on page 142*



# JOHN COWDEROY ANTIQUES

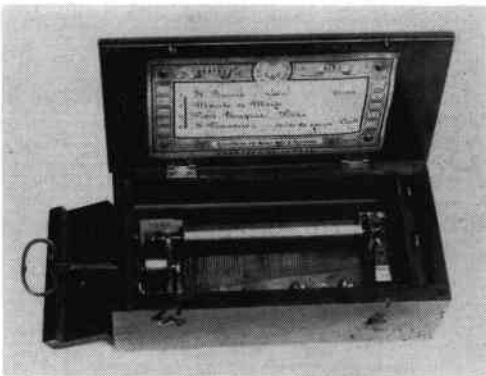


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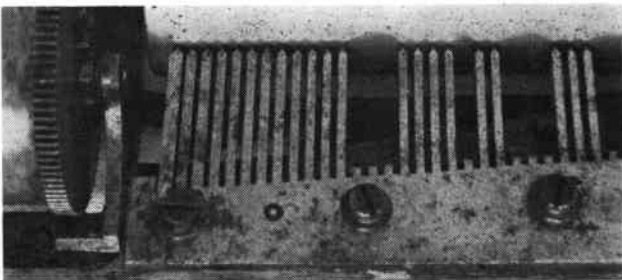
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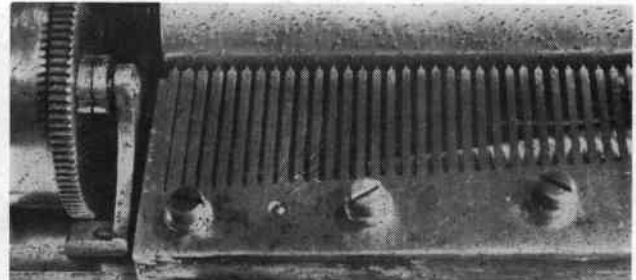
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Section of a Musical Box Comb before restoration



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## Letters to the Editor

### Sense of proportion

Gerry Planus, member number 3, writes from White Plains, New York :

"*MEA Culpa, Mea Culpa, Mea Maxima Culpa.*"

I must be getting old though frankly I don't feel it, for after reading some of the latest letters in the magazine it seems to me that I have and still do live in another world from some of your other writers. I've always thought of myself as a Pragmatist, and so I would like to offer some of your readers a view of another world that they were not lucky enough to be in, and perhaps a view of this other world might help them to understand things a bit better.

I always have liked (and the phrase has always made me feel a bit secure) to start a story, or rather a tale for this one is *Fact*, with the words . . .

Once upon a time, long, long ago . . ., so here we go.

Once upon a time long, long ago there were very few music box collectors, in fact it would be true to say that there were many music box abusers, and very few music box lovers, in fact at this time, gentle reader, you might cast a thought back to your parents and elderly relatives and ask yourselves, in which category your relations fitted, for some of them might have been the people who cast out of their doorsteps into the bitter cold of a wintry night an early music box simply because it was out of fashion.

Luckily I was among the few (at that time) who fell in love with them, and I bought up, begged for, and dived in rubbish heaps (garbage dumps) to get anything that looked even remotely like it was or had belonged to or came from a music box. This became a disease with me so much so that I can lay claim to be without a doubt "The only sewing machine dealer who bankrupted his business buying music boxes in the world."

I bought everything, interchangeable overture boxes on tables, in fact I used to stack interchangeable boxes on their tables three high. I found that the legs always cleared the box underneath, so if your interchangeable box has four indentations at the corners of the table top you now know how they got there. And I don't apologise as some of your latest correspondents seem to expect that I should. I could, of course, have left them out in the rain, but thought that my method was better. I have bought the remains of combs with all the leads which had been melted off. The scrap man could get money for the lead but not for the steel, so I found them without any leads. Here I must confess that I have since used these teeth for repairing combs and I didn't put a distinguishing mark on them so that someone in the future might know it was not an original one.

