MECHANICAL MUSIC WORLD

ASSOCIATION OF MUSICAL BOX COLLECTORS

An Association of Musical Box Collectors Publication

From the Editors' Desk

After what seemed like a very prolonged winter, spring is definitely in the air!

In this issue we have a more detailed than usual report of one of our gatherings at the Old School. This is to emphasise how these meetings can be of benefit to all levels of collectors in the Association. You are able to hear as well as see a variety of instruments. You can compare and contrast various types, sizes, makers and even quality. You can take part in discussions (or keep your own counsel) in a relaxed setting with fellow devotees, all with an interest in these wonderful machines which are categorised as musical boxes (organettes, street organs, player pianos etc).

We receive via email details of sales in Yorkshire. Whenever we have visited Leyburn we have enjoyed looking at what is coming up for sale at Tennants and have also enjoyed tea at the Tea Pottery next door on many occasions. I digress – to come to the point, among their specialist sales they sometimes have mechanical music items of many kinds. On their web site we found a "guide to buying musical boxes at auction". We found it an appealing and graphic way of assessing musical box quality by comparison with motor vehicles, and a solid reflection of current market values. We have included it in this publication (with permission of the author and the saleroom) for information. Tennants have regular specialist sales of all sorts of collectibles.

Alibert's curious ancillary (and often hidden) numbering system comes under scrutiny from Chris Fynes, whilst Paul Bellamy contributes a piece on restoring a marotte.

In view of the public's avid curiosity about all things 'Royal', there is an article on Princess Mary's Gift Book.

The article on Matchbox musical toys took us by surprise - they have slipped under the radar for us - and we were totally unaware of their existence! Thanks to Juliet Fynes for this latest foray into the more modern musical market. Definitely something to look out for.

The great majority of musical boxes made in the nineteenth and early twentieth Centuries were made in Switzerland. Charles Ullmann may have been an exception, since he was working in France, though his advertisements claim that his boxes were made in Switzerland! The article we have looks at his company and its associates and includes details of one of his instruments which features not only bells but a conductor who beats time with the music. The mandarin figures have needed no restoration and are as originally painted. Chinese, not Mexican, as one of our visitors suggested!

CONTENTS

Chairman's Report

Although our membership is slowly growing I still want to encourage younger members, by which I mean 30 – 50 year-olds. Having given talks and spoken to people younger than this, we unfortunately have some time to go before they can both appreciate and afford the more expensive mementos of yesteryear. For this reason we also include the more affordable musical boxes and novelties in our meetings and publications.

I know I go on about prompt payments, but not having to send out reminders saves time and money. If, for any reason, you do not wish to renew your subscription, please email or telephone us to save you getting unwanted post. For all those who have renewed, thank you for your continued support of our Association and I hope to see some of you at our Organ Day on the 1st June at the Old School. New members are especially welcome. Don't forget to bring sandwiches for lunch and I will supply drinks and puddings.

We are happy for members to bring friends to our Chanctonbury Ring meetings if they have an interest in our hobby There is always a chance they might want to join us!

Treasurer's report, membership year March 1st 2018 to 28th February 2019

Members will receive copies of bank statements at the AGM in accordance with the constitution to show opening and closing balances plus a statement showing the balance of the accounts.

A surplus of £1059.99 has been made on the year, not including an anonymous donation of £3,000.00 to print the restoration book, soon to be available. The donor paid the treasurer a personal cheque and the treasurer transferred this amount by personal cheque into the Association bank account. If the restoration book recovers its costs, the treasurer will offer to repay the donation in part or full.

Since our foundation just over four years ago, we committed AMBC to close bonds with other societies for mutual benefit in sharing information and research. The AMBC Journal has been at the forefront of this by projecting historical interest in the hobby of self-playing musical instruments and automata. Our editors, David and Lesley Evans, have consistently produced a balanced issue of four journals each year. They live on Vancouver Island, Canada.

Membership income is required to cover the running costs of the society. This comprises, Journal printing, Journal postage, website domains, website management and administration. This is supplemented by advertising income. The margin between membership subscription plus advertising income is only just in balance with journal cost and posting.

The constitution requires advertisers to be AMBC members and we thank them for their membership support and advertising payments. All committee members are fully paid up members and do not claim expenses.

Other donations resulting from the generosity of members are ring-fenced and dedicated to pay for research publications and not used to supplement membership subscription. Similarly for the sale of DVDs, the Blue books and past Journal copies.

A book on musical box dating charts is being prepared for publication 2020-2021. It is based on and will be an extension of the work initiated by the late HAV Bulleid. It will include several extra charts for other makers.

The opening balance for next year, which includes the slight increase in membership subscription agreed last year, should enable the level of subscription to be maintained for the current year and next year, commencing 1st March 2020. My proposal is that the subscription will remain unchanged for this and next year. Paul Bellamy, Treasurer AGM, April 2019.

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Feel free to contact any of us.

Publication Dates for "Mechanical Music World"

Winter issue 28th January; Spring issue 28th April; Summer issue 28th July; Autumn issue 28th October

We need articles and advertisements (unless repeats) to reach the Editors at least one month in advance of these dates. Please allow more time for involved articles with many illustrations.

AMBC Meeting Dates

Please contact the host to ensure a place is reserved and for needs to be catered for. Include any guests you may be thinking of bringing. Also please advise if a booking has to be cancelled so that places can be offered to others.

Chanctonbury Ring Meetings Diary

June 1st: Organ Day: Bring sandwiches, puddings and drinks supplied.

August 18th Lunch supplied

November 23rd Lunch supplied

All meetings take place at the Old School.

Please let Ted know if you intend to come.

AMBC Meeting

Sunday 24th February

The meeting began with a Show & Tell programme, which was once again filled with interesting examples of both cylinder and disc boxes. As is usual with these meetings, the interaction between members (to say nothing of the wonderful refreshments) made the day very worthwhile. Our thanks go to our hosts Ted and Kay.

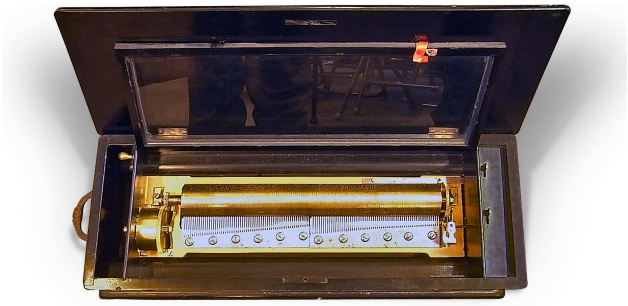


Fig 1: Fine sublime harmonie *box, possibly by Paillard*

The first item, Fig. 1, was a very fine, large, 8-air musical box with a 17-inch cylinder, in good playing condition with case work unrestored. That in itself prompted the question as to what extent one should restore anything of historical interest. Restorers do what the owners want and there is no doubt that many want their treasured item looking like the day it was made, or even 'better'. Others buy them and 'restore' to achieve the highest possible market price. The case-work of this musical box bore its well-earned age very well and it was a pleasure to know that it had not suffered a make-over.

The main reason for bringing it was to identify the names of its airs but only about two of the few already known were achieved. There was, of course, no tune sheet and no known maker, as is often the case. The general consensus was that it was a Paillard movement made in Saint Croix. Its serial number was 15760, which equates with the Bulleid date chart for Paillard as circa 1884.

It had two combs, each with 61 teeth that, at first sight, appeared to be tuned to the same scale. In part they were. The mid-range was tuned *sublime harmonie* where corresponding teeth were of the same pitch but slightly different frequency. When played together, the frequencies interact and create a vibrato effect, much the same as the voix celeste stop of the pipe organ.

As each fine arrangement played, sometimes only the second comb was in full play with the occasional teeth of the first comb emphasising the rhythm of the arrangement. The most intriguing thing was that the bass notes of the first comb were about an octave lower than the second comb. This gave a very resonant bass when

Fig 2A: Six-bell box by Brémond

producing bass octave chords. The treble end of the second comb had an extended range and acted almost like a 'piccolo' comb. The arranger had taken full advantage of the two intricately tuned combs so it was more likely that the combs were made and tuned specifically to meet the requirements of the arranger.

The second musical box for 'play and display' was an 8-air, 6-bell, Brémond example with 15-inch cylinder, Fig. 2A. An unusual feature was the winding lever stamped with the name STAUFFER and the serial number 9830. The bass-end cylinder cap was scratched: G917, its gamme number. For a new member this meant very little, until explained that the gamme number refers to the actual tuning scale of the comb but can also be an aid in identifying all the tunes if the tune sheet is missing. Unfortunately, there is no publicly available record of the relationship between gamme number and tune programme. The only one in existence remains in private hands.

Fig. 2B shows the tune sheet with the serial number

Fig 2B: Tune sheet of Brémond box

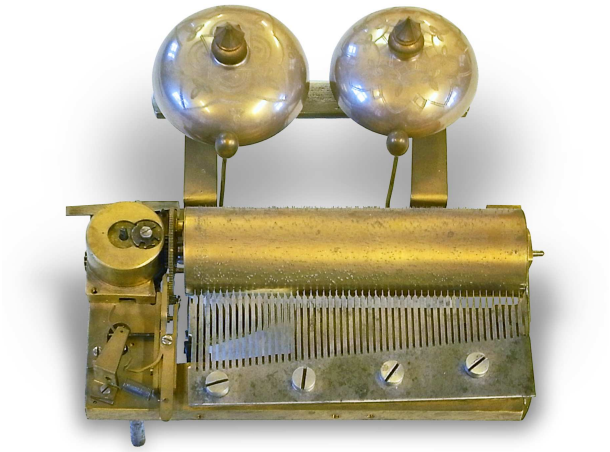


Fig 3: Unnamed small bell movement

hand inscribed in the top border, a common feature for this early style of Brémond tune sheet. The bottom cartouche was unused but usually carried the legend: Etouffoirs en Acier soit à Spiraux, meaning dampers made of steel in the shape of a spiral. Some of the Brémond characteristics were obvious, including the tune sheet and the name Stauffer, a Geneva agent known to act for Brémond. It is rare to find the agent's name stamped on the winding lever. According to the Bulleid dating chart for Brémond it was made in 1868, so quite an early lever-wind movement.

