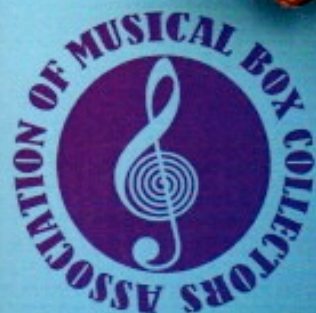


Issue 30, Autumn 2022

# MECHANICAL MUSIC WORLD



## A Sweet Automaton

An Association of Musical Box Collectors Publication

## From the Editors' Desk

Autumn - the Fall - 'Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness, close bosom friend of the maturing sun' etc., is upon us and we can look forward once more to pursuing our indoor hobbies and enjoying 'the boxes' quietly - hopefully without too much distraction.

We are delighted to bring you the article on the resurrection of a musical box case from Bernard Novell. 'Resurrection' is so descriptive of something which is not exactly restoration but gives an object new life. What a wonderful way to secure the future of the box and a fine musical movement, as well as to make a daughter very happy!

After the long ban on meetings it is good to see a picture of 'The Old School' (AMBC Meeting - August 2022). It brought back many memories of wonderful times at past meetings Ted and Kay have hosted there. It also highlights how much we have missed these 'get togethers' and cross-fertilisation of ideas.

Paul Bellamy's article on the pros and cons of 'restoration' is an example of this exchange of thoughts and opinions. It is also apposite that the two Pauls have taken the opportunity to right a few errors in past writings in the light of new research - always remember that 'He who never made a mistake never made anything!'

A visit to Kew Gardens is always a treat for those of us who enjoy a pleasant walk (even in the rain!) through lovely gardens - and now we have even more reason to go thanks to the incentive provided by David Soulsby's article on the restored Pagoda. The modern automaton approach to the presentation of historical facts is so imaginative that we long to get to see them. As for the 'Grimm' tale, what a wonderful representation! Obviously people who appreciate automata should keep an eye out for the Cabaret Mechanical Theatre's exhibitions. In the mean time, Ted Brown has showed us the secrets of four pieces in his own collection - all very intriguing.

It is very hard for us to realise that this is the thirtieth issue of Mechanical Music World and it is a good time to reflect on the amazing 'coverage' the journal has had. Our thanks go out to Chris and Juliet Fynes for the wonderful montage of the covers.

Christmas has come a little early at The Old School but we will take this opportunity to send you all our Good Wishes for the Festive Season.

The Chairman, Editors and all  
the members of the Committee.

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## Chairman's Report

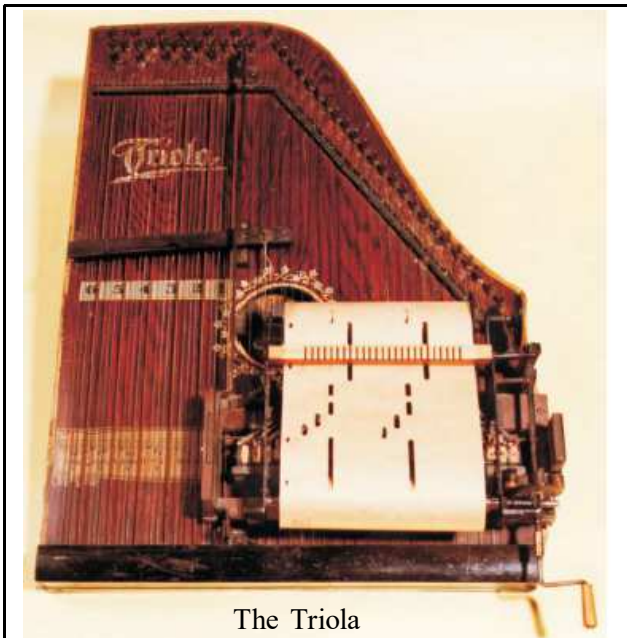
### Christmas

This issue is a bit special being No. 30. We are trying to keep the content varied but if any members want a specific subject covered please let us know and we will do our best to accommodate you.

I am pleased that, as a committee, we decided to print 100 of our latest book. as we only have a few left for sale at the time of writing but by the time you read this we may be sold out. For those in the USA please contact Nancy Fratti who may have copies left for sale.

I am having another Chanctonbury Ring meeting with a Christmas theme at The Old School on the 16<sup>th</sup> October. Although a little early it is because of the high cost of heating oil for this old place if I hold it in the colder months, such is the price we have to pay for Putin's war in Ukraine. So please contact me or Paul if you wish to attend - and bring your coat if necessary! Lunch will be supplied as usual.

Ted Brown  
Chairman



The Triola

*By turning a hand crank, a perforated paper roll is driven and at the same time a swinging hammer strip is set in motion on which there are small tear plates. By raising and lowering the plates, the melody plays quieter or louder. The accompaniment is plucked by hand by a finger ring. A corresponding information can be printed on the music rolls.*

From a German advertisement.

## Officers of the AMBC

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### Publication Dates for "Mechanical Music World"

Winter issue 28<sup>th</sup> January; Spring issue 28<sup>th</sup> April; Summer issue 28<sup>th</sup> July; Autumn issue 28<sup>th</sup> 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 MEETINGS

### Christmas Meeting

There will be a

### Chanctonbury Ring

meeting with a Christmas theme at The Old School on the 16<sup>th</sup> October. If you would like to attend please contact Ted Brown.

## A Quartet of Automata

Ted Brown

I think most of us have come across automata in some form or another and no doubt fascinated as to how they work. Obviously French, Swiss and English automata of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century were amazing and originated from the clock makers of the time. Bontemps, Vichy, Rochat, Decamps, Rouillet and Jaquet-Droz were some of the best.



*Fig. 1. The Nubian Prince.*

I have only a few basic automata - one of the simplest is the Nubian Prince, as described in an auction catalogue (see front cover). It was not working but I bought it and could see that the head was wrongly connected. After removing about 125gms of excess lead weight and re-balancing the head I got it working. The drive mechanism is an 'A' frame mantle clock movement with a clockwork spring that runs for 16 hours. A rod connected to the escapement wheel and a pallet propels the head from left to right and the pretty glass eyes move from right to left.

It was made as an advertising piece for the Belgian chocolate market to sit in shops with a tray of

Sarotti Full Milk chocolates. The tick-tock of the movement attracted customers to sample a chocolate in the hope they would buy more.



*Fig. 2. A 'Peter Pan' Scotch Oats Advertising Monkey.*

Apparently 51 of these advertising monkeys (Fig. 2) were made in the 1950s by a firm called Fyfes Engineering in Scotland. They were a copy of a French Descamp monkey, either singly or as a pair, mounted on a base. The drive was a 12-volt World War 2 military surplus motor supplied by a 240v/12 transformer.

It had seven operating cams driven through a double reduction worm gear giving a 1:1600 speed reduction. The cams make the monkey blink, wink, lift its spoon to his mouth, open his mouth, turn his head, nod his head in appreciation and wave his

*Mechanical Music World*

flag. The dressing gown appears to be made of parachute silk. The head is cast in aluminium and his hair is rabbit fur.

The automata motors were very noisy but it probably did not matter if displayed in shop windows to attract passers by. Most of the surviving examples have been altered and re-dressed to become pairs of card players or drinking companions. Having lasted 70 years or so they are doing very well.



*Fig. 3A. Charlie Weaver the Bar Tender.*

This was a late 1950s Japanese tinplate toy with a flexible plastic face (Figs. 3A & 3B). It is operated by two 1½ volt batteries. He shakes the cocktail shaker, pours a drink and tastes it. He then screws up his face, his cheeks glow red and smoke comes out of his ears. The glowing cheeks are illuminated by an internal bulb and the smoke is produced in a canister of oil with a heated element passing through it.