I have even bought empty boxes, and you, Mr Editor, must surely remember that one section of my cellar consisted of an empty box department. I must here also plead guilty to putting a mechanism into an empty box. Just imagine if you can the following . . . 40 Nicole eight-air boxes sitting on a shelf, I buy them at prices ranging

from 50/- to ten pounds. One of them has no lid and is full of wood-worm, but in the empty box department is an empty eight-air Nicole box. The mechanism fits perfectly, it should do for they were mass-produced so that they would fit into any Nicole box. Bear in mind that Nicole Freres didn't wander up the street to the box maker with a movement under their arms, and say to the box maker (whose name by the way was Nicolette), "Hey Nicky! knock us up a box for this movement will you, and let us have it before tea time, as it's got to catch the cart nipping off to England in the morning".

No. . . . They gave the box maker an order of a hundred at a time for the standard boxes, so what difference does it make whether the mechanism is in number 2 box or number 69 box. The music sounds the same and that, after all, is what a music box is all about. . . .

I hasten to add that I would not (though I have seen it done) put a miniature sectional comb movement into an overture-size box, screw the lid down and then advertise music box for sale. I answered the advert and went along to see it, and naturally by then, with John Clarke's help and advice, I knew that that sound didn't belong in that box. I conveniently forget whether the seller was an unscrupulous collector or a dealer for there are some of each around, and after I had picked myself up from the floor where I had fallen through laughing so much, I got the chap to unscrew the lid (all the while he was protesting that that was how he had bought it). We both had a good giggle when the lid was finally unscrewed and I still bought the box, and the movement. By

## Society auctions

George Worswick writes to the President from Bardney, Lincolnshire :

AS chairman of the Meeting of the Society on the 4th June, you attributed the existence of the Auction, intentionally or otherwise, to either the Committee or Mr C Proudfoot in particular. I would wish to make the following points which I hope you will convey to the Editor of the Journal in order that the facts can be presented correctly.

To the best of my knowledge, the Society has only held auctions during the last three to four years. The first would thus have been organised by myself at Lincoln, with the assistance of Mr L C Thompson of Lincoln (and other volunteers) at the Eastgate Hotel, Lincoln; its purpose was to respond to our then President's request for more activity on a local level, made at a London meeting; it was the best effort the full weight of the Lincolnshire membership could organise without assistance.

The first auction proceeds covered the cost of the hotel room, and added funds to the Society, as well as refunding printing costs for entry forms and Conditions of Sale leaflets. Profit was about £80 in November, 1973, and about £100 in April, 1974. From the auction at the Provincial Meeting in March, 1975, profit was £157 approximately, but costs were met from the proceeds of the Meeting accounts. Thus the last Society Auction was in fact the fifth. . . .

now they are both happily in use separately and I bet the owner is quite content.

I also bought a revolver box which was under a workbench being used as a foot rest. I had the case restored putting in new brass stringing (without identification marks) where the original was missing. . . . You know, when I think of it I have been a very naughty boy indeed. I've even had boxes re-pinned and didn't tell the new owner that all the pins were new.

Please let's have a sense of proportion, let's stop making mountains out of mole hills, and if any of you want to collect pretty boxes there are plenty of them around without any music in them. In fact I still have some left from my empty box department.

But if you are a true collector of music boxes then surely the mechanism and the music is the most important part. The box is secondary, being something to hold it in and make it easy for dusting!—even though it is a gold box with enamel, etc.

If, after reading this, you are still dissatisfied with having the wrong movement in the wrong box, I am always willing to buy such items, at a low price, of course, for after all it's in the wrong box!

**Editor's Comment :** *My old, respected venerated friend breathes a breath of undoubted commonsense into things. The only difference being that, as he says, musical boxes once cost 50/- and were regularly scrapped. Now they fetch astronomical prices and are avidly preserved. Somewhere between the two lies a right, proper and sober course.*

I very rarely have to resort to trumpet-blowing, but I feel in this instance that I am justified, as both Lincolnshire members have contributed their fair share in providing the Society with an "event" and income three years before London! So please give your isolated country members the credit they deserve. . . .