Another small orphan musical box with 52 teeth was on show, Fig. 3, beautifully engineered and adapted to play just two bells. There was no tune sheet and no identifying features that could confirm the maker. However, it had four sturdy feet, a common feature for L'Epée. The governor details were slightly different to many other Swiss movements of this type and the bedplate was made from stock sheet brass - but there is little point in guessing unless some other more positive features can be determined. The feet help to transmit sound directly to the base of a case, which acts as a soundboard.

The remainder of the display was themed to show the differences between some small disc musical boxes; the key-wind, lever-wind and hand-cranked versions (called manivelles). Fig. 4 shows a typical Thorens 4½-inch novelty disc key-wind spring motor movement in its case. It is well engineered and formed a mainstay of their early musical box production. The lid has an instruction card with a notated sketch of the movement. The Thorens family business was first registered in Sainte-Croix in about 1882 and started making musical boxes and clock movements but later diversified, lasting well into the 1950s. The musical movement part of the business was eventually taken over by Reuge of Saint Croix but Thorens also ventured into the production of Edison-type phonographs in 1903. By the 1950s and 1960s the firm was producing electric-motor driven

Fig 4: Thorens disc box, circa 1950

record players, which are still considered to be fine examples of audio equipment.

Figs. 5A & B illustrate a Symphonion 5-inch disc box in its carved case. It was made by the Lochmann Company of Leipzig, Germany in about the 1880s. It has a front crank handle, not for winding a spring motor but for winding the disc by hand, called a manivelle after the French name for 'crank'. Although cheaper to make, these hand-turned versions are rarer than the spring-operated ones. For children (and adults, of course) there is the opportunity to vary the pace of the music, a satisfactory advantage for some but a risk when handed to children, who inevitably either wind the handle backwards (just to see what happens, but it does not, fortunately, work that way) or try to make the music play at break-neck speed!

Fig 5A: 5" Symphonion Manivelle

Fig 5B: Symphonion Manivelle

Fig. 6 is another example by Thorens, also a manivelle. It was traded under the name Edelweiss, a good choice because the Alpine flower of that name, a member of the daisy family, is also a national symbol of Switzerland. It was first produced in 1897 and several different sized Thorens products were produced under that name. Thorens also used the same mechanism for models trading under the name Helvetia. The discs were interchangeable between the two models.

Fig 6: Thorens Manivelle

Figs. 7A & 7B are of a Polyphon spring-motor instrument. The winding lever is mounted on the right-hand side of the case and the small front button is pulled to start the movement. The case is scumble finished to simulate mahogany and the transfer on the lid is rather well worn. The unrestored movement plays well. The lever is called a pressure bar and holds the disc firmly in place against the star wheels, which in turn operate to pluck the tuned steel comb.

Figs 7A & 7B: Polyphon spring motor box

Figs. 8A & 8B are of a similar type of lever-wind model made by Lochmann, called a Symphonion. The winding lever is on the same side as for the Thorens example, Fig. 7B. The pressure bar is a much shorter and simpler device and like many Symphonion models there is no automatic stop mechanism. The stop lever can just be

Figs 8A & 8B: Symphonion spring motor box

seen at the back-right hand side of the case. The inside of the case lid carries the list of patents and operating instructions in three languages, English, French and German plus the agent's sticker: Robert Dunlop & Co of Glasgow.

Figs. 9A & 9B are of another Polyphon, similar to Fig. 7A but this time a manivelle. The detachable crank handle can be inserted through a hole in the lid or played with the lid open. The pressure bar is quite crude but effective. The movement is unrestored but not the lid of the case. The lid was in far worse condition than that of Fig. 7A. During its life discs must have been placed on the lid with the teeth facing down, causing the pattern to be rasped away. A photo of a similar box was printed on paper to the correct size, the edges of the paper feathered thin and then glued down onto the lid. A little blending in with scumble finish and overlaid with a clear polish has returned the case to a semblance of its original condition.

Figs 9A & 9B: Polyphon manivelle

Finally, Ted Brown rounded off the meeting showing several 'coasters', i.e. small drinking glass mats. The first was by member Annie Tyvand who lives in Seattle. She is a skilled glass worker who made each committee member a souvenir coaster with the AMBC logo. Annie also makes glass flowers for her garden

and has expertly replaced a missing leaded glass front to a disc musical box. Ted showed two lesser artistic versions made from gramophone discs, Fig. 10.

Another small musical box was brought for display and play, also without a tune sheet or serial number but this one will feature as a future article under the title The Big Little Musical Box.

Fig 10: Old records recycled as coasters

MATCHBOX MUSICAL TOYS

by Juliet Fynes

The trade name Matchbox is synonymous with die-cast models. However they did make other toys as well, including some fitted with musical movements.

The name of this iconic British brand was inspired by a child, much as one of the owners of the American toy giant, Mattel, got the idea for their most successful product, Barbie, by watching her daughter at play.

In 1947 Leslie and Rodney Smith (not related) founded an industrial die casting company under the name of Lesney. Initially they supplied small parts to agricultural and automotive companies. They soon took on another partner, Jack O'Dell, who instigated the production of toys starting with a road roller, a direct copy of a Dinky toy, that was followed by other models. His daughter wanted to take the popular road roller to school but was only allowed to bring a toy that could fit in a matchbox. O'Dell set about scaling it down and the Matchbox brand was born. By the 1960s it was the largest manufacturer of die-cast model vehicles in the world, but, facing stiff competition from American brands such as Hot Wheels, it began to diversify into different and larger ranges whilst retaining the Matchbox branding.

The company enjoyed great success throughout the 1960s and 70s, but by the end of the 1970s Matchbox faced financial difficulties due mainly to the economic climate in the UK at the time. It went into receivership in 1982. A similar fate befell Corgi (Meccano) and Dinky (Mettoy) at around the same time and all three eventually became part of the Mattel stable, where they were united with American rival Hot Wheels.

The company was initially purchased by Universal Toys and some manufacturing continued in England until 1985. At the time of the bankruptcy Jack O'Dell bought some of the production machinery and began making die-cast models under the Lledo trade name.

As part of the diversification Matchbox produced a range of pre-school toys under the branding Live-n-Learn. In 1972 they launched a small collection of "Busy Live'n Learn" hand-cranked automata toys, some with musical movements. These included a slide, passing the ball, stacking boxes and a skipping game.

They were "a new concept ……..designed to teach children basic skills while they play", aimed at ages 2 to 6. The different toys variously claimed to encourage hand/eye coordination, cooperative play and a sense of rhythm and tempo as well as the more mundane counting and colours. They were all rather fiddly to set up, using precise instructions that would have challenged the average pre-schooler!

The Live-n-Learn range expanded throughout the 70s, probably the best known example being the Play Boot. There were a few musical models produced in 1974, such as the Play Slide, a much simpler design than the Busy Playground. The Busy series were too clever by half. In the Playground model the little people were meant to circulate continuously round to the ladder to be cranked up to the top of the slide, then slide neatly down and drop into position ready to begin again. In practice they mostly fall over. The Play Slide works more reliably, but the figures just drop off the end.

The Stack'a Cake, similar to Busy Buddies, is equally challenging. I eventually got the baker to push the cake onto the platform instead of knocking it out of the way with a back hander, but totally failed to get the mother to do any stacking. Clearly 1970s toddlers were more dexterous than twentieth century arthritic seventy-somethings! Or perhaps not. These toys are quite rare but usually in good condition and complete with boxes, which suggests they were not much used.

They are now getting on for half a century old and make interesting collectibles. The V&A Museum of Childhood has a (non-musical) Live-n-Learn toy in its collection. The musical models can be purchased for similar prices to the non-musical and often much less than musical toys of the same era by better known makers such as Fisher-Price.


Full List of 1972
Busy Live'n Learn Toys
Busy
Playground
Play
Slide
Busy
Jump
Rope
Stack'a
Cake
Busy
Buddies
Matchbox Live'n Learn Toys

Alibert and the mystery of his inscribed numbers

By Christopher Fynes

Francois Alibert is listed as operating from 10 rue J-J Rousseau, Paris from about 1807. He is well known as a maker and agent of small snuff-box movements fitted with sectional combs, larger musical boxes and musical clock movements with exposed controls. Many of his small movements are inscribed with his name and an associated number thought to have been repair numbers.

My first example is a tortoiseshell snuff-box (pictures 1, page 11). The lid is impressed with a classical head surrounded by radiating lines. It has a sectional comb with twenty-two segments, each consisting of three teeth, playing on a 6cm cylinder. The brass comb base is inscribed *'alibert 5023'* and the base stamped with the serial number '484'. The inscription uses a lower-case initial *'a'* for the surname. I had to restore the movement and the tortoiseshell case, which were both badly damaged, and replace the broken spring kindly donated by another member. The movement now plays two early airs very sweetly.

Interestingly, this compares with another similar movement in a Palais Royal necessaire of the same period (pictures 2). This one is inscribed by the same hand *'alibert 5027'* (4 digits higher than the snuff-box), and the comb base stamped with the serial number '477' (7 digits lower than the snuff-box). Note the lower-case initial *'a'* again used for the surname in the close-up. It plays two airs from the 'Siege de Corinthe', but is otherwise identical to the snuff-box movement including the unusual engraved lines circled around the tops of the spring barrels.

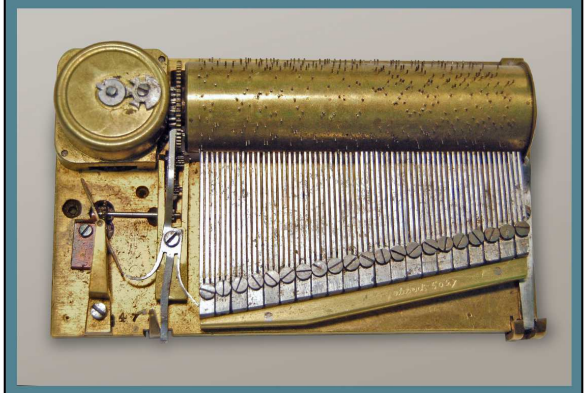
This is too much to be a coincidence. It has always been assumed these inscribed numbers were Alibert repair numbers, but are surely more likely to have been his stock numbers when acting as a Paris agent. These two items probably started life together in the same shop, before being sold off and now finally, after all these years, have come together again. Although neither movement is actually stamped by any maker, it does not necessarily imply they were made or repaired by Alibert, just because he had an inscription scratched on it. Indeed, a slightly later snuff-box movement, designed in the shape of a packing case (pictures 3), has 'M BORDIER' stamped on its bedplate with the serial number '9808' and inscribed on the cock-plate by, yet again, the same hand *'alibert 28718'* with its typical lower case *'a'*. M. Bordier, of course, being a well-known Paris maker.