*Fig. 3B.*

Many of these toys, including Figs. 4A & B, were made from recycled tin sheets with Japanese and American writing on the underside.

If anyone knows where I can get 2 spare elements, please let me know - mine have burnt out!



*Fig. 4A. Mr. McGregor the Scottish Traveller.*

Mr. McGregor the Scottish Traveller. (Figs 4A & 4B.) He is of a similar age to Fig. 3 and also battery operated. He stands up, sits down, opens his eyes and smokes a cigar, which glows. The smoke is produced in the same way as Charlie McGregor.



Fig. 4B, showing the mechanism.

**The  
"Mikado"  
Polyphon  
Clock.**

No. 54u.

For Halls,  
Banqueting  
Rooms, and  
Private  
Residences.

This Instrument exhibits the  
closest possible following of  
the original tune, and is dis-  
tinguished by its purity and  
richness of tone.

Plays over 20 minutes.  
159 NOTES.

**Richly Carved  
Walnut Cabinet.**

Size, 105 x 34 x 21 ins.

**Price, £62 10 0**

The Clock is arranged to start  
the music at every hour, or the  
Music can be started at will.  
Extra Tunes, 6/- each.  
Tune 25 ins. diameter.

**THE ABOVE  
PRICES INCLUDE  
SIX TUNES.**

20

No. 54u.

**Grand Musical  
Hall Clock**

WITH "MIKADO"  
POLYPHON MOVEMENT.

159 Notes. Plays over twenty  
minutes.

Size, 120 x 45 x 25 ins.

•

**Eight-Day Clock**  
with very fine Quarter  
Repetition Gong.

At every hour the Clock will play  
one tune, but if desired the Music can  
also be started at any moment by  
means of a lever.

•

**Price, 105 Guineas.**

Price of each extra Tune, 6/-.  
Tune 25 ins. diameter.

---

**The  
"Mikado"  
Polyphon.**

No. 54. WITH LARGEST  
POLYPHON  
TUNE MADE.

Plays over Twenty minutes.  
159 NOTES.

Size 88 x 33 x 21 ins.

Price - £50 0 0

Extra Tunes, 6/- each.  
Tune 25 ins. diameter.

Can also be had with Penny-in-Slot attachment.

Same illustration as Mikado Clock  
on page 20, but in place of Clock,  
Ornamental Gallery Top.

The above prices  
includes 6 tunes.

**"Geisha" Polyphon  
Hall Clock**

Size, 109 x 27 x 14 ins. Price £45 10 0

1 lays after each hour or at will.

Can also be had with Penny-in-Slot Attachment

Extra Tunes, 2/6 each.  
Tune 12 ins. diameter.

A choice of fine Hall Clocks was available from Nicole Frères Ltd at 21 Ely Place, Holborn Circus, judging by their catalogue (not dated, but includes Edison phonographs, Zonophone gramophones etc, so after 1900). Several of the Zonophone advertisements mention the new Grand records in 'double size'. Since the original 'Standard' records were 7-inch diameter from 1900, and a range of 9-inch records was introduced in 1901, presumably 'double size' referred to playing time rather than diameter. It would appear that this catalogue therefore dates from 1901.

## Resurrecting a Palais Royal Square Piano Musical Necessaire

Bernard Novell

*The term Palais Royal is generic term applied to many fine quality items. The name actually derives from the former Palais Royal located in the 1st arrondissement of Paris, France, opposite the Louvre. Originally called the Palais-Cardinal, it was built for Cardinal Richelieu from about 1633 to 1639 by the architect Jacques Lemercier. Richelieu bequeathed it to Louis XIII, and Louis XIV gave it to his younger brother, the Duke of Orléans. As the succeeding dukes of Orléans made such extensive alterations over the years, almost nothing remains of Lemercier's original design.*

*The area was extensively modified and known for its high class shopping arcades. It is also the seat of the Ministry of Culture, the Conseil d'État and the Constitutional Council. The central Palais-Royal Garden, called Jardin du Palais-Royal, serves as a public park, and the arcade houses shops.*

In 2008 I restored a full-size Square Piano – just for fun, well actually I found it on Freecycle and just couldn't let it be destroyed, but that's another story. If you have a copy of the AMBC booklet 'An Introduction to Mechanical Music' you may have noticed a rectangular box on legs with what looks like a piano keyboard occupying the central section of the lid. Although I had this booklet, I had not really noticed this picture. It just happened that I saw a piano box for sale on eBay, reminding me of the full-size version, and I successfully bid for it.



Picture 1: As received

The description was somewhat vague but the photos seemed to show that it was sound. However, when it arrived it was not as good as it looked in the pictures. The solid mahogany lid was detached from its frame. The lid was quite badly bowed and had lost the half round beading from two sides. The inlaid keys were, however, in very good condition.

The box itself was empty except for some scraps of pale blue material and lots of dirt. The turned legs, with cast brass ferrule at the top and cast claw feet, had been removed and very badly refitted at some stage in its life. Possibly one broke off and, rather than drill it out and redowel it, someone thought it clever to remove them all and mount them using a square of wood screwed to the top and then glue and pin them to the underside of the box. This had two effects, to raise the height of the box and to move the legs inboard thus hiding all of the detail of the top of the cast ferrule.

I began by cleaning off the glued-on material and removing all of the legs, hinges and lock. Then I glued the lid back onto its frame, leaving it clamped in a vice for 24 hours. I quite expected it to pop off when released but it stayed in place. I then hand made two half round edging strips, with mitred corners to match the front and back, and stained them to match the originals.



Picture 2: Lid removed - the movement fixing holes visible at the front.

I showed the work I was doing to a friend and, for some reason, I also showed him the booklet, whereupon the penny dropped as I realised that this box would have originally included a musical movement and there were the filled-in holes to prove it.

Although I had a small number of tabatière movements in stock, I really wanted one with a sectional comb, preferably with underneath controls. To my amazement one came up for sale, again on eBay, and I made sure I bought it. Maybe I paid a little over the odds but I feel that it was well worth it.

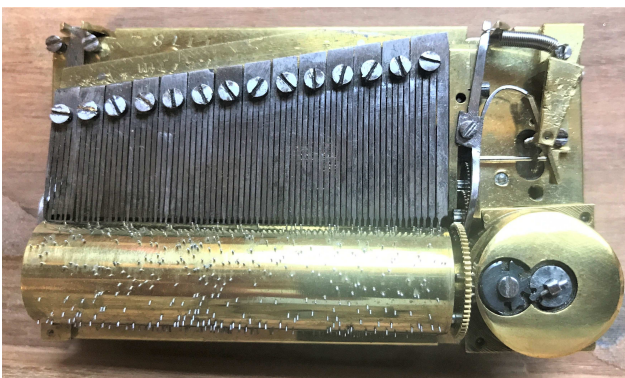
I stripped, serviced and reassembled the 70 toothed movement, modifying the control mechanism by threading the ends of two brass bars to protrude through the base. I then added wooden beads, pinned to the ends of



Picture 3: The movement as received

the bars with brass pins, so that the movement could be operated without opening or picking up the box.

I discussed this necessaire with my piano playing daughter. We agreed that it should be hers and, as I could not restore the interior to be a necessaire, we decided that it would become a luxury jewellery box. The interior of the box had grooves which told me where the original dividers would have been, so I made new dividers from 4mm thick mahogany and then added a cross divider to segregate and protect the movement. Research showed me that the original movement would have been protected by a wooden cover but I felt that such a beautiful brass movement should be seen. I decided to make provision for a clear polycarbonate cover.