**The President replies :** *I am sorry if the impression was given that auctions were the brainchild of either the Committee or Committee member Christopher Proudfoot in particular. I feel certain that I did not say this as it is patently untrue. Society auctions were, as you so rightly point out, first thought of by yourself and you arranged the first two entirely alone with the response and results as you set out. Most certainly you and Mr Thompson were entirely responsible for paving the way for what has become a major annual attraction.*

## Automata in TMB

David Shankland writes from Llandaff, Cardiff :

YOU occasionally draw attention to inaccurate descriptions of musical boxes, etc., and I expect you noticed a few good examples in the recent Phillips catalogue, such as :

"A Coin-Operated Polyphon (wait for it), 'The Britannia' . . . etc."

"A 'Symphonion' Coin-Operated Polyphon . . . etc."

And, of course, another oldie :

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# PERPETUAL MOTION

## The History of an Obsession

by Arthur W. J. G. Ord-Hume

Make a machine which gives out more work than the energy you put into it and you have perpetual motion. Inspired by the abundant supply of free energy provided by Nature, early Man did not recognise that perpetual motion was impossible.

Many early writers on engineering hopefully devised means whereby mechanisms would "go of their own", usually connected with such basic human needs as pumping water or grinding corn. Strange as it may seem, the basic tenets of engineering grew from the failures of perpetual motion. The deceptively simple task of making a mechanism which would turn for ever fascinated many an inventor and, perhaps surprisingly to us today, a number of famous men and physicists applied themselves to the task. Their quest for perpetual motion in some cases became an obsession.

However, despite the naivety and blatant trickery of many of the inventors, there are a handful of mechanisms which defy explanation.

In this book a present-day engineer looks back over centuries of misguided effort, forlorn hopes and frustration.

"225 pages of compulsive reading" — *Engineering*. Published by Allen & Unwin. Available from bookshops or direct from the author at £5-90 (\$11) post and packing free.

14 Elmwood Rd, London, W.4.

I can well imagine your comments. . . .

Incidentally, I do not see many photographs of automata in *The Music Box* and as I was fortunate enough to purchase that fine minstrel banjo player from Sothebys last July I wonder whether you would like a photograph.

I am always surprised that you are able to maintain such a high standard with the regular publication of *The Music Box* and to exhibit such talent and expertise and would again like to say, as so many other would like to say, thank you.

**Editor's Comment:** *I remember overhearing two transatlantic ladies in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. One said: "Who painted that Rembrandt?". What really amuses me is the repeated allusions to "musical boxes and Polyphons" which suggests that one isn't the other. The paucity of material on automata is not my fault. Send me material and see what I can do to correct the situation! I agree that the authors who contribute to the journal do display talent and expertise. It would be nice if there were a few more though. . . .*

### Omission on repairs

**R. E. Store writes from Ealing:**

WITH reference to "Repair and Accessories Section" (volume 8, page 41), I advertise my business in *The Music Box* and pay for the privilege. No doubt you do not consider the services I have to offer of any consequence to warrant inclusion in the said Section.

**Editor's Comment.** *Mr Store's first*

*classified advertisement appeared in the same issue as the Repair Section which had already closed for press before his services were advised. The Repair Section was in any case not intended to be comprehensive, but to list main repairs. The second edition of this will appear late next year and will, hopefully, be much more complete. Meanwhile those seeking Mr Store's services will find his notice on pages 51 and 98.*

### Poly tunes & scales

**Arthur Coombs writes from Dulwich commenting on discordant Polyphon discs which were described on page 210 of Volume 6:**

I WOULD tell you that I actually possess discs 4022 and 4315 on 2 $\frac{3}{8}$ in Polyphon and they are perfect so it is obviously certain discs that are faulty and not the scale. I have had this before on other sizes — something must go wrong in the stamping occasionally. As regards Symphonion, I have just done a 13 $\frac{1}{2}$ in and the scale in Webb's book is hopeless. Many notes are wrong and in any case as you know being musical, you don't mix sharps and flats in the same scale. Whoever did this starts off in B flat, which is OK, and then D sharp appears instead of E flat as it should read. But as I say, apart from this many notes were actually wrong.