On the other hand, I do have a much later composition cased snuff-box, circa 1850, which is stamped 'F ALIBERT' on the brass bedplate with the serial number '22203'. However, this one does not have an inscription – perhaps dropped in this later period.

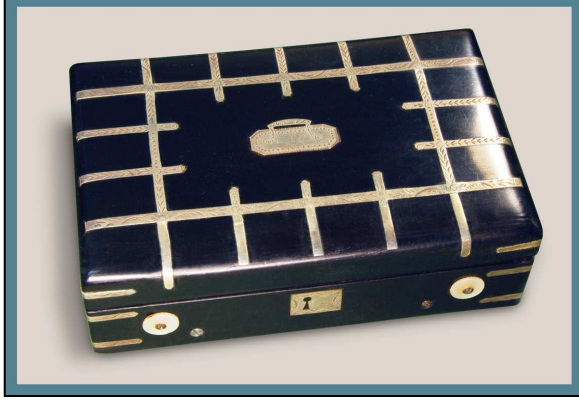
My final tortoiseshell musical snuffbox is quite interesting. It also is inscribed 'alibert 13199', (picture 4, page 13), but in this case is not stamped with the usual serial number. The inscription would date it somewhere between the first two afore mentioned snuffboxes. It has a fine quality two-air movement with 83 teeth (picture 5), and a slow-turning cylinder that takes about 50 seconds to play each tune, both of which are accompanied with sustained trills. This one is also stamped 'M. Bordier' on the comb, (picture 6). It even comes with its own original red leather case. When I took the comb off to examine it, I was surprised to see one tooth did not come away with the rest of the comb and then realised the tooth was separately mounted into the bedplate (pictures 7 and 8). It was tightly tapped, perfectly tuned and lined up perfectly with the rest of the comb when it was in position. It was so beautifully engineered, this was highly likely to have been a replacement tooth made during its manufacture by the original maker, perhaps as a result of an imperfection in the steel comb. The steel is 3/8inch thick and so it has integral tuning weights with added brass extensions on the two lowest base notes (picture 9). It is mounted on a separate adjustment brass plate. The dampers, also made of

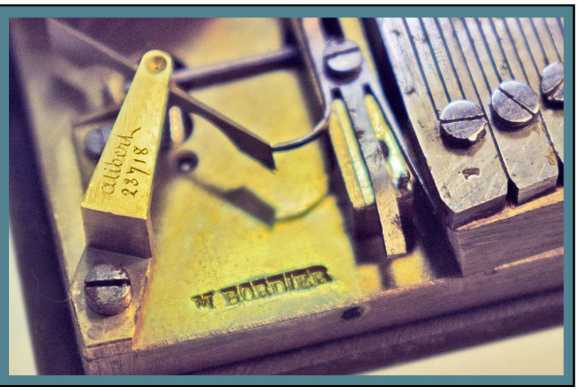
1 *Musical Snuff-box*
Serial no: 484
Inscribed: alibert 5023

2 *Musical Nécessaire*
Serial no: 477
Inscribed: alibert 5027



3 *Musical Snuff-box stamped M BORDIER*
Serial no: 9808
Inscribed: alibert 23718





steel, are pegged and drilled into the steel weights (picture 10). The tiny pins on the slow-turning cylinder are densely packed and are driven by an extra strong spring, very similar to movements made by Henri Capt. Many good M. Bordier musical tabatiere movements have now come to light, such as this, which were probably previously underestimated, some of which are of outstanding quality. On the inside back panel of the tortoiseshell case are scratched the words 'Wm Hall of New St, Birm. Musical box maker & dealer in musical boxes'. William Hall of Newhall Street, Birmingham was known in 1830 to be an agent for musical snuff-boxes who also made tortoiseshell cases for them. He probably bought the movement from Alibert and made the case for it.

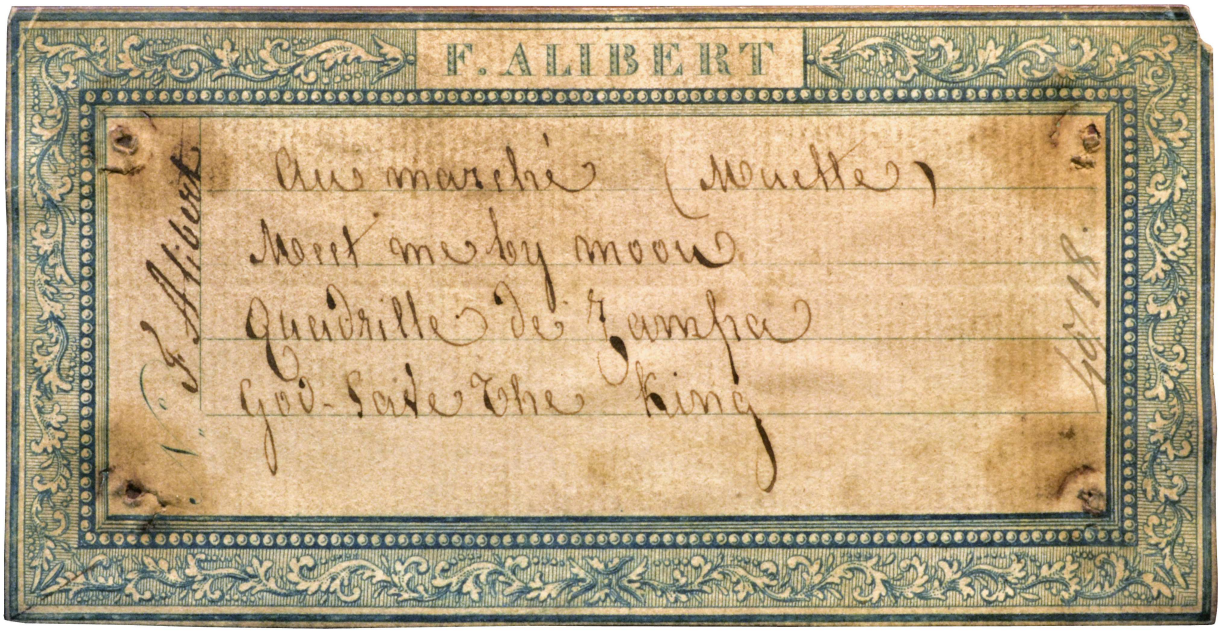
There are also Alibert cartel type movements to be considered. An early four air box with exposed controls has the serial number '6567' stamped on its bedplate, but there are no inscriptions on the movement. However, it does have a tune sheet (picture 11), with the name 'F. ALIBERT' incorporated into the top of its printed border, also the signature *'F Alibert'* written up the left-hand-side with the number *'40718'* written up the right-hand-side. This is obviously not the serial number, but again, could well be his stock number. You can hear this box on our website. This movement also has yet another hidden number stamped on the bottom of the bedplate on the thin cross rail to the left of the spring, the number 2418. Alan Godier, who has noted these hidden numbers, associates them with movements that were made by Lecoultre, either as blanks or finished movements. Other examples he has logged are:

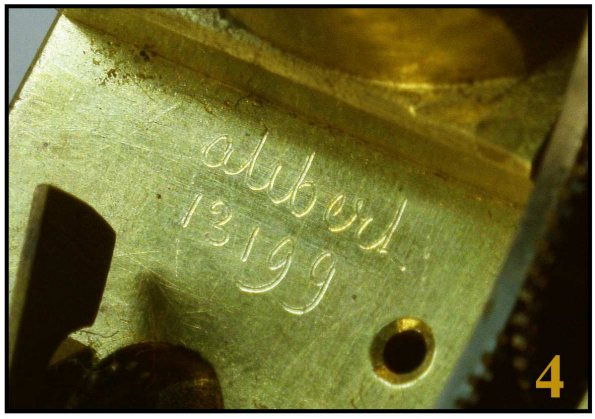
Serial numbers:	Cross rail numbers:
6234	 2139
6245	 2170
6416	 2450

It is also worth noting the blue printed tune sheet too, is identical those used on other early Lecoultre movements, such as the example in the 'Tune Sheet Third Supplement' (number 374), except that particular one has the words 'QUATRE AIRS' imbedded in the top rectangle instead of the name 'F. ALIBERT'.

Whether or not Alibert actually made his own musical movements is now open to speculation – one thing is certain, however, he had some exquisite stock.

Picture 11 (below): Alibert tune sheet





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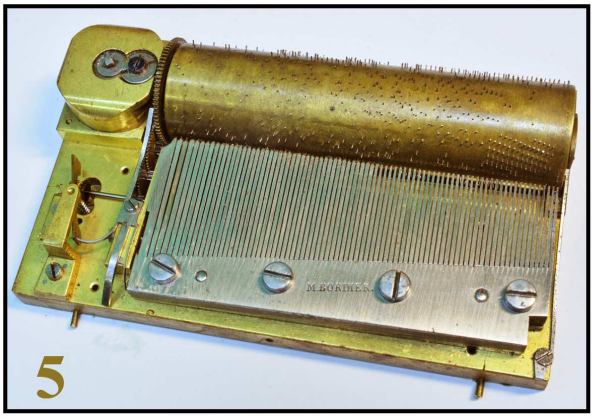

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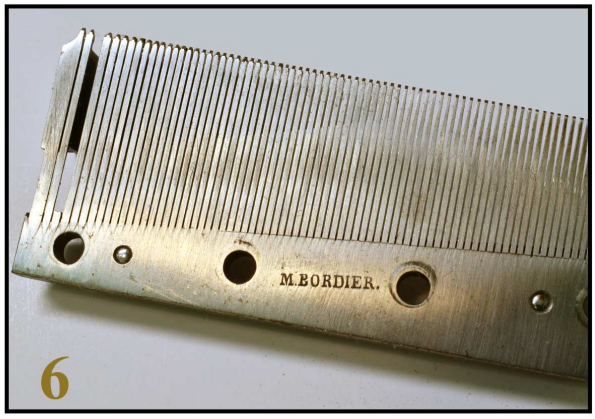