Picture 4: The overhauled movement

I made a new twelve aperture tray to fit above the lower sections using quality plywood for the base and solid beech for the sides and dividers. Only the base was to be lined, so the beech was given two coats of clear shellac polish and the base was lined with velvet before the dividers were fitted.

The brass ferrules and feet for the legs, plus the brass



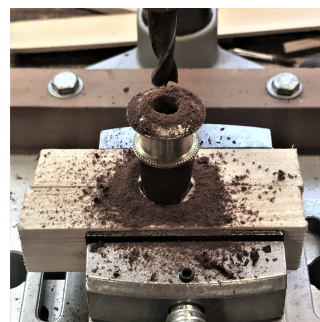
Picture 5: Controls

hinges, lock & keep were cleaned and polished along with the movement. I modified a vintage key to fit the lock and my wife sewed on a gold tassel.



Picture 6: The new tray for the jewellery box adaptation

I decided to refit the legs as they would have been originally. This required drilling out the original dowel holes in the base of the box and then drilling the legs themselves to accept new dowels. I made a tapered jig to hold the legs in a small vice but was worried that the top of the leg might split and so left the ferrules on the legs while I drilled. This worked a treat but then I discovered that one leg was 6mm shorter than the other three, so I had to hand cut the three to the same length as the short one. In some ways this was good because it gave me the opportunity to make better joints for the brass claw feet that were then glued and pinned onto a short stump.



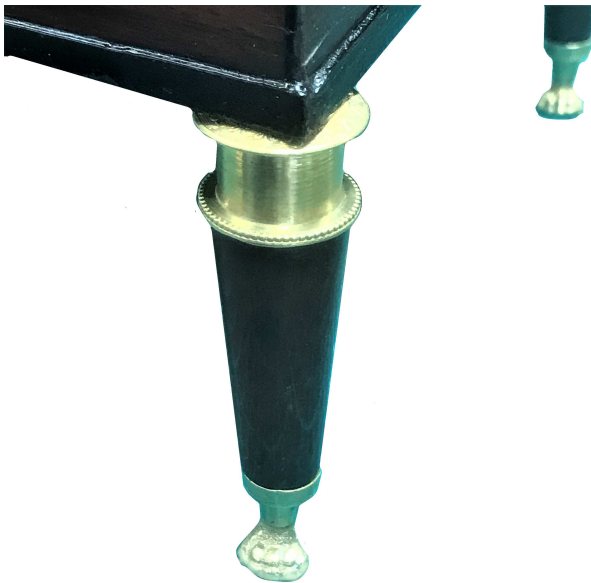
Picture 7: Drilling the legs for new dowels.

*Mechanical Music World*

The final stage was to brush two coats of Mylands black French polish onto all of the lips and partway down the interior and then give the exterior several coats of Mylands clear shellac polish. I lined the interior with velvet using black for the movement section and burgundy red for the rest, including the inside of the lid. The sequence of pictures shows each step of the restoration.



Picture 8: A new dowel ready for the leg to be fitted



Picture 9: The leg fitted



Picture 10: The newly fitted interior



Picture 11: The completed project

My daughter was delighted with her gift and I'm sure she will cherish it.

*(ED: This delightful article shows that, however damaged a rare old item may be, it can be re-cycled (or is it up-cycled?) to give it another treasured life. Just as important is that the musical movement, itself an orphaned antique, now has been re-housed and given a new home.)*

“Always an Exquisite Delight.”

**The One Perfect Music Box**

**Criterion.**

An American disc instrument playing an unlimited number of tunes.  
Final achievement of the oldest music-box manufacturer in the United States—factories in Switzerland and America.

For brilliancy, sweetness, expression, and volume of tone unqualifiedly first of all instruments of its kind—\$14 to \$175.

For catalogue and further information [without which it would be most unwise to buy a music-box elsewhere] address

**M. J. PAILLARD & CO.**  
680 Broadway,  
New York.

Advertisement in 'Cosmopolitan' magazine from 1897.

## AMBC MEETING, 14<sup>th</sup> August 2022

from Paul Bellamy

For the first time in over three years we were able to hold a meeting at The Old School. It was tentatively announced in our journal but only to ask for interest, so no actual date was given other than: 'Some time in August'.

Chairman Ted

Brown was concerned that numbers might have to be limited because he wanted to assure that attendees could maintain Covid-safe distances and other Covid precautions should they wish to do so. We then agreed a date at just 14 days notice so he had to phone around. Despite the fact that it was mid-holiday season and very hot, we had more than enough who wanted to attend, some coming very long distances. Despite the message to bring along some food, professional chef Chris Prebble supplied extra quiches and a strawberry flan; all was devoured. Some brought barrel pianos and organs for general entertainment, not of course for eating, and we all relaxed in the shaded outdoors. Others brought instruments for the morning's Show And Tell.



Chris Fynes brought along two musical boxes that he had restored, both of which had been previously featured in the Journal.

It was now time to entertain us with their repertoires followed by comments and questions. The music was

exquisite; there were lovely dance tunes in two-step and three-step timing. The general conclusion for both movements was that the arrangements were specifically programmed for the purpose of dance. The tunes were also well arranged, lively, quite loud and fitted the pattern of popular dances of the day, such as the galop, mazurka, schottische (possibly of Bohemian or Polish origin), ländler (an Austrian folk dance), polka, waltz, etc.

The acoustics of the Old School Room, built in 1881, with its wooden floors and very high ceilings, was well suited. The dances of the Victorian Age, all over Europe, were social events where men and



*A very fine tortoiseshell-cased snuff box. Note the colour tones and the way in which the case is moulded with its vase of flowers and intricate edge pattern. The button on the left is stop/start; on the right is tune change.*



*A view of the movement with its transparent inner cover made of a different but clear shell. It is moulded to the shape of the movement so that snuff cannot enter. The up-stands and continuous hinge also makes sure that snuff powder does not escape. Note also the translucent nature of the lid that allows the moulded lid pattern to be seen from underneath.*

women would parade in their finery; often with an outer circle of men and an inner circle of women. These were also occasions for young men and women to meet, during which many a courtship began.



*The comb has 21 segments, all of which have three teeth but the treble end has four teeth, 64 teeth in total. They are mounted on a thick brass comb base that is dowelled to the bedplate. Close inspection of the teeth reveals that they were cut by hand, probably by a type of slitting saw or file. Note also what appears to be an A-shaped mark on the base. It could be a casting fault but most probably is some form of code mark. Such marks were quite common on early movement but their use was unknown, possibly used to identify a particular worker for the purposes of proofing or payment.*

Musical boxes have a tune repeat lever so that each tune could be repeated many times. During the 'tune change gap' when playing stops for a few seconds, partners might also change in clockwise or anti-clockwise order.

We tend to think that those times were very sedate but many old prints show the exact opposite; lively, fast, plenty to drink. Of course, many of these dances included regular exchanges of partner as they progressed, ideal for young courting couples.

It was then that Chris made an admission: "I have actually reduced the loudness because it was too loud for me!" In fact this is common restoration practice whereby a slither of paper is placed under the front edge of the comb base to elevate the teeth slightly. Cylinder pins then release teeth at a slightly lower lift and that reduces the intensity of sound. The reverse also applies, using a strip of paper at the rear of the comb base.

Chris also demonstrated two small Symphonion disc boxes which had slightly different comb arrangements. One was a spring-powered movement with two combs but in fact they were actually two parts of a single comb, each placed on either side of the star wheels. The combs were tuned chromatically but alternately on either side.