Believe it or not, we have found some more errors in Polyphon scales in Graham's book and I should be so glad if you would insert a small paragraph to correct these.

The 19 $\frac{3}{8}$ in error was Graham's printers — my copy is correct, but the

24 $\frac{1}{2}$ in errors were definitely mine.

19 $\frac{5}{8}$ in Polyphon. Lower comb, notes number 54 and 55 should both be B flat and not B.

24 $\frac{1}{2}$ in Polyphon. Upper comb, note number 7 should be D flat; 8 should be D; 9 should be E flat; 12 should be G flat. On the lower comb, note number 8 should be D; note number 13 should be G; and number 14 should be A flat.

### Achilles Hooghuyts

**Ted Bowman writes from Clophill, Bedford:**

THE recent article on Louis Hooghuyts (page 12) was of great interest to me as present owner of No. 595 (70-key ex-John Boutwood) and it is particularly commendable that such information has been recorded before it becomes lost for ever. In this view, I should like to add that there are five music books belonging to No. 595 which bear the signature *Achilles Hooghuyts* on the last page: two of these are also dated 9-5-1931. Presumably a brother or cousin of Romain-Charles, Achilles lost his life during the 1939 war. The books are noted in the characteristically sprightly Hooghuyts' style: 2065 Waltz (no title); 2093 Polka, Constantinople; 3003 Polka (no title); 3085 Foxtrot, Le Chemin du Paradis, and 3088, March, Womba.

Number 595 was acquired in 1959 by Jack Boutwood who had and still has business connections with Holland and Belgium since he is a specialist in flower-growing. I think he found the instrument in Courtrai.

The Achilles books bear no address apart from the usual Hooghuyts stamp, and I presume that he also lived in Grammont.

Number 595 originally had a "mandoline" stop which Mr Romain-Charles Hooghuys told me had three strings to each of nineteen notes. This was removed in 1914 because of tuning and maintenance problems. I asked if he had any drawings so that I could reconstruct the mandoline, but he advised against it. I often wonder if the one in the Utrecht museum would fit!

I was interested to read in your article that Louis Hooghuys patented his design of action: the layout of the keyframe makes possible ready access to any parts or adjustment (unlike most rival makes) and for example the valves supplying the xylophone motors are a model of simplicity and lightness.

I wish you success in your quest for the rest of the jigsaw pieces!

## Pathetic response

Tug Wilson writes from Finchampstead, Berkshire:

ON page 249 of Volume 7, you kindly published a letter of mine asking members to inform me of any item of interest to the mechanical music lover. The plan was to produce a map of the British Isles showing all of these places so that they could be more widely known among our members. To date, the response has been overwhelming—THREE REPLIES! I do, of course, thank those three members and must conclude from this that the rest of the members have seen nothing of interest—except their own collections.

**Books** *cont. from page 138*  
instruments. Besides which, I have the feeling that the serious phonograph collector and his reproducing machine would merit a whole new work devoted to these things. Four pages must be insufficient to cater for the vast field.

**LEERBOEK DER CAMPANOLOGIE.** *Andre Lehr. Nationaal Beiaardmuseum, Asten, Holland, 210pp, 11½ins (297mm) by 8¼ins (210mm). Line illustrations in text. Paper covers, in Dutch. Price on application.*

The author is a director of the famous Eijsbouts bell foundry in Asten, president of the Historische Commissie van de Nederlandse Klokkenspel Vereniging, and is also a lecturer at the Beiaardschool in Mechelen. Furthermore he is founder and director of the Asten museum, described on page 126.

Mr Lehr's *magnum opus*, "Van Paardebel tot Speelklok" was published in 1971. Now he has produced a thorough and businesslike documentation of the science of bell-founding, tuning, installation and arrangement.