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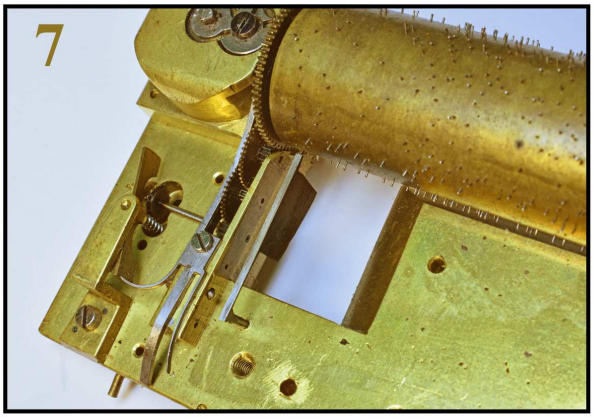
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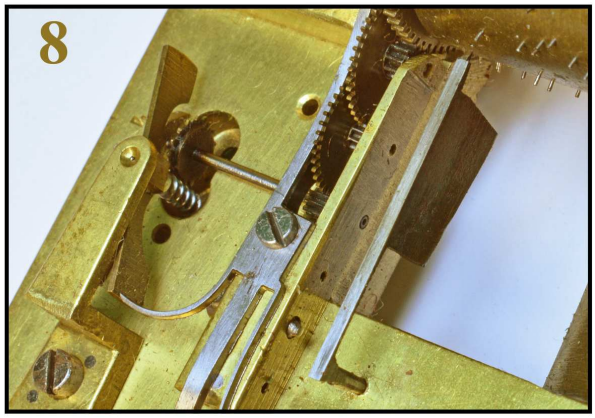

8


9


10

Snuff box musical movement with M. Bordier stamped on comb

4 Inscribed ‘alibert 13199’ with no serial number.
5 Snuff box two air movement with 83 teeth.
6 Comb showing broken missing tooth.
7 Replacement tooth tapped into bedplate.
8 Tooth is properly tuned and tightly fitted.
9 Steel tuning weights with two brass extensions.
10 Close-up showing metal dampers.

Restoring a musical Marotte

The movements used to provide the music for these old Victorian era toys were adapted manivelles, made in their thousands but, like all toys, not many survive in playing condition. There were many manivelle makers but probably the most prolific was L'Épée and most of them were marketed by Thibouville Lamy & Co of Miracourt, France.

This marotte, a musical puppet that plays when twirled around, was in a non-playing state. Someone's attempt to get at the musical movement had succeeded but, finding it irreparable, had left it in even worse condition. The clothing, what was left of it, was damaged, dirty and worn but its little bisque face was appealing.

Most manivelle movements are played upside-down. Most are tin cased or with the movement mounted separately, as was the case with this little old (actually she looked quite young) lady. Its pâpier-maché case was spherical, made out of scraps of German newspaper.

The case was not made to be opened and had been sliced open around a crude wooden base at its diameter, upon which the movement was attached by screws. The resulting half sphere had bits missing and could not be glued back.

Marotte manivelles, because they were mounted upside-down, are usually wound by hand in an anti-clockwise direction, opposite to the hand-cranked examples. The simple mechanism is an 'endless', i.e. spiral screw, that directly engages the cylinder drive gear (called the great wheel) that also forms the cylinder end cap. Marotte manivelle screw threads, as in this case, were usually left-hand spirals rather than right-hand ones. Any attempt to play with clockwise rotation would be prevented by the anti-rotation device.

The first task was to appraise the condition of the movement and it did not augur well. Fig. 1 shows its condition with a slightly rusty comb,

Fig 8: Marotte before restoration

four teeth missing in the 'melody' section, one at the treble end and another towards the base end. The tune was an unknown jingle but when compared with a tuning meter, was to an identifiable musical scale and almost in perfect pitch. If the teeth could be replaced there was a chance of getting it to play again.

Guessing the pitch of missing teeth for this comb was relatively easy but there remained the risk of having enough tooth thickness to remove metal at the tip to raise the pitch if the guess was wrong. In fact all the teeth were replaced but it proved too difficult to get the tuning scale exactly right. Worse, soldered teeth are more vulnerable to failure because the slightest reverse rotation offers no resistance to the soldered joint. Fig. 2 shows the comb cleaned ready for a tooth segment to be soldered in place. Although the repair looks messy it does not matter because the movement is hidden in its shell. However, soldered teeth are very vulnerable if operated in reverse, which was the original cause of the damage; so this first attempt was abandoned.

Fortunately, Ted Brown had some spare combs that were identical in shape except for


1
2
3A
3B
Restoring a Musical Marotte
4
5A
5B
5C
6A
6B
7

the comb screw holes. The only combs available were of an entirely different scale and their top teeth were tuned lower than the damaged comb but had insufficient thickness to raise the pitch the required amount. The only alternative was to transpose the original scale down.

This was the best option because it preserves the original melody. Several transpositions were tried 'on paper' and then the notes played on a piano to get the sense of the scalar pitch and some idea of the melody. A transposition closest to the scale of the replacement comb was chosen in order to limit the number of teeth needing to be re-tuned. With a total of 29 tiny teeth, it is a tedious 'get-it-right-first-time' task and the pitch only needed to be lowered by a full tone.

Steel is much lighter than lead and there is usually insufficient thickness in the top treble range to raise a treble tooth much more than a semitone. Lowering the pitch requires the addition of more weight by either using a 'touch' of solder or soldering on a lead weight. Fortunately, the guess for the replacement comb proved to be correct and it played perfectly first time.

The real problems now manifested themselves. Fig. 1 shows the badly worn top bearing with a depression that was made to form a spur. The spur acts as a non-reversing device so that if the marotte (or manivelle) is rotated in the wrong direction, it prevents damage to the comb. Combs are placed at an angle of about 7 degrees sloping upward and slightly above the axis of the cylinder. Teeth lift just a little when played but, should the cylinder rotate backwards, they are pushed down so far that they either distort or snap.

When the spiral screw rotates the cylinder in reverse, cylinder pins contact the comb sufficient to lift the winding handle so that the end of the endless engages the spur. Unfortunately, the spur, seen as the slight depression made in the bearing, Fig. 1, was worn as was the endless. Neither could be restored so a different form of anti-rotation device was needed.

An alternative is to use the great wheel as the non-return mechanism. Figs. 3A & 3B show how this can be done. A piece of spring, mounted on a wooden base is shaped to engage the great wheel gear teeth. Two holes in the spring allow one screw to hold it fast and the other screw to adjust the tension and height of the spring. It works well but can still be unreliable if too much force is applied when rotating the marotte. The rules of 'play' are quite simple: Don't rotate it often, don't apply too much force, and it is far better and safer just to rotate the handle not the marotte in order to hear the tune. As with all restored antiques; they are old, expensive and need to be treated with care.

The cylinder pins were badly worn and rounded so it was set up in the lathe and re-ground. Fig. 4 shows a simple but effective lathe 'centre' made out of wood. The cylinder is mounted between the centres and the drive pin engages a hole in the cylinder end cap. The grindstone is mounted on the cross slide. Very gentle cuts, about 'one thou' at a time, are all that is required, as well as keeping the lathe bed covered and clean.

Fig. 5A shows the re-ground cylinder, the robust replacement top bearing and the endless. The endless shaft was badly bent so had to be straightened; it was also worn at the bearing and had to be re-sleeved and machined. Fig. 5B shows the old top bearing. Fig 5C shows the items assembled. Note the wear on the outer edge of the great wheel and the extra dowel in the replacement top bearing. It is a nail with the head left on to facilitate removal.

The mechanical part of the restoration was now complete so attention was turned to its spherical case, which had to be restored. A wooden mould was made in the shape of a

half ball, Figs. 6A & B and covered in cling film to prevent the paper sticking to the wood. The damaged half was put into a saucepan of water and gently heated so that the layers of paper became soft. Old brown sticky paper, Fig. 6B, on the inside of the case was peeled away and the softened case placed on the mould. The papers were still sticky and could be slid over each other so that missing parts of the hemisphere were complete. Allowed to dry, the inside of the flimsy shell was re-inforced with triangular pieces of computer paper smeared with PVA glue. The top half and bottom halves of the case were then sprayed with an art lacquer to protect the surface from further damage. The result was a very strong shell. Finally, a wooden annulus was made and glued to the underside of the base, Fig 7 (annulus not shown).

Fig. 7 also shows the state of the marotte's cape or shawl. It was extremely fragile and badly torn so would not survive. A new faux-silk shawl was overlaid and the old one point-stitched to preserve it to show its provenance. Similarly, an underskirt was missing with little trace of the original. It may have been red. Trying to guess was impossible so another faux silk sleeve skirt was made for effect. It can easily be removed and replaced. It also contrasts well with the black shawl, and helps to hide the rather ugly newspaper case.

The lace overlay was dirty and discoloured. So, with the aid of cling film wrapped over the cape, it was treated with a laundry whitener, applied by hand, rinsed gently and dried with a hair dryer. The lace work was, fortunately, not silk and originally coloured cream. The marotte's head, glued onto a wooden peg, was also dirty, the hair (possibly human) was frayed and had been glued back on at some time. A warm, blunt scalpel blade enabled the old glue to be pared away so the face could be washed, the hair re-plaited and consolidated into a band and the felt hat cleaned. A folded black ribbon was then glued around the head to act as a base for re-gluing the hair and point-stitching the hat back in place. Fig. 8 (page 14) shows the marotte before restoration and Fig. 9 (below) when finished. Restoration complete.

It belonged to the grandmother of a member and as far as can be ascertained, was bought in France. However, the small bisque head is German but the maker's marks were not clear enough to decipher. It is nice to know that this little treasure had not just been well loved but extensively played, probably by several generations of children. The wear is part of its provenance. Was it worth the effort? Most of the fun in restoration is not the time or money spent but the satisfaction to know that a little musical toy, well over a hundred years old, can be seen and played once more. It remains a very old young lady and must still be treated with care and played as originally intended – but not too often.

Fig 9: The restored marotte

Yester Year

A street piano

Fig 1: The Princess Mary

In the UK we have been celebrating the suffragette and suffragist movements that gave women the right to vote. Suffragists were members of the militant Women's Social & Political Union (WPSU). It developed from Milicent Fawcett's National Union of Women's Suffrage (NUWS), founded in 1897. These were the Suffragettes who used non-violent means to achieve their objective, whereas Emmeline Pankhurst encouraged the use of violence when Parliament refused to respond to their reasonable demands for equality. They gained limited voting rights, including election to parliament as an MP, for the first time in 1918.