The second disc box was hand cranked with a conventional single comb. The audience was asked to say which instrument had the best quality of sound. Of course, both were in tip-top playing condition so it was a fair question to ask. The hand-cranked (called a manivelle) disc box was chosen as the better. The lesson to be learned here was that appearances can be deceptive and that the quality of sound as well as the quality of musical arrangement of its tunes should be the dominant factors for choice. Having said that, both were fine small instruments in their own right.

Next up for discussion was Ted's latest acquisition, a small musical toy called an Accordionette but that follows separately in this issue under the heading 'Can you tell me anything more about it?' (see later - Ed).

The next Show and Tell item was by Bernard Novell. Bernard brought along a number of items that he had either restored, were being restored or that he had 'up cycled.' The latter created much interest. He re-houses orphaned movements, makes gifts for family and friends by using new small spring-motor driven cylinder movements as well as hand operated movements, all housed in beautifully crafted boxes bought 'on line.'



*An 'up-cycled' case modified to house a musical automaton*

One item of great interest was a 4-air sectional comb musical snuffbox. One of the tunes was a Ranz des Vaches arrangement found on many surviving musical boxes of the period. The number of teeth per segment gives a rough guide to the movement's age, which was estimated just pre 1830. The maker is unknown but its musical quality matched that of its finely moulded tortoiseshell case. The actual material was obtained from a turtle called the

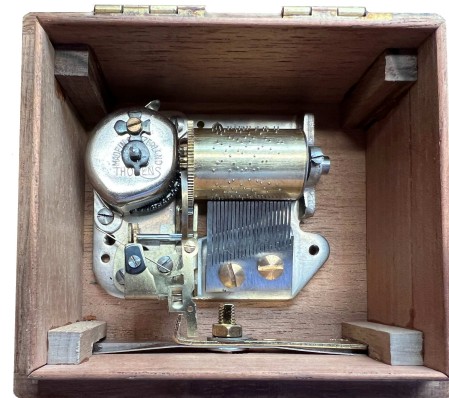


*The dancing doll automaton movement: surely a delightful gift for child or adult?*

Hawksbill turtle, so named for the shape of its beak-like head. The term tortoiseshell may seem confusing today but the name 'tortoise' was probably used generically because the two species are related. The Hawksbill turtle shell was popular because of its fine colouring. The material was (it is now rightly prohibited) versatile, capable of being moulded and fused together under modest pressure and heat.

Ranz des Vaches? These were mainly tunes played by Swiss herdsmen as they drove their cattle to and from high mountainous pastures. Austrian and German herdsmen had a similar tradition. Each valley had a distinctive tune played on the Alphorn, a very long valve-less horn whose bass register echoed across mountain and valley. The exact source of the one commonly arranged for the musical box is uncertain. The arrangements often have a 'descant trill', a high pitched trill of two alternating pitches typical of the Swiss yodel. Yodels also combined the vocal falsetto of the 'head' and 'chest' voices (alternating high and low pitches), sounds which also reverberate in mountain and valley settings as does the Alphorn.

This particular Ranz was probably based on a yodeling tune. Just like the bass notes of the Alphorn, both were used to convey messages, no doubt asking 'her indoors' to put the kettle on when the husband came down from the high pastures. The cattle would also respond to certain calls, not to put the kettle on but to let them know when it was time to move up to or down from the high pastures.



*An 'up-cycled' box with a 22-note Thorens movement. The four corner posts are there to support an inner lid.*

## **My Toy Accordion**

from Ted Brown

This was part of the Show & Tell, one of Ted's acquisitions that had lain dormant for some time, awaiting some Tender Loving Care. The toy itself was reasonably complete and intact but with some glued bits that had fallen off and a few rusty and broken screws.

The cardboard case had just about survived in a number of torn, discoloured and missing pieces. The first task was to reconstruct the case before it deteriorated further. The paper was so fragile that the slightest touch caused bits to fall off. Finding a substitute thin card of similar colour was almost impossible but a piece of modern corrugated cardboard packing came to light. Soaked in water, one side of the corrugation was pulled apart and ironed dry and flat on a breadboard; it is quite surprising how many useful kitchen utensils and modern materials can be put to restoration use!

Some of the printed covering was detached so this was glued back using an artists archival PVA glue. The same glue was applied liberally to the inside of the very thin cardboard case. It was then covered in Clingfilm and weighed down flat on the breadboard. When dry, it was

## Mechanical Music World

no longer fragile. The cardboard taken from corrugated packing was almost the same thickness and used to replace the missing bits. This was done using a scalpel to ‘feather’ the edges of both the original and substitute parts using the same archival PVA. Corners of the case were reinforced and then re-assembled.



The main scrap of cardboard case for the Accordionette. The text gives the price at 2/6d or 2/9d if posted. This old English currency of shillings (2/-) and pence (9d) seems cheap but it was just over £20 (or \$24) at today's prices. An extra packet of 6 tunes was 1/- (one shilling). The operating instructions were fully detailed on the outside of the cardboard case.

Of course, much of its torn paper cover was still missing and it was impossible to replace it. The only way to make it presentable was to find a colour that matched the background of the outer face of the case. This was achieved by using a mix of acrylic paint blended to represent the stained and discoloured printed papers.

Dating the instrument had to be judged by the musical repertoire, which starts with God Save the Queen. Well, which one? Unlikely to be Elizabeth I or even our late lamented Queen Elizabeth II! None could be considered children's songs and all predate 1900. There are many tunes of Scottish and Irish origin, religious and military. That raised a debate at the meeting about why anyone should make a toy for a child that clearly had no typical children's tunes. Paul Baker, with his vast knowledge of music of a bygone age, reminded us that childhood was quite different in Victorian times and the age profile was much older than today's concept of a child. Children



This shows the fully reconstructed cardboard box.

remained minors in law until the age of 21. Toys were probably better looked after in those days and only allowed to be used under supervision; so this toy was probably kept safe in the hands of a parent.


The toy is made of wood and only 4 x 3 x 2 inches, a perfect fit in its cardboard case. It has a paper bellows that, when expanded, draws in air via a set of 15 tuned reeds; when compressed the air is released via two circular leatherette flap valves. Therefore the reeds only play when the bellows are expanded. The result must have been a sort of *oompah, oompah* rendition and nothing like an accordion.

There was only one punched-paper tune band entitled The Girl I Left behind Me. It is a rather beautiful and sad air, based on an Irish melody dating to about 1840 but it has much earlier and very widespread roots. It is said to relate to soldiers and sailors departing for war. Some accounts say that it dates to 1758 when British admirals Rodney and Hawke were observing the movements of the French fleet. Other accounts mention that it was exported to America about 1650 and known as Brighton Camp. Whatever, a 1796 copy resides in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. So, hardly a child's song but no doubt its military connotations may suite the *oompah, oompah* of a military two-step?

**The mechanism.** The wind chest with its reed block, Fig. 6C, has a traction roller bar with two rubber bands that act on the punched paper roll. The roller bar is attached to a wooden pulley. A brass coated, spring loaded, pulley is attached to a string that wraps around the wooden pulley. The remote end of the string is attached to the bottom board of the bellows. As the bellows is expanded the brass-coated pulley rotates but the paper roll is held stationary by the spring loaded wedge whilst air is sucked through one or more of the exposed reeds. When the bellows is compressed air passes through the two flap valves; the reeds do not sound but the roller bar drags the

paper forward by a small increment as the brass-coated pulley re-winds under the action of its coiled spring.