The subject of scaling is clearly and thoroughly discussed. The carillon and its automatic playing systems are covered along with more abstruse aspects such as

sound dispersion from towers, the effect of wind currents on sound pressure waves and the arrangement for optimum dispersion.

The author's grasp on his subject, both historical (from his previous work) and technical, as evinced in the present book, adds much to the as yet small literature of authority on the bell. This is very much a work for the Dutch-reading student but as such it is an outstanding contribution.

**HET PIEREMENT.** *Dr J J L Haspels, Nationaal Museum van Speeldoos tot Pierement, Utrecht, Holland, 12pp, 5½ins (160mm) by 6½ins (165mm), paper covers, illustrated. In Dutch. Dfl. 2.*

**THE MUSICAL MUSEUM.** *Frank Holland, The Musical Museum, Brentford, Middlesex, 16pp (inc. paper covers), 8¼ins (210mm) by 5¾ins (148mm), fully illustrated including seven pages in colour. 60p.*

**DISCOVERING MECHANICAL MUSIC.** *T E Crowley, Shire Publications Ltd, 48pp, 4½ins (225mm) by 7ins (178mm), illustrated, paper covers, 35p.*

Three little books here which I think are best considered together. There is an immense need for simple little books on mechanical music which will be of interest and value to the casual observer (who doesn't want to get bogged down with history and technology) and to the younger generation. Never forget that it is the youngsters today to whom we must look for the preservation of our treasures in the years to come.

*Het Pierement* is in every way a small book and it concerns itself solely with the Dutch street organ. For those Dutch youngsters who haven't a clue why a brightly painted, carved and wheel'd box produces such fine music, here is a

low-cost pocket guide. It even contains a picture of a church barrel organ which was formerly in the Presidential collection.

*The Musical Museum* is, by contrast, a book which sets out to do much more with its subject divisions—pianos and organs. A really bright, professional-looking and busy little book, its cover is enough to get the potential reader hooked, for it shows an impressive line-up of "grands", orchestrions, the giant Wurlitzer theatre organ—and even a phonograph, all in the somewhat attractive surroundings of Frank Holland's aged Brentford church. It serves as an ever-present reminder that the man who founded The Player Piano Group and who got together this fantastic collection initially as a spare-time interest now heads a National museum administered by trustees and owning a tonnage of instruments which, if lined up end to end, would create London's biggest-ever traffic jam!

Terence Crowley's *Discovering Mechanical Music*, first reviewed on page 30 of Volume 7, is now in its second edition. The pictures, the same non-representative selection as used in the first edition, are printed on better-quality paper and look less indistinct. Sadly, although the appendices have been revised to include up-to-date bibliographies and museum details, there are still a few inaccuracies. The carillon at the Rijksmuseum, for example, was erected in 1583, not 1554. To claim that the flute clock rapidly declined at the time the comb-playing mechanism came into use is not true. The typographical errors of the earlier work (i.e. Jacquet-Droz) also remain. Still, though, it serves as an introduction for the neophyte who has the ability to polish his knowledge at a later date if he so wishes.

A O-H

## CALENDAR

### 1977

#### September 9th, 10th, 11th

Musical Box Society Int Annual Convention, Cleveland, Ohio, USA.

#### October 15th

Musical Box Society of Great Britain Winter Meeting, London, England.

#### December 3rd, 4th

Musical Box Society of Great Britain Winter Regional Meeting, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, England.

*Convention and Event Organisers are invited to send in dates for regular publication to aid members throughout the world in planning their participation.*

### 1978

#### June 2nd, 3rd, 4th

Musical Box Society of Great Britain Annual General Meeting, London, England.

#### September 21st, 22nd 23rd

Musical Box Society Int Annual Convention, Sarasota Hyatt House Hotel, Watergate Centre, Sarasota, Florida, USA (correction to dates previously published).

#### October 14th

Musical Box Society of Great Britain Winter Meeting, London, England.

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