Just a few years earlier in 1914 Princess Mary (Fig. 1) produced a gift book (Fig. 2), all profits of which were given to the Queen's 'Work for Women's Fund' (Fig 3). She was known as the Princess Royal and Countess of Harewood, the third child of King George V and Queen Mary.

Queen Mary (1867-1953) was born in Kensington Palace and was baptized Victoria Mary Augusta Louise Olga Pauline Claudine Agnes. She used the names Victoria Mary until she became Queen when she married King George V in 1893. She received little formal education but spoke French, German and Italian. Despite this lack of formal learning, quite commonly imposed on women at the time, she was interested in literature, art, history and German politics. Thus, along with the suffragists and suffragettes, the women of this era, whether Royals or commoners, had immense influence on public opinion and changed the course of history.

Princess Mary's Gift Book was in gentle vein, consisting of contributions by various authors such as J. M. Barrie of Peter Pan fame and Arthur Conan Doyle, author of the adventures of Sherlock Holmes. Amongst these contributions was Fleur-de-Lis, by lesser known author Kate Douglas Wiggin who wrote a then famous children's book called Sunnybrook Farm.

Fleur-de-Lis was the pseudonym of a character in the story called Marie Hortense Amélie Dupont. This sad story of poverty with its caption (Fig. 4) is introduced as follows: "There were only two rooms for father, mother and child (i.e. Fleur-de-Lis) and these were in a very dreary tenement house, for Pierre Dupont, a stranger in the land, was having a desperate struggle

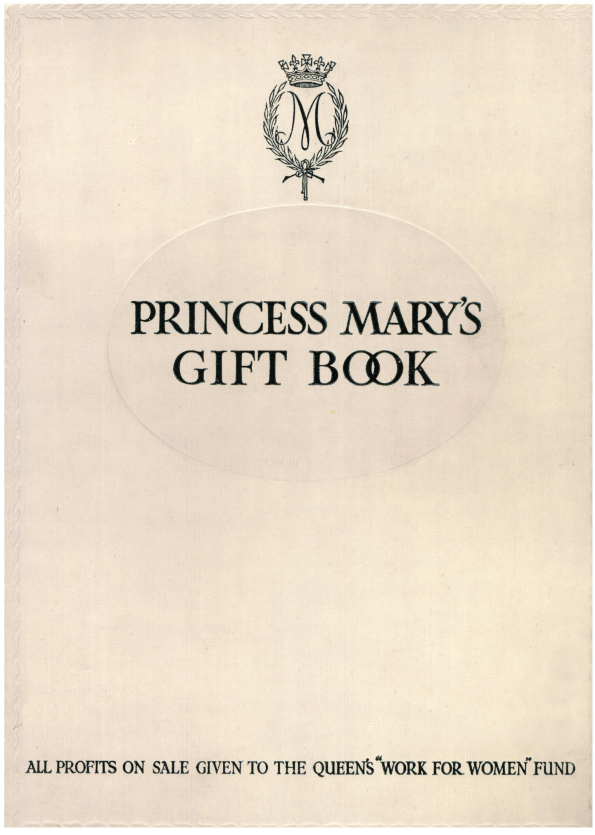


Fig 2: The Gift Book - front cover

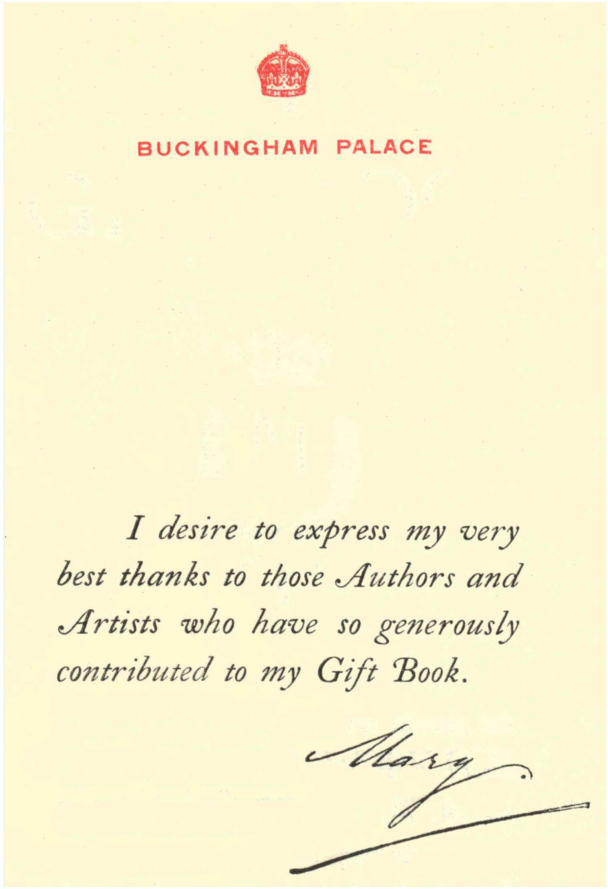


Fig 3: Mary's Inscription

with poverty… a maimed and broken man, he had to turn his (one useful) hand … to crank a street piano".

The story relates how he wheeled it through the streets from morning till night. Some people wanted to hear the piano but others did not! But he scraped enough money to meet their frugal needs. His wife accompanied him, carrying the baby Fleur-de-Lis in her arms, collecting pennies in a tambourine. They were in fact economic refugees from the upper classes of the French Republic who fled to the protection of the UK but who had then sunk into poverty. How little have times changed from then until now!

Typical of these Victorian and post Victorian stories, the mother, Marie, dies and: "…the piano suddenly grew uncertain, and subject to grave musical lapses, attacks of aphasia in the middle of some tunes, and asthma in others; so that the hoot of the stony-hearted bystander and the ruffian small boy became familiar to Pierre's ears; for he could not afford to buy new cylinders (sic) to fit into the old instrument."

He had saved enough pennies to buy a new barrel with the tunes 'Annie Rooney' and 'Old Comrades'. Fleur was still a young child so Pierre had a baby carriage made to fit one end of the old barrel piano. Fig. 5 shows the scene of Janet, Fleur and Pierre with their piano and its pram made out of wooden sugar packing case and two bicycle wheels.

On the first anniversary of Marie's death it was cold and raining. Pierre covered the piano with a rubberised cloth. He was in the more fashionable avenues of red brick houses. He cranked the handle to play 'Love's Young Dream'. It seemed to him that with every revolution: 'he twisted the chords of his aching heart'. He finished Love's Young Dream and continued with the Boulanger March.

Then, at the window of a house appeared a young girl aged about eighteen or nineteen accompanied by excited children: "She had a beautiful, rather serious face and it brightened into amusement." Pierre played on, now with 'I dreamt that I dwelt in marble halls'. Desperately he played tunes in turn, hoping that he would earn more pennies. The piano jerked through several bars making a final dash into 'No one to love'.

The young girl runs down the driveway, slips on her jacket and gives Pierre a piece of silver before dashing back into the house to her mother: "Please look out of the window, mama", says the girl. Mother sees Pierre and Fleur but assumes that he is not disabled: "They all play the tricks of their trade by binding one arm down to the side", she says. Her daughter disagrees but the mother is cynical. The daughter says: "I was dropping the quarter into her (Fleur's) hand when he touched his cap and said '*Pardon*, give it to me *s'il vous plait'* in a French accent".

Mother and daughter Janet are at loggerheads about the validity of Pierre's condition until finally she agrees to give Pierre half a dollar*. Janet flings open the window and cries: "*Bon soir, Fleur-de-Lis! Bon soir, monsieur! Revenez bientôt, je vous prie!" Pierre responds: "Dis bon soir, bébé! Je vous remercis mille-fois, ma'selle; Je revendrai"*. So the anniversary of Marie's death: "did not go out in utter blackness after all."

Fig 4: The Caption to 'Fleur-de-Lis'

Fig 5: The illustration of the barrel piano and baby carriage.

***Coda:**

The story seems to have been influenced by Mrs. O. F. Walton's story Christie's Old Organ.

The term 'dollar' was in common use as slang for the UK currency for a five shilling coin, also called a Crown. Hence a half dollar was the slang for the half-crown coin (two shillings and six pence). It was worth quite a lot by today's standards.

In 1910 most women chain makers, a common occupation at that time, bending and welding by heat and hammer the interlocked links of chains, were earning about 5 shillings a week for more than 50 hours work. *(In Hampshire from the middle of the 19th Century, and no doubt in other places too, the term 'chain maker' applied to women employed to make fusee chains for clocks and watches – Ed)*. They had been awarded an increase by the Chain Trade Board, which more than doubled their earnings to 11 shillings a week. Many employers refused to pay, leading to a strike that lasted for several weeks but the women won their case and the employers had to pay.

Princess Mary's book was, of course, published at the outbreak of the Great War, 1914-1918.

Record brands that Ch & J Ullmann Frères were agents for in France from 1901 (Zon-o-phone), 1904 (Odeon) and c. 1910 (Fonotipia) - see article on opposite page

Charles Ullmann's Baton and Bells

by David Evans

Whilst perhaps not considered to be in the highest echelons of musical box manufacture, Ch. Ullmann Frères were certainly the largest producers in France. Serial number 6679 was made about 1896, so as the business started in 1881, their output appears to average about 440 per year, which puts them way behind Paillard or Nicole. In terms of quality they are much like other manufacturers, most of whom bought in the component parts. Arrangements are generally good but not outstanding, judging by the extant examples. Anthony Bulleid did not produce a dating chart for them, nor make any comment upon their boxes in his published works. Nevertheless, they did produce some interesting examples, some of which are shown in this article.

As dealers in and presumably manufacturers of all sorts of musical instruments, the business must have prospered, judging by their ability to finance other businesses, as discussed below. See the advertisement for Thibouville-Lamy on page 7 for the range of instruments stocked. Rivals Ullmann no doubt had similar.

Background

Charles Ullmann was thought to be a German-speaking Swiss. With his brother Jacques he lived in Paris and set up as musical instrument dealers in 1881 at Faubourg Poissonière 11. The firm's head office remained there until 1924. The firm was known as Charles Ullmann and was also listed in trade directories at rue du Tyrol 9 in L'Auberson in the municipality of Ste. Croix, Switzerland, where they claimed their musical boxes were manufactured. From 1882 until circa 1904 they were also styled as Charles & Jacques Ullmann at the same address. In 1886 the firm took over the business of Philippe Cuendet of L'Auberson. In 1896 Charles withdrew from the firm briefly, leaving Jacques in partnership with Alphonse Norman, still at the rue du Tyrol address. Charles rejoined the firm in 1898 and the company name became Ch. & J. Ullmann. The firm prospered and by 1904 they were advertising musical instruments, phonographs and Zonophones but no mention of musical boxes[1].