Although the mechanism is very crude and simple, it works reasonably well. Unfortunately, we were not able to play the roll because the paper had aged and was too hard. The paper needs to be soft and flexible so that, when under suction, it seals off all the reeds except those exposed to its punched holes. The next step in the restoration will be to replicate the punched paper music with a thin, flexible, substitute.

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God Save the Queen.	The Harp that once,	Home Sweet Home
Bonnie Dundee.	Auld Lang Syne.	British Grenadiers.
Keel Row.	The Bay of Biscay,	Rule Britannia.
Belle Mahone.	Annie Laurie.	Wait till the Cloude
Tender and True.	The Men of Harlech.	Roll by.
The Minstrel Boy.	Oh! dear, what can the	My Lodging is in the Cold
	matter be?	Cold Ground.
		Gipsy's Warning-

A digitally reconstructed tune list (the original was too fragile and stained).

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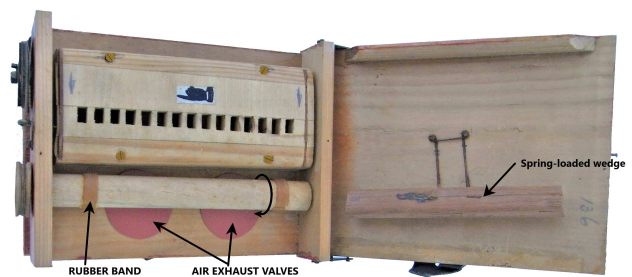
The picture shows a lady in Victorian dress operating the instrument, exaggerated in size, with the endless punched roll hanging over one hand.



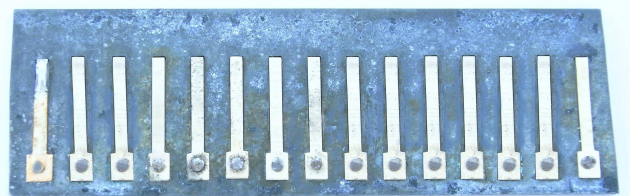
A side view showing the external parts of the operating mechanism



The Accordionette ready to be put in its cardboard box.



An internal view showing the tracker bar that conceals the reed block plus the roller bar and wedge.



The reed block.

**So, can anyone tell me anything more about my toy accordionette?**

If so, please contact Ted Brown or the Editors.

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## CELEBRATING THE THIRTIETH EDITION OF MECHANICAL MUSIC WORLD

by Juliet Fynes

The Association of Musical Box Collectors was officially launched over seven years ago in February 2015 at a well attended meeting in the Old School. The intention was to hold such meetings on a regular basis, but as more members began to join from all over the country, and as far afield as America and Japan, it became necessary to publish some kind of newsletter. It didn't take long to realise that between us we had the expertise, technical, editorial and artistic, to produce something more professional. Furthermore, with no one to pay but our friendly local printer, we could publish a quarterly edition within the income from a very modest membership fee and advertising contribution. Thus "Mechanical Music World" was born, and here we are on our thirtieth edition.

What's in a name?

In forming a new society there are many things to be considered; aims, constitution etc etc. The first is to find a suitable name. It was always our intention to embrace all forms of mechanical music, but with particular emphasis on musical boxes, as there are a number of specialist organisations concentrating on other types of instrument. "The Association of People Interested in Mechanical Music Especially Musical Boxes" hardly trips off the tongue so the truncated "Association of Musical Box Collectors" was agreed. We were able to be more specific in naming the magazine, "Mechanical Music World". World might sound a bit ambitious and from time to time we have printed articles that are neither mechanical nor musical, but so far have not been challenged under the Trades Description Act!

Our first magazine was published in the summer following the inaugural meeting. The blue colour was chosen as it is distinctive and a good contrast to most musical instruments that tend to be brownish. With the old-fashioned typeface, it became our house style that could be adapted to future publications. We incorporated our logo in the title as the O in "World". The logo of a treble clef containing a spiral to represent a spring neatly encapsulates our main interest.

For our first edition it was easiest to choose something from our own collection. The Aubert snuffbox

with painted lid was a suitable illustration for the review of the history of snuffboxes article. As, most unusually, the painting on the lid is signed we were able to add details of the artist. Such peripheral bits of information have become the hallmark of our articles as, hopefully, being of interest to our readers.

The subject matter for each cover is mostly chosen for its visual impact and does not necessarily refer to a major article. Such is the second cover, which uniquely depicts a person as well as an instrument. It is of course one of our founder members, Richard Kerridge, with his Pasquale barrel piano. It had recently been one of the stars of our annual "Organ Grind" and Richard's costume, complementing the attractive instrument, made it an obvious candidate for a front cover.

The instruments depicted on these first two covers could hardly be more different. The aim is to make them as varied as possible, thus to date we have used 2 snuff boxes, 7 cartel boxes, 3 disc boxes, 4 automata and one each of a barrel piano, barrel organ, singing bird, orchestrelle, phonograph, radiogram and clock. The remaining 7 are loosely grouped as "novelties". When captioning these images we can never resist a weak pun, thus on Issue 7 "What the Tortoise Taught Us". Anyone who has been to the Old School will have passed Kay Brown's pet tortoise compounds in the playground on the way in. Indoors it's impossible not to notice all the tortoise ornaments, cushions, teatowels and so on that have been gifted to her. Imagine Ted's delight at finding a gift for her that actually embraced both their passions.

Publishing society magazines has come a long way in recent years with talented amateurs able to produce professional results with the aid of technology. All our covers start life as photographs but can be greatly improved by Photoshop. Reflections can be removed, indistinct detail enhanced, missing corners or legs built back. All are subject to "matting", the process of erasing all unwanted background. The most matting was needed for the elephant automaton on Issue 15. This striking image referred to the interesting and well illustrated article by David Soulsby, indefatigable seeker out of all types of

automata, from Victorian end of pier attractions to the latest in animatronics.

As a doll collector the cover item I most envy is Annie Tyvand's musical doll (Issue 22). Annie was very happy with her purchase of what she thought was just an ordinary doll. It took several years and an impending domestic disaster for her to discover that she was actually a very rare specimen with a cylinder musical movement inside. How serendipitous that of all the people who could have bought her she should fall into the hands of a music box enthusiast.

Lastly I must mention the only front cover article

for which I have had any input. Probably just as well as I am liable to go "off piste". Who else would drag a papier mache fan exhibited in the V&A into an article on a musical box? This box was the property of our good friend, the late Joe Berman. Its chief point of interest was that it is a rare example of musical box for hire. Joe wrote an article about the box and kindly gave me my head to research the shop in Oxford which hired it out, which somehow led to the fan.

We hope that these thirty issues, covers and content, have brought as much pleasure to the readers as to the team that has put them together.

## The Melodia Organette

David Evans acquired a new toy.



(Above): The original re-wind crank, the end doubling as a reed puller.

The Melodia organette is a simple 14-note paper-as-valve instrument, playing 7 1/4" wide rolls. This example came with two original rolls - one labelled 'Mechanical Orguinette Company', the other 'The Aeolian Organ and Music Company'. The address is also mentioned: 831 Broadway, New York in both cases. William B Tremaine founded the Mechanical Orguinette Co in 1878 and the Aeolian Organ and Music Co. in 1887 to make automatic organs. Patent numbers printed on the instruction label show

dates from 1877 to 1881, indicating that the Orguinette roll pre-dates the other one, and that Aeolian were still producing Melodia rolls after 1887. The instrument has both 'Melodia' and 'Mechanical Orguinette' stencilled on the top.

This instrument has the extra hole above the main crank handle to 'fast forward' the roll using the small re-wind crank. The button seen front centre is to sustain notes by rocking the main frame down, thus halting the drive.