Meanwhile, in America, the Berliner Gramophone Company was busy developing the gramophone from a toy to a working talking machine. They needed to promote it to the public and the company's directors approached an energetic New York promoter and advertising man named Frank Seaman. He took an optimistic view of the gramophone's future and proposed that Berliner's should make him the sole United States selling agent, and in return he would set up his own merchandising company to promote and distribute the machines. In 1896 the Berliner Gramophone Company signed a fifteen-year contact with Seaman , who formed the National Gramophone Company of New York City. Sales boomed and the National Gramophone Company made considerable profits. However, patent wars soon cropped up[2] and Seaman found himself in the middle of them. Since the very basic sound reproduction patents were being challenged in the courts, in March 1899 Seaman transformed his National Gramophone Company into the National Gramophone Corporation of Yonkers and set about manufacturing gramophones himself. He set up a separate company called the Universal Talking Machine Company to manufacture the machines. In 1898 the National Gramophone Company had announced that it had reached the $1 million mark in revenue[3]. Suddenly in October 1899 orders from Seaman to the Berliner Company ceased, to the chagrin of Berliner. Seaman began advertising his new machines as the Zonophone.

Around the turn of the century, the Gramophone Company in London (the British arm of the American parent company) had started to amass a considerable library of recordings. The Zonophone had proved a great success, but had a limited range of recordings to sell its customers. Seaman found an expert tactician named F M Prescott, a New Yorker who had built up a thriving business exporting Edison phonographs to Europe. He joined Zonophone and made grand tours of Europe in 1899 and 1900, signing up local distributors and extolling the virtues of the Zonophone machines. In order to take on the Gramophone Company, the International Zonophone Company was incorporated in 1901 with Prescott as managing director and Seaman as principal stock holder. Prescott located the head office in Berlin and started to build an extensive catalogue of recordings. To minimise costs, he appointed Zonophone agents all over Europe. These agencies would finance all recordings in their territories and take charge of all matters relating to artists and repertoire. Records would be manufactured in the Zonophone plant in Berlin. The agent for France was Ch. and J. Ullmann[4].

The reaction of the Gramophone Company, the major player in Europe and viewing its up and coming rival with concern, was to make an offer to buy Zonophone in 1903 that Seaman and his fellow American stockholders could not refuse. It was a hostile take-over as far as Prescott was concerned, as his company was wound up and he was out of a job. He created a new business, the International Talking Machine Company. His main financial backers were Ch.& J. Ullmann Frères. In deference

to them, he named his records after a famous theatre in Paris, the Odéon. Prescott built a factory in Germany and began marketing Odeon records and talking machines in 1904. The records made a profound impression when first exhibited, as they were double-sided. Up until that time all gramophone records had been single-sided, the reverse being either blank or impressed with a trade mark[5].

In Italy, the Societá Italiana di Fonotipia began operations in Milan in 1904. It was the world's first record company to concentrate solely on serious music. Its directors included directors of grand opera companies, including La Scala in Milan. Its managing director was Alfred Michaelis, formerly the Gramophone Company's Milan agent. Later the Ullmann Brothers created a company (Fonotipia Limited) in London to purchase the Italian Fonotipia and entered into partnership with Michaelis. They became distributors of Fonotipia records as well as Odeon records and machines[6,7]. By 1922 Fonotipia had been absorbed into the Odeon stable.

Musical Boxes

The Ullmann company made, or at least sold, musical boxes of all sizes, but it seems their main business was in smaller ones. Picture 1 is of an example with thirty one teeth. It has typical Ullmann featues - the mark stamped on the comb and governor and the boss on the inside back of the case.

Picture 1: Small Ullmann box with 31 teeth

Picture 2 is of a manivelle by them, and its movement in Picture 3.

Picture 4 is of a lovely little box with four bells with mandarin ringers.

Not all Ullmann boxes were small. Picture 5 shows a 12-air tremolo zither box by them. Its tune sheet is as TSB 309, though a different colour.

Picture 2: Ullmann Manivelle

Picture 3: The movement of the manivelle.

Picture 4: Small mandarins & bells box

Picture 5: 12-air Tremolo Zither

The firm also acted as agents for other manufacturers, Billon-Haller being one of them, and marketed their own productions through agents.

Picture 6: Ullmann bell box case

One of Ullmann's mid-sized boxes is illustrated in Picture 6 and on the front cover. This is an eight-air box with seated mandarin bell ringers, the cylinder 11", the comb with 71 musical teeth, plus 5 for the bells and one for the conductor. The unusual thing about the arrangement of the movement is that it has five bells. The centre figure (Pictures 7 and 8) rings one bell and wields a conductor's baton in his right hand[8]. The baton and arm has its own set of pins on the cylinder (Picture 9) so that it is perfectly in synchronism with the rhythm of the melody on all eight airs. Another rather unusual feature is that the bells are angled forward rather than standing on vertical pedestals. This makes them rather more visual and enables the mandarin figures to be viewed more readily.

Picture 7: Seated conductor

The tune sheet is as TSB 309 in the second supplement of the Tune Sheet Book, and similar to that one, it has a small serial number, 6779, in the Programme panel in the bottom centre of the sheet, and a larger number (7012) on the plinth of the cherub column on the right. Bulleid suggests that these latter may be agents'numbers, though there is no mention of an agent on the tune sheet. Could

Picture 8: The colourful conductor. The bell is angled forward so that the conducting action can be seen more easily.

Picture 9: The cylinder pins which operate the conductor's arm and baton can be seen in front of tooth no. 6

they perhaps be gamme numbers? The serial number is also stamped on the bass end cylinder bearing bridge and on the bass end of the cylinder.

The tunes are basically music hall songs and date from

1892 to 1895, so we can conclude that the date of manufacture was probably 1895-6.

Tune list (Picture 10):

1. Linger Longer Loo – Sidney Jones – (1894)
2. The Farewell – Keller
3. Salute my Bicycle – Geo Le Brunn. Sung by Marie Lloyd circa 1895.
4. Happy Darkies – Arthur E Godfrey (1892)
5. La Didily Idily Umtiay – C M Rodney (1894)
6. Over the Hills – Ivan Caryll (1895)
7. I went to Paris with Papa – Leslie Stuart (1895)
8. And her Golden Hair – Felix (Mac)Glennon (1894).

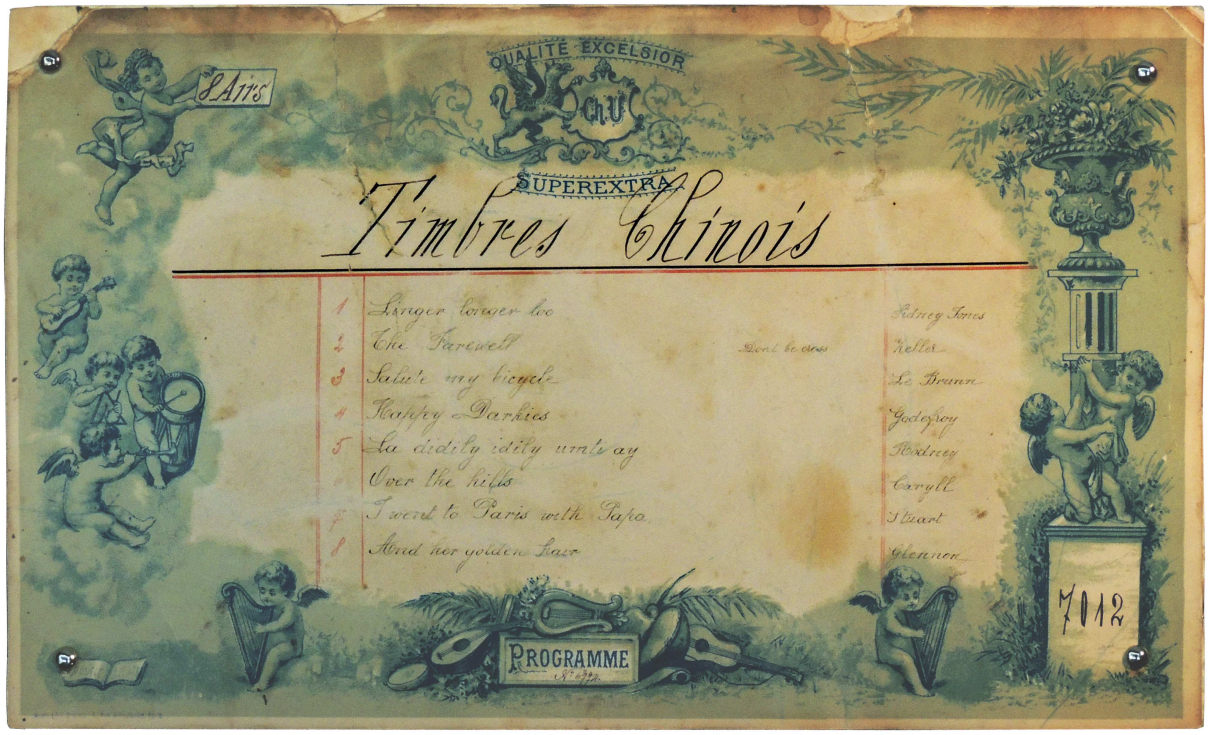
The Ullmann trade mark is present on the governor cock (Picture 13) and the comb (Picture 14), without the "Ch. U." initials, as in Plate 6.87.3 of Bellamy's book.

Pictures 13 & 14: Ullmann mark stamped on governor and comb

Picture 11: The serial number below Programme

NOTES

1. For more details about Ullmann Brothers see Bellamy, Paul: "The Music Makers of Switzerland", AMBC 2015 section 6.87 and 1904 letter heading Plate 6.87.4.
2. See Gelatt, Roland: "The Fabulous Phonograph 1877 – 1977", Cassell, London 1977.
3. Tschmuck, Peter: "Creativity and Innovation in the Music Industry", Springer, Dordrecht 2006.
4. Gelatt, Roland.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Bellamy, Paul
8. A musical box by an unknown maker with six bells, three mandarin ringers and a separate conductor at the right hand side, facing the bell ringers, can be seen on Youtube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tjXdZgSVoX8, uploaded by Vincent Freeman Antiques of London.



Picture 10: Tune sheet for bell box serial no. 6779

How Music Was Made

Music Boxes at Auction

By Kegan Harrison*

In the mid to late 19th century, Cylinder Music Boxes, along with their close cousins Disc Music Boxes, were the only way a household could play 'recorded' music. Prior to Thomas Edison's invention of the Phonograph and later the Gramophone – once seen in every home in the land and now in almost none – music boxes were popular as after-dinner entertainment.

Like all technologies, they were produced at differing levels of quality and complexity to suit budgets and tastes. Today there is a nice simple way for us to tell the wheat from the chaff – count the teeth! Teeth are to music boxes that cylinders are to cars; the more you have the better, as every different note a music box plays requires a tooth. The more teeth, the more notes you can have, which results in better sound definition within the tonal range of the box.

How you can own a piece of music history, whatever your budget:At the simplest end of the scale, we have this Swiss box with a short cylinder (six inches), 56 teeth, and which plays six tunes. This is the Fiat 500 of the Music Box world (*by Ami Rivenc - Ed);* a good starter model produced in large numbers for the mass market. It sold for £120.

This mid-range Swiss Music box has a longer cylinder (13 inches), allowing twice as many teeth as the previous example, and which plays eight tunes. It has resisted the temptation of many of its counterparts to add any 'bling' in the form of, quite literally, bells and whistles (drums, percussion blocks and bellow driven organs were also added). This is a sporty BMW without all the add-ons, and sold for £300.

At the top end we get the Ferrari of cylinder music boxes, the Overture Box. Like its automotive counterpart, it has no flashy gimmicks as all the money is spent on getting the best possible sound. The engineering difficulty of getting more than 200 densely packed teeth on a 10-inch comb in tune and the pins in the cylinder to be exactly in the right place is huge, and to make things more difficult, there are three tunes included on a single cylinder. These boxes are masterpieces of their art and are very rare. This fine example sold for £5,200.

Kegan Harrison is the Mechanical Music Specialist at Tennants Auction House of Leyburn, North Yorkshire.

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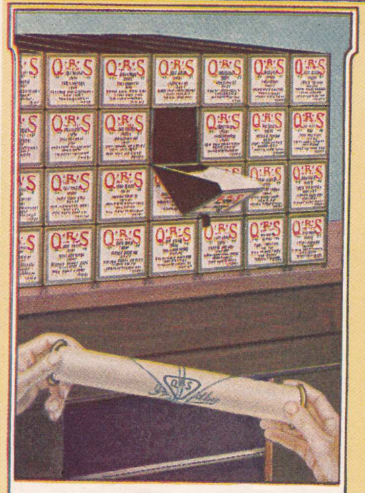
Q·R·S

TRADE MARK REGISTERED

PLAYER ROLLS *are Better* -so is the New Box



Rolls instantly removed and replaced without disturbing other roll boxes. The open box shows where the played roll goes.

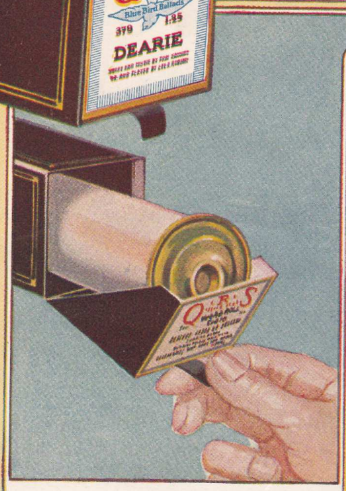
Now comes the final refinement . . . . the last touch of convenience in player piano use . . . as much as the self-starter was to the auto.

The new Q·R·S box in which this famous roll comes without extra cost or price advance, is a marvel of convenience and simplicity.

It has no lids. One pull at the little end tab and the roll is in your hand. A second of time replaces the roll and closes the box.

Roll boxes can now be neatly piled and stay that way. This, because with the new Q·R·S box, every roll is instantly accessible without in any way disturbing the other boxes in the pile. You take out the roll you want—not the box—that stays where it is.

Confusion and mixups are avoided. It's as easy to put the roll back as to lay it down.



No lids—end opening. One pull—roll in and out in a second.

WHEN YOU BUY A PLAYER PIANO

Ask your Dealer to Show you this New Wonder Box

Book Review:

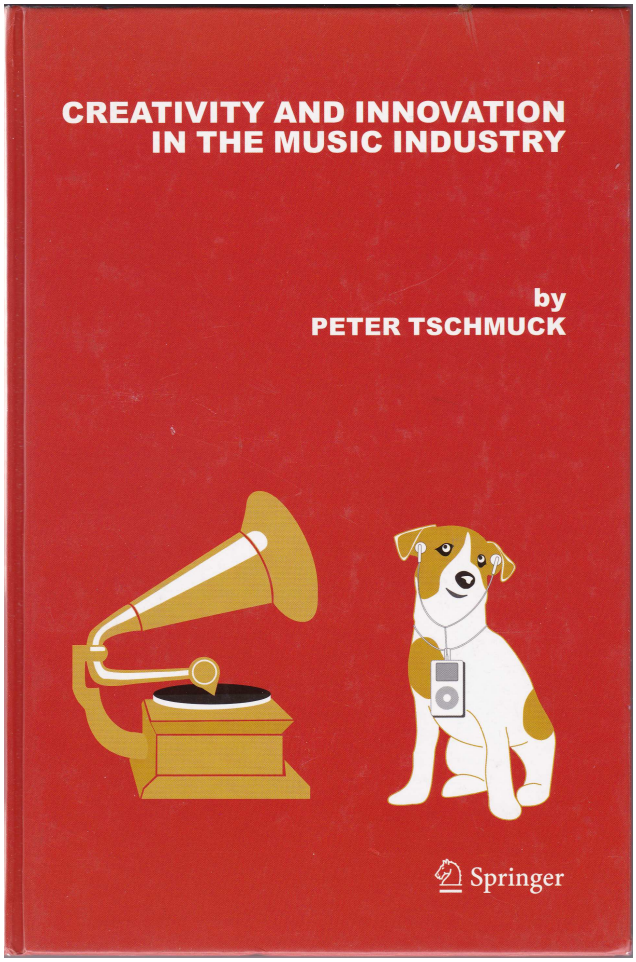
Tschmuck, Peter – Creativity and Innovation in the Music Industry – published by Springer, Dordrecht, The Netherlands 2006, Second Edition, March 2012, available now price US$103.88 in paperback.

A very comprehensive work on the business side of the music industry, this book covers the period from before the emergence of the phonographic industry, through the jazz and swing eras to heavy metal, punk rock and disco. It includes formats ranging from Edison cylinders to MP3 files and covers virtually all of the world's businesses involved in the recording, production and distribution of these formats.

The author states: 'A history of the music industry comprehensively covering industrial music production throughout its existence and in all its aspects is yet to be written.' Peter Tschmuck has come very close to writing it. He continues: 'This study has another goal – the search for an explanation for the emergence of novelty in the music industry'.

So why would this be of interest to mechanical music enthusiasts?

Where else could one find out about the relationship between Polyphonwerke AG and Polyphon Sprechmaschinen und Schallplatten GmbH of Vienna, Nordisk Polyphon AS in Copenhagen, Nordisk Polyphon AB of Stockholm, Deutsche Grammophon AG of Berlin and Hanover and Kraft Behrens GmbH of Leipzig? Did one know that the British record manufacturer, Decca Records, was created in 1929 by British Brunswick, itself founded by Brunswick-Balke-Collender of USA and Polyphon of Germany? Or that the French musical box makers, brothers Ch & J Ullmann, were the French representatives for Zonophone records in 1910 and founded the Odeon label as the International Talking Machine Company of Weissensee, near Berlin, and were the first to introduce double-sided records? Or of the battle



between Carl Lindström and Polyphon AG for control of the phonograph and record industry in Germany?

Though the book concentrates principally on the recording industry and the machine manufacturers, it also includes chapters on the influence of radio broadcasting on the music industry, pointing out that whereas in USA, Victor, and in UK, HMV, regarded radio broadcasting as a hostile competitor, had they had a little foresight, they could easily and cheaply have set up their own broadcasting stations in the mid to late 1920s and used them to advertise their products!

It is impossible to do justice to a book of this complexity in a short review. Suffice it to say that anyone interested in the industry that followed musical boxes as entertainment should really obtain a copy. David Evans

All Things Bright & Beautiful

A study of a rather unusual Hymn Box by Paul Bellamy

Carol & David Beck supplied photographs and details of a Nicole Hymn Box, following a discussion on the Mechanical Musical Digest (MMD) forum. This musical exchange enables questions to be asked, answers given and for knowledge to be shared freely amongst its worldwide membership. One of the discussions was on Nicole Hymn Boxes and the difference between hymns and oratorios. My contribution was as follows:

I am sure many will express an opinion on this so I hope my response accords with others. If one studies the gammes* of musical boxes by most makers there will always be some that may have just one religious air amongst others. It may be a hymn, an aria or an oratorio. Sometimes there is a National Anthem in the mix. The term Hymn Box has come into common use - perhaps not so common at the time the musical box was made, because gammes that comprised a complete suite of hymns were very popular at the time. Religion had a powerful grip on many parts of society such that it was frowned upon if one did not recognise the Sabbath as a day of church and religious contemplation whether of Catholic or Protestant inclination. Thus a box full of hymns may have been used for family services or just for family or personal entertainment, mainly on the Sabbath day!

Nicole is the best source of study because more of his hymn boxes have been recorded than any other. The first is about 1840 and like most of his, a 6-air movement. About 1848 there were, surprisingly, Mandoline hymn arrangements. In 1856 there was a 10-air cylinder musical box and by about 1860 the first Forte Piano Nicole 8-air musical box. By about 1863 the first two-per-turn Nicole appears. The last recorded 'Nicole' hymn box was in 1889 but Charles Brun now owned the business from about 1880 and it was in his 50,000 series. Some of the most popular later versions were the Moody & Sankey hymn boxes, but these were not made by Nicole as far as is known.