## A Visit to the Automata at the Kew Gardens Pagoda

By David Soulsby



*The Great Pagoda Kew Gardens 2022 with the new dragons on display*

So much interest in modern day automata has been generated by the work of Cabaret Mechanical Theatre, holding a series of exhibitions featuring work by renowned automatists, up and down the UK. Put on hold because of the Pandemic the first one that I attended was at Gosport in Hampshire.

There were a number of new pieces on display and I particularly enjoyed viewing the work of Fi Henshall that I had not encountered before. Fi is a sculpture graduate from Falmouth College of Arts in Cornwall. She was born in 1981 in Fishguard in south west Wales. She works in wood, metal and the use of found objects appears to be one of her hallmarks.

One of her exhibits that I found particularly intriguing was “Hansel and Gretel” (Photo 1).

Representing the fairy-tale by The Brothers Grimm, the pair are a brother and sister abandoned in a forest, by their starving parents. They are led to apparent safety by a snow-white bird to a house



*Photo 1: Fi Henshall's automaton of Hansel & Gretel, and caged Hansel below the kitchen where Gretel works.*

made of gingerbread. Unfortunately this is the home of a cannibalistic witch who locks the children inside. All the features of the candy house are shown in delicate detail in Fi's model. Gretel is put to work in the kitchen and the struggling Hansel is being fattened up by the witch in an iron cage

underneath. The bird that led the pair to the wicked witch's house is shown perched on the window ledge. The automaton features the movement of pots, pans, a broom and other implements in the kitchen, all shown in reclaimed and metal items. Gretel bangs down the the top of the oven and "SPOILER ALERT!" reveals the head of the witch that the children have pushed inside to meet an untimely end. The whole Grimm tale is encapsulated in less than 5 seconds of motion, although the time to appreciate the details of the scene is considerably longer.

The exhibition provided brief biographical details of all the artists whose work was on display and these indicated that Fi Henschall had just completed two large tableau for the Pagoda in Kew Gardens. This information was what lead me to travel to Kew and see this impressive display for myself.

Firstly, some historical background to set the scene. Princess Augusta, widow of Frederick, Prince of Wales, established the world famous botanic gardens at Kew in 1759. She employed a renowned architect, Sir William Chambers, to construct a number of impressive features. He was the first European architect to go to China and in 1748 he visited the trading port known as Canton (modern day Guangzhou). While there he drew many Chinese gardens and buildings including those that inspired the Great Kew Pagoda. The 18th century had seen increased trade between China and the West, and led to a great deal of interest in Chinese art and culture. Chambers' Pagoda was an early example of this (head photo) and was built in 1761-2, it consisted of ten octagonal storeys decorated with 80 wooden hand-carved and gold painted dragons placed one at each corner. It was the most popular folly of the age towering 50 metres high with unparalleled views across London. However the dragons were made of cheap pine and rotted away following a period of atrocious weather - the Thames froze over in 1783 - and were removed when the building was restored in 1784. Over time the Pagoda became very dilapidated and was closed to the public in the late 20th century.

A major restoration project undertaken by Historic Royal Palaces saw the refurbishment of the Pagoda, including the recarving and reinstatement of the dragons. The master copy of one of the dragons was carved in African cedar wood, and seven more were

replicated for installation on the lowest roof. The remainder were fabricated in nylon using 3D modeling technology, as the weight of the wooden sculptures would have been too great for the roofs. It was reopened in 2018.



*Photo 2: Fi Henschall's automata on display inside the Great Pagoda*

Two handmade automata were commissioned by Historic Royal Palaces at the same time. They are positioned inside the lowest level of the Great Pagoda (Photo 2) and are indeed built by Fi Henschall. The two dioramas are housed in specially designed wooden and glass cases. Each has three separate handles which when turned bring the scenes to life. The first depicts the Canton market in the 18<sup>th</sup> century visited by the young architect William Chambers where he studied Chinese building design.

The second shows Princess Augusta, William Chambers, George III and Queen Charlotte taking a tour round the Palace gardens during the construction of the Great Pagoda. The first scene of the

*Mechanical Music World*

market at Canton is a hive of industry, especially if, as I did, you get three willing visitors to turn all handles at the same time. A model of the sailing ship dominates the harbour and a section drops away revealing Chambers busy on his plans (Photos 3 & 4). A sailor strains winding a handle as various boxes are loaded aboard and flags run up masts. A number of small Chinese boats bob about in the harbour. A huddle of traders discuss cargo while two Chinese ladies in formal attire are taking tea, Chambers observes their traditions from behind a screen.



Photo 3 (above): Chinese sailing ship dominates the harbour

Photo 4 (below): Section reveals Architect Chambers hard at work



In fact the famous architect appears in numerous parts of the tableau depicting how he studied all aspects of the 18th century Chinese culture.

The second scene depicts the Princess Augusta and group walking through Kew gardens at the time that the Pagoda is still being fabricated (Photo 5).



Photo 5: The Royal party tour the Pagoda site

The construction site is a busy place with chains and buckets moving various sections into position. (Photo 6). The original dragons can be seen being pulled into their places around the roofs (Photo 7).



Photo 7 The dragons are moved into position



*Photo 6 The Great Pagoda under construction*

A number of other ornate buildings populate the grounds as well as a menagerie of animals including grazing zebra. The group pauses en route round the gardens and peacocks open their feathers and bow heads towards them (Photo 8).



*Photo 8: The peacocks open their tail feathers and bow heads towards the Royal party*

I made contact with Fi where she was struggling with “The Lady of Shalott” her latest automaton. Apparently “her” arms were too short and the tower a little too dull. In the Tennyson poem referenced,

the tower is built on an island in the middle a river, a situation Fi is familiar with as she herself lives in a boat anchored in the River Penryn, Cornwall.

I asked her how rigid the specification had been for her commission for the Kew automata. “The brief for the garden piece was fairly prescriptive - they wanted William Chambers to be showing the Royal Family around the garden around the time the pagoda was built, and to illustrate that at that time there were more follies as well as exotic animals at Kew. They also felt it was important that the presence of the royal children in the garden was apparent, hence the young prince who goes up the inside of the pagoda. They had lots of different ideas for the next piece and I just threw together the ones I liked best and sent a rough sketch! I think the most important aspects were the influence of Chinese gardens and ornamental architecture on Chambers' designs, and the export of chinoiserie into Great Britain”.

On my questions about construction of the automata. “The ship is made from wood and very thin ply which has been burnt, oiled and rolled in ash and grime! The pagoda is made from old tins with an oriental design and the dragons are made from old copper ship building nails. The two pieces took about eighteen months to build. For a while I employed another maker, Jack Stilling, to work with me part time, otherwise I would have had to send my children to the orphanage to get it finished!”

I asked her whether I had missed any appearances of Chambers, the architect *hidden* in the first diorama. “Chambers is at the back of the Canton market trying to bribe some tradesmen, he appears from behind a screen where the ladies are drinking tea, he's hidden in a crate in one of the boats crossing the harbour and he's in the European quarters trying to pay a boatman to take him across the harbour (the Chinese part of Canton would have been off limits to him)”. Photos 9 & 10.

Before leaving Kew, I climbed the 253 steps of the circular staircase to the top of the Pagoda, past the magnificent new dragons and taking in a unique view over London, somewhat different from the one enjoyed by Chambers back in the day.

Fi's trademarks of using wood, wire, metal tube and sheet, found objects and carved figures and above all the composition and movement in her displays are also scenes that live long in the memory.



Photos 9 & 10 reveal some of the many incarnations of Architect Chambers hidden in the harbour tableau.

## To Restore or not to Restore and Provenance.

Paul Bellamy



Fig 1: Nicole Frères Musical Box No. 20247

At one of the AMBC regular meetings, where members bring along items to show and explain, this unprepossessing looking example of a mid 19<sup>th</sup> century musical box aroused considerable interest. It was bought for ‘a song’, apparently, no doubt because of its appearance, Fig. 1.

The end flap was missing; the cylinder and works were the dull colours that brass achieves after years of exposure to the air. The tune sheet was torn Fig. 2, but gave all that was necessary to determine its age because it had a serial number. It is a typical Nicole tune sheet of the period, serial 20247 dating

to 1840-1841, the pre-1860 ‘golden period’ of key-wind cartel cylinder movements according to the late HAV Bulleid. And so it was when played.

It seemed to be in almost perfect working order with no obvious indication of restoration or repair and the music it played was of delightful quality with deep reverberating bass notes, superbly arranged melodies and the upper range of the comb playing with sparkling clarity. What more could a buyer want?

Thus a discussion followed on what should be done with a musical box in this condition? The temptation is to ‘give it the works’; maybe the case refinished,

perhaps the movement polished to showroom standards? This has to be a choice for the latest owner but when one owns a movement that has survived the ravages of time for nearly 180 years and plays as well as this example, is it better not to over-restore the instrument? Non-reversible and insensitive restoration can devalue the item for a fastidious collector but the fashion is often to 'improve' the look of an antique to modern showroom standards.

One of the problems with collecting is that most instruments have no provenance associated with them. So not only should the movement be researched but also everything known about it should be recorded and kept for the future. Where it was bought and at what price could be of historical interest. When we published our recent book, *The Cylinder Musical Box, Tune Sheets Makers & Agents\**, we made it clear in the last sentence of its introduction that any relevant part of it may be reproduced and kept as part of the provenance of a musical box without contravening copyright.

All instruments should be carefully examined and recorded before making any attempt at restoration. Our other AMBC publication: *The Cylinder Musical Box, A Collectors' & Restorers' Handbook\*\** was designed for this purpose; one does not necessarily need to be an expert to make a basic assessment of a musical box's condition when using the advice given in this book.

A visual inspection is important and should include recording of letters and numerals written or stamped on the component parts such as the bedplate, gover-



*Fig 3: The number 13-2 - for what reason?*

nor crane, great wheel, tune sheet, comb base or even the underside of the case. Fig. 3 is an unusual example of a number, 13 - 2. Its purpose is unknown yet it is clearly in view, so why would anyone want to treat the instrument in this way? It does not appear to be in a continental hand so perhaps the instrument was taken apart at some time and treated with little concern for its condition. After all, thousands of musical boxes were scrapped, thought to be redundant and worthless.

Look for missing tooth tips, bent and missing cylinder pins. Does the key- or lever-wind mechanism operate smoothly and effortlessly? Is the Geneva stop-work present on the spring motor case? It should be then be played to see if the airs play at an acceptable speed, neither too fast nor too slow but do not make adjustments at this stage. Is there damper noise, that inevitable squeak of a damaged or missing damper? If so, take a 'note' (pun not intended) of the location and maybe use a marker pen to indicate which tooth. Sometimes a damper can be reset rather than replaced.

Ideally, the movement should then be dismantled, inspected, cleaned, defects attended to and the component parts reassembled before complete reassembly. Sometimes there are scratched numbers such as on the lowest bass lead weight. This will be the gamme number, a number that the maker used to determine the exact pitch of each tooth of the comb. The number may also relate to the actual programme of tunes as written on the tune sheet.

Once the casework and mechanism of a musical box have been cleaned and its old polish revived it is important that any repair work should be reversible. Modern glues are very effective but old-fashioned 'pearl' glue is just as good for most repairs, is authentic and reversible. Missing parts such as the end flap need a little more expertise. Reclaimed old wood of the same species is an unlikely source but new wood of the same type can be artificially aged. Woods can be colour matched using modern stains but to do so without artificially aging the wood before first can cause the colour to change with time. Woods age naturally in free air, mainly due to oxygen (called oxidation), so even if stained, the colour can still change. One useful oxidising agent is potassium permanganate; when diluted in water, its brilliant purple colour will turn to brown and then quickly fade, so it does not actually colour-stain the wood; instead it does what the oxygen in the air does but, instead of slowly, can do in a short time what air takes in years to achieve.

When considering the provenance of a musical box it is easy to ignore the tune sheet. After all, what was written on it must have had significance for the person who first bought it. The tune sheet designs for Nicole and other makers of the period were hardly imaginative. Most were crudely written by hand and probably conveyed what the purchaser already knew,

i.e. the names of the airs, but the owner would not know in what order the tunes were pinned. This tune sheet is written in a flowing continental hand in Italian script. The information is not very informative to the modern reader but its content must have been clear to the original buyer. That person would have been familiar with the airs and the terms that described them:

Tune 1: Duetto nell D'othello.

Tune 2: Choeur favorit de la Préciosa (Notice the combined o and e).



Fig 2: The tune sheet

Tune 3: Grande Waltz favorite de Mozart

Tune 4: Grande et belle Marche de Rossignol

Tune 5: Waltz nell opera Lucrezia Borgia Donizeti.

Tune 6: Suoni la Trombe des Puritains.

1. There were several versions of the opera called Othello. The Verdi opera of the same name was written much later by Verdi in 1887. This one is in three acts by Gioachino Rossini with libretto by the Italian Francesco di Salsi. Based on Shakespeare's original work, Rossini relocated it from Cyprus to Venice as well as changing much of the original plot. It is called 'artistic licence', as strong then as it is today when books are turned into films. Even so, Shakespeare's version also was not original because he based his on an earlier short story by Giralidio Cinthio, published in 1565.

2. This was written by Carl Maria von Weber in 1821.

3. The Mozart Grand Waltz. This is the one he wrote in the key of B<sup>?</sup>. Mozart was an accomplished dancer and wrote dances in several different genres as separate pieces or parts of bigger

works. There were popular minuets of the day (3 beats to the bar) and a genre called German dances based on folk dancing. Also, there were social dances called *contra dances*, where lines of couples exchanged places.

4. The composer of this march is uncertain, so maybe a reader can assist.

5. Lucretia Borgia was a daughter of Pope Alexander VI. She was subject to several arranged marriages and led what could be described as a 'colourful life', a good subject for an opera. Victor Hugo wrote a play based on her life from which Donizetti based his opera, the libretto of which was written by Felice Rominni. It was first performed in London in 1839 and then in Paris in 1840 at the Théâtre des Italiens. Hugo was annoyed at the appropriation of his work and obtained an injunction under French copyright law. Undeterred, the opera house renamed the opera La Rinegata and relocated the scenario from Italy to Turkey. The story is of power, passion and poisoning and one may wonder how a waltz should fit in. Scene 1 is the clue where love seems at first to be blossoming.

6. Let the trumpets sound! Il Puritani is an opera by Vincenzo Bellini, originally in two acts but later modified by him to three acts on the advice of his friend Gioachino Rossini. The story line is based on the English civil war of 1642 - 1651 when the King's men (the cavaliers) faced the republican army of the Parliamentarians led by Oliver Cromwell.

With a tune sheet in this condition it can be conserved by applying a backing, preferably of acid free paper bonded with a good quality artist's glue but probably best left alone.

Musical boxes can be so much more appreciated when placed in the context of their time. The music is as important as the musical box and adds to its interest when one takes the trouble to understand the nature of the music. No doubt the owner was an opera buff and, by playing the music, could recollect a visit to a live performance.