Oratorios should not be confused with hymns because they are a different musical genre. The first 4-air Oratorio Nicole version is 1849. Both 4- and 6-air movements continue until the mid 1860s after which date they become few and far between. Two of the 4-air movements are Forte Piano, both circa 1859. The first 8-air movement appears in 1851 and makes an occasional appearance until the late 1870s, all of which appear to be a 'standard' 8-air format. The first 12-air two-per-turn version is listed in 1860 and quite a few of these are Forte Piano. One-per-turn 12-air movements commence about 1870, only one of which is listed as Mandoline, circa 1870. However, 12-air 1/T Mandoline movements are common in the 50,000 series. 2/T versions start with serial 37092, circa 1860, the last one being serial 46265, circa 1873. Two in the 40,000 series are Forte Piano.

Fig 1: Nicole piano forte 3-per-turn hymn box

So what is an Oratorio? It is principally a vocal work, usually for solo voice accompanied by choir, often with some kind of instrumental accompaniment. Hence it carries the etymology of an oration or spoken statement, not necessarily religious but often so. The oration is usually in the form of words from a religious text. Of course, musical boxes could not sing but the listener would surely have the words in 'the mind's eye'.

The term Aria is, of itself, misleading when one sees other terms such as Oratorio. An aria is also a vocal solo, sometimes duet, used especially in an oratorio or opera. Popular in the 17th and 18th centuries, it was usually in three sections and organised more formally than a song. The third section often repeated the first with the second as a contrasting strain.

Thus, if one wants to be pedantic, the oratorio should not be confused with Hymn Boxes, although one can find arias, oratorios and even national anthems amongst the mix of Hymn Box gammes. Any musical box with religious airs but few, maybe no, hymns is best classified as a Sacred Airs box."

*Gamme is strictly the musical scale for every tooth on a comb that accommodates all the airs pinned onto the cylinder. The comb and hence its group of airs is allocated a gamme number. If the gamme is known, there is a good chance that all the tunes are known as well. But be aware, sometimes the tunes are arranged in a different order or perhaps one of the airs has been exchanged for another one that still fits the tuning scale. If so, the word 'bis' may be found somewhere on the movement, usually on the tune sheet. It is French for 'repeat'. If there is no tune sheet, the gamme

Fig 2: Nicole stamp on the bedplate

number can often be found on the lead weight of the bass tooth. *Thus Carol and David were prompted to add the following details. It concerned a fine Piano Forte 3-per-turn, 18-air Hymn Box, Fig 1. The cylinder is 16¼ inches long x 4" diameter with a 160-tooth comb. The serial is 46346, dating it 1873 according to the HAV Bulleid dating chart, hence a 'true' Nicole made when the last family member was in charge of the business. The two brothers Pierre-Möise and David-Elie had died, the first much earlier in 1857 and his brother in 1871. Thus the owner of the business was Pierre François Elie Nicole, the son of David-Elie, aged about 39 at the time this musical box was made. It has a very unusual feature for this type a of cartel at this period of time because the bedplate is cast brass with ribbed machined surface, Fig. 2. The words 'Nicole Frères Geneve' are stamped on the left rear of the bedplate and the name Nicole Frères stamped on each comb. A Keith Prowse & Co., London logo is on the back inside of the case, Fig. 3. Note that it is headed 'patent', the meaning of which is uncertain.*

Keith, Prowse was one of the last major London Nicole Agents. Robert William Keith (1767–1846) was a musical composer, an instrument maker and an organist at the New Jerusalem Church, Friars Street, London. He opened a shop there in the late 1700s. He and William Prowse (1801–1886) entered into partnership to form Keith, Prowse & Co in 1830. Prowse was also a musical instrument manufacturer and music publisher.

The case, which measures 29¼ x 12½ x 10 inches high is rosewood veneered front and sides with triple brass banding. The front has an enamel and brass inlay 7½ " x 3¼" and a similar one 15½" x 5½" inlay on the lid. The silver-plated tune plaque lists all the tunes, Fig. 4. It is indicative of high quality and a study of the tunes is quite revealing, showing a mix of hymns and oratorios from a number of sources:

Händel (George Frideric, note the Germanic spelling) Oratorios:

Dead marche (sic. March) in (from) Saul. A funeral anthem, which is a type of hymn in two parts).

Halleyluyah (Hallelujah) Chorus from the Messiah.

Fig 3: Keith, Prowse label and fine piano forte combs

See the Conquering Hero Comes, from Judas Maccabeus.

Hayden. Two Oratorios from the Creation.

With verdure (green),

Heavens are telling

Moore (Sir Thomas):

Hymnal (a collection of hymns) Sound the loud timbrel (oe'r Eygypt's dark sea, from 'The song of Miriam'):

Bowling: The reference to Bowling is unclear but there was a Blanche Bowling associated with writing hymns. Frederic William Faber (1814-1863). Pilgrims of the night, from the hymnal: 'Hark hark my soul Angelic songs are swelling'.

Malan: Hymnal: Before jehova's (Sic, Jehova's) aweful (throne), words by Isaac Watts.

Hymns:

Hark the Herald (Angels sing) by Charles Wesley, written as a Christmas carol from his collection of Hymns & Sacred Poems.

The vital spark (of heavenly fame). A Danish Hymn. Words by Edward Harwood

Good (Sic, God) moves in a mysterious way William Cowper:

Christ the Lord (is risen again) an Easter hymn by Michael Weisse (1531):

Rock of Ages, written by the Reverend Augustus Montague Toplady (1763)

Bousseau's dream? Probably a misspelling for Jean Jacques Rousseau, a philosopher, writer and composer, born in Geneva (1712-1778). Originally a secular serenade with the words 'Days of absence sad and dreary' from his opera Le Devin du Village. A *devin* was some form of oracle or soothsayer, someone who could look into the future. Later it was referred to as Rousseau's Dream and the piece incorporated in a hymnal. Franz Schubert (1797-1828) composed or arranged the work, no doubt promoting its popularity. Rue Rouseau was named after him.

Fig 4: The beautifully engraved and silvered tune sheet

Jesus lover of my soul, Charles Wesley, Hymns & Sacred Poems.

Lo He comes (with clouds descending). Original words by Charles Cennick (1752), rewritten by Charles Wesley who attributed the tune called Helmsley to Thomas Olivers.

Thy Will be Done, the words of The Lord's Prayer set to a number of different airs.

In conclusion it is reasonable to call this a Hymn Box but a better description might be to call it a Sacred Airs Musical Box. It incorporates Oratorios and hymns because in its remarkable variety of religious works, it has an eclectic mix of religious music of the time, much of which has disappeared from the modern repertoire. Old standards such as Rock of Ages and the Lord's Prayer have musically lasted to the present day, some with different melodies to the words. Charles Wesley made hymn singing a popular pastime not just in Chapels but also in the home and at out-doors gatherings. Hayden, Schubert and Handel were popular with the 'upper classes'. So who and why would a person want to buy such an expensive musical item? Clearly, it was someone with a broad taste. Was the purchase purely for religious reasons? Who can tell, but music has an entertainment as well as inspirational and emotional elements. Thus entertainment that would not be 'frowned upon' on the Sabbath day must have had its place and this marvellous example would 'fit the bill!!' This study shows that there is sometimes more to the hymn box than meets the ear and it is thanks to Carol & David Beck for allowing these details to be published!

PB

Association of Musical Box Collectors

Aims and Objectives:

To promote the enjoyment of mechanical music in all its forms.

To provide opportunities of social interaction to members through meetings and outings of musical and other historical interest.

To establish formal links and working relationships with other national and international organisations in the field of mechanical music.

To encourage research and publication of articles and books on the subject.

To reach out to the public and foster a wider interest in mechanical music.

Awaiting Image

AMBC sale items

The following items are for sale to AMBC members and those of its associated organisations. Surplus from sales will fund AMBC administration costs. The primary allocation will be towards research and further publication for the benefit of AMBC members and that of associated organisations.

Contact P. Bellamy or Ted Brown for P&P details: bellamypaul@btinternet.com or 01403823533.

A Passion for Barrel Pianos *by Milly & Colin Williams. (See illustration)*

This delightful and informative limited edition has over 60 illustrations and charts, most in colour. There are 12 sections dealing with aspects of casework, barrels, gearing, musical arrangement, marking and pinning.

The booklet is A4, ring-backed binding for easy use, with 40 pages of information between the covers.

UK price: £10 + P&P with comparable European and overseas costs to be negotiated.

Cylinder Musical Box Design & Repair by HAV Bulleid. £10 + P&P.

Cylinder Musical Box Technology by HAV Bulleid. £10 + P&P.

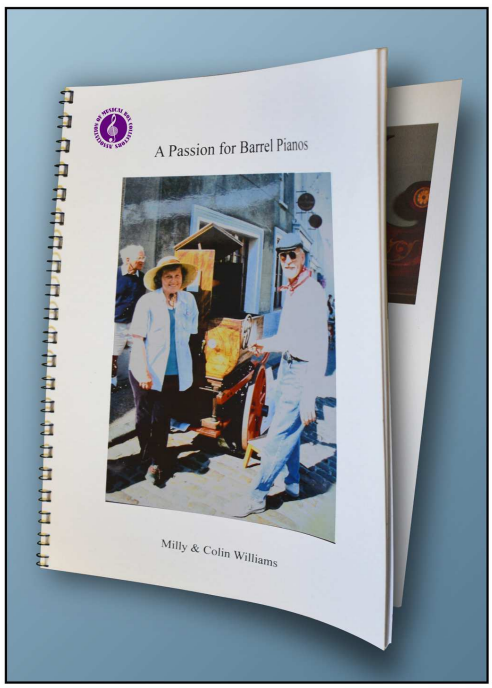
***Disc Musical Box Book** by K. McElhone. £50 + P&P.

***The Nicole Factor in Mechanical Music** by Paul Bellamy and contributing authors Cunliffe and Ison. £35 + P&P.

***Musical Box Tune Sheets** (The Tune Sheet Book) and three supplements, by HAV Bulleid.

***The Organette Book** by K. McElhone. £35 + P&P.

***Street musicians on Postcards** by Paul Bellamy. £8 + P&P.



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Polyphon 104 (19 5/8") Pediment:

I have some good reproduction pediments that can be supplied 'as is' in the white wood or stained and polished

Polyphon 105 (24½") Motor Cover. Polished and glazed.

Symphonion 25¼" Pediment, in excellent condition.

Restoration Project: Case, Motor, Bedplate and Combs to make a Symphonion 25¼"

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If you have not yet bought a copy of the book it is £5 plus postage - see advertisement inside front cover.

In future editions of ***Mechanical Music World*** *we shall be pleased to accept advertisements from members, both display (contact Ted Brown for details) and classified (contact the Editors). Let us know if we can help.*