\*Some copies are still available. For the USA, contact Nancy Fratti at [musicbox@frontiernet.net](mailto:musicbox@frontiernet.net). For the UK [bellamypaul@btinternet.com](mailto:bellamypaul@btinternet.com).

\*\* This limited edition is now sold out.

## Let's put the record straight!

Paul Bellamy & Paul Baker

One of the dangers in writing an article or a book is to repeat mistakes or misconceptions written by others. Of course, any author may unwittingly fall into that trap. The late HAV Bulleid did so from time to time but he was cautious on two accounts. Whenever possible, he would try to confirm another author's work if he doubted what was written. He would also correct his misconceptions if he had cause to do so. When I worked through his extensive archive it was full of handwritten comments and question marks. He used them as a prompt either when in doubt or when attempting to answer a specific point correctly. He would later correct an error as his work progressed although there were remarkably few. Of course, once published, the initial error will still exist and can be perpetuated by others.

I have committed at least one such error in the appendix to our recent AMBC book entitled *The Cylinder Musical Box, Tune Sheets, Makers, Agents & Dates*. I quoted a known source concerning the date when the complex musical box movement called the Plerodinique was patented. Well, patent law in Switzerland did not, apparently, apply until about 1887 although it was active in the USA. The Q. David Bowers book *Automatic Musical Instruments* states that a US patent No. 266826 was filed on October the 31st 1882. The inventor was Albert Jeanrenaud of Saint Croix, Switzerland. So the date I quoted was entirely wrong.

One of our members pointed this out to me so I have tried to retrace my steps. My failure was to check available sources such as Bowers. Another search on the internet revealed a noted auction description of a Plerodinique. It had a footnote quoting Bowers but the name Jeanrenaud was misspelt as Jearenaud, no doubt the result of a typing error when letters get typed in the wrong order and do not get picked up by 'spell check'. Once again, simple mistakes can cause lasting errors.

I also discussed feedback with Paul Baker on my article: 'Canon Wintle and a Pasquale barrel piano restoration' that was published in *Mechanical Music World* (Issue 29, Summer 2022). I remarked that Wintle and others could remove pins of just one tune and replace it with a more up-to-date tune. I based this statement on what I thought to be common practice recorded in other sources. Paul pointed out that while this may be possible in theory, in practice it would be extremely difficult and time consuming to achieve and in all probability would not be at all practical from a financial standpoint.

The standard barrel piano of 48 notes and ten tunes has 480 'tracks' of pins around its circumfer-

ence (48 tracks for each tune) and to remove 48 tracks of pins at 10th track intervals surrounded by closely packed pins of the other nine tunes would be a nigh impossibility. The common method of re-pinning a barrel with new tunes required removal of the old pins using a special form of flat-nosed pincers designed for the job, filling redundant pin holes with a scotch glue-based compound, then covering the barrel with virgin white paper ready for a process called 'marking', ready to then receive new pins where the marks have been made on the paper. To carry out that process for the 48 separate tracks of just one tune would not really be feasible in common practice. Paul Baker also pointed out that he had never seen any evidence of this occurring in his long experience of collecting and restoring barrel pianos with upwards of fifty instruments having been through his hands.

Paul and I then discussed the use and meaning of the terms I found on the printed Wintle label '... Jazz Band Organs, Slot pianos and Street Organs. Firstly, it must be understood that in this context, the word 'organ' has nothing to do with instruments containing pipes or reeds! The word organ as used here is a contraction in popular parlance of the term 'piano-organ', which description for a street piano was in common use in the period up until the 1920s. After that time it seemed to disappear quickly from the language and be replaced in popular form by the phrase 'barrel organ', which became a cover-all word for several distinctly different types of mechanical instrument. As far as the general public were aware, all shared the same characteristic of being played or operated mechanically without the intervention of any human musician.

Also in common usage in continental Europe were large coin-operated barrel pianos for cafe use, which can be more accurately described as piano-orchestrians; they often contained percussion instruments such as drums cymbals and bells in addition to the regular piano hammers. Often known as 'Jazz band Pianos' in deference to the added percussive effects, these enjoyed a brief period of popularity in this country as well and it is to these particular instruments that Canon Wintle is referring.

There are several theories as to the origin of the word 'Jazz' but in a musical context it appears around 1915 in Chicago to describe a certain new form of exciting music, initially as 'Jass' or 'Jasz', although the word can be traced back to the 1860s with spelling variants such as 'jasm' and 'gism' Sufficient to say for the readers of these pages that it had connotations with vitality, excitement and virility. Some barrel piano makers also produced

barrel instruments with reeds or pipes. The smaller instruments, termed 'street-harmoniums', were played rested upon a stick or stump by the operator. The term 'belly-organ' has also been used in colloquial language. This dual activity is possibly partly responsible for the misunderstanding in more recent times of the term 'piano-organ' (which Canon Wintle nearly always used when stencilling a barrel piano sounding board) when the hyphen has been incorrectly interpreted to mean 'piano and organ'.

Finally, our conversation moved to another subject and once more I was enlightened by his knowledge. Somehow we got talking about phonographs and gramophones.

In UK English, a phonograph plays cylinder records and a gramophone plays discs. I had always thought, along with many others that cylinders came before discs and, while the invention of the first phonograph did indeed pre-date that of Emile Berliner's Gramophone, Paul pointed out that it was possible to buy a disc record in London as early as the year 1889, six of which were included with a toy gramophone that could be obtained from Messrs Parkins & Gotto, whereas at that early date, the phonograph was envisaged merely as an adjunct to commercial enterprise in an office location for dictation purposes. Machines and blank cylinders were being leased rather than sold outright, so it was not for another few years that the general public was able to buy wax cylinder records for home entertainment.

Another popular misunderstanding, quite widespread today among those who have not studied the subject, is that the company names 'Edison' and 'Edison-Bell' are variants of one and the same organization. This is not the case. The brand name 'Edison' was used by Thomas Edison's National Phonograph Company, which had its parent organization in America as well as branch companies worldwide whereas Edison-Bell was a wholly British affair from its inception in 1892.

Finally, we illustrate a humorous postcard from Paul Baker that people of the time would have understood

but may be lost on today's generation. It has a street piano-organ in the background and a woman apparently gesticulating wildly as a bus passes by and fails to stop.

The caption indicates that the conductor thought she was dancing to the music of the 'organ'!

So, thanks to our readers' feedback we can help to put THE RECORD STRAIGHT in both metaphorical and literal terms.



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### 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.

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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.

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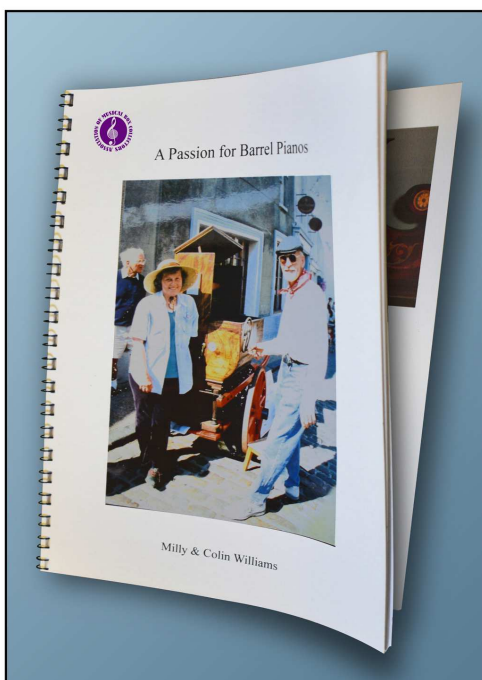
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