

Issue 39, Spring 2025

MECHANICAL MUSIC WORLD



North Tonawanda Musical Instrument
Works Keyboard A-Roll Piano
- See article on Page 25

An Association of Musical Box Collectors Publication



From the Editors' Desk

Spring hasn't exactly sprung as we write this, but at least the sun is shining occasionally, which is a start! Fortunately our hobby, unlike gardening, is not usually weather dependent, unless of course you are operating an organ or street piano in the open air.

This issue of our journal seems to be even more varied than usual, with articles covering some historical research, a musical box, an apparatus for record playing, a coin-operated café piano and finally an article on giant French automata. Our thanks go to all the contributors to this issue. It is said that 'variety is the spice of life', and we certainly have that here.

It has come to our notice that the next issue will be number forty - ten years' anniversary of the founding of AMBC under the guiding light of our amazing founder, Ted Brown. If you would like to contribute to this celebration issue with a memory or a picture or two please contact us, Paul Bellamy or David Soulsby. It will be good to have as many members represented as possible!

The falling monetary values of instruments and boxes is concerning to all of us. In our clock shop customers were always advised to buy clocks they liked rather than for investment only. Over time clock prices have gone the same way as mechanical music, with only the really exceptional pieces maintaining their value. This is not necessarily a wholly bad thing in that it does enable the collector to acquire pieces at reasonable prices.

It is wonderful that Paul Bellamy has for the last ten years continued to publish the in depth research begun by Anthony Bulleid. Both these gentlemen

have done an amazing job of 'unpicking' the intricacies of the Swiss and French manufacturing families and firms and furthering our collective knowledge in this field. It is to be hoped that there will be some in the next generation to carry on this work of research following in the likes of Jean-Claude Piguet, Anthony Bulleid, Paul Bellamy, Ted Brown, Olin Tillotson and many others. This is an on-going research project!

Thank you to all our contributors to this issue: Paul Bellamy, Ted Brown, David Evans, Bernard Novell and David Soulsby.



Welcome to Spring 2025 and welcome to this issue of Mechanical Music World.

From a Victorian magic lantern slide.

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Chairman and Deputy Chairman's Report

It is AMBC's 10th anniversary, a fact we on committee had almost forgotten until reminded by committee member David Soulsby.

There is no point in dwelling on why AMBC was formed except to say we were asked to do so by those who enjoyed the informality and friendliness that we offered. Thus we maintained the traditional UK format used by many other societies by registering ourselves as an unincorporated society. In UK law we are recognised as a not-for-profit, self regulating members society run by members for members under a constitution approved by the members.

The alternative was to consider becoming a charity or a limited liability business. Legal requirements place quite onerous obligations on both, particularly those who volunteer or otherwise offer their services to the formally elected committee. Incorporated public and private business registration requires committee members to be directors of the company registered at UK's Companies House.

AMBC is not inhibited by those constraints. Of course, we have to comply with UK law with a registered business account. The reason is primarily to ensure that unincorporated companies cannot be used as a cover for money laundering or avoid tax if trading in the public domain.

Meetings recently have been a bit limited. Overseas and UK coach trips of the past have become very costly. Sadly the number of UK venues in which societies once participated have failed. Even so, we have participated in Horological Society meetings, have had meetings at UK heritage sites and will do so again this year.

We are fortunate to have members with expert knowledge who have kept the pages of this magazine alive for those past 10 years and hopefully for the next ten as well.

Ted and I wish all our members well.

Ted Brown, Chairman.

Paul Bellamy, deputy Chairman.

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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

The Amberley meeting will take place on the 21st April. AMBC will be displaying and playing a variety of self-playing musical instruments. Unfortunately, there were going to be a number of street barrel pianos as advertised on the Amberley website but the owners of some of these instruments are indisposed. Chairman Ted Brown will be giving two talks that day telling the story of these instruments with many examples being played.

For more information search for Amberley on their website to learn about this town and its heritage centre.

<https://www.amberleymuseum.co.uk/whats-on/musical-box-collectors/>

A Very Special Cartel

by Bernard Novell

I purchased several cartel boxes during the first few months of 2021 so it was inevitable that some would need to wait a while before they could be restored. Although the case was in pretty good condition this eight-tune cartel, made by Langdorff et Fils in 1882, was one of the last to come into the workshop, mainly due to the dreadful, dirty & oily, state of the mechanism which I knew would take some hard work. See fig 1.



Fig 1: Cartel box by Langdorff prior to restoration.

On arrival and first inspection I thought that the unusual cartouche in the centre of the lid, which has several contrasting woods, intricate mother of pearl and brass inlay, was not in keeping with the era of manufacture and certainly a later addition due to the way the grain runs and because the finish was nowhere near smooth. (See Figs 2a & 2b). The box itself has a scumble finish to the sides, rear and front with the latter having two bands of stringing. Sometime soon I will repolish the case inside and out.

The mechanism did run, albeit slowly, and the tunes all sounded 'off'. There were many bent pins, so I thought that many notes were being missed, and it was probably out of register, but these issues are not



Fig 2a: The non-original inlay, shown in more detail in Fig 2b.



Fig 2b: The inlay.

really the cause or case, as I found out later.

It was late 2022 when I turned my attention to full restoration. There were a couple of relatively minor issues with the mechanism, such as a cobbled up stop arm spring, missing pawl spring and no female Geneva stop-work - though the screw was there! These parts were quickly made by a local engineer friend. So I thought a simple clean & polish, gild the bedplate, straighten the pins and all will be well. Think again!

Removal of the oil and tarnish from all the smaller components was no problem, but the cylinder was a very different story. The reddy-brown coloured substance seemed to have soaked into the brass, particularly into the fine grooves around the cylinder. After three scrubs with an ammonia based brass polish, it was a bit cleaner, but a very long



Fig 3: A large number of damaged pins.

way from the highly polished finish I was looking for. See Fig 3.

Slightly dejected, I decided to turn my attention to straightening the pins. I got about 50mm along from one end before giving up. Nearly all the badly bent pins broke off, so I realised that this cylinder was going to have to be completely re-pinned – an expensive and lengthy process. During the cleaning process I also discovered that the mainspring was the wrong size. It must have previously been replaced for a good reason, but it would need to be replaced again, this time with the correct size. I had purchased a couple of brand-new four-metre-long clock springs a few months earlier. Checking the dimensions and using the very handy calculator on the National Watch & Clock Collector’s website, I determined that I could use one of these as the thickness and width were perfect, however it needed to be much shorter. See Fig 4.

By June 2023, some two years after buying this box, I had it all back together, (See Fig 5), but the governor was not running smoothly, there were too many bent and missing pins, and the comb required several new dampers. I didn’t realise at the time that



Fig 4: Showing the new mainspring before shortening. the comb also needed tuning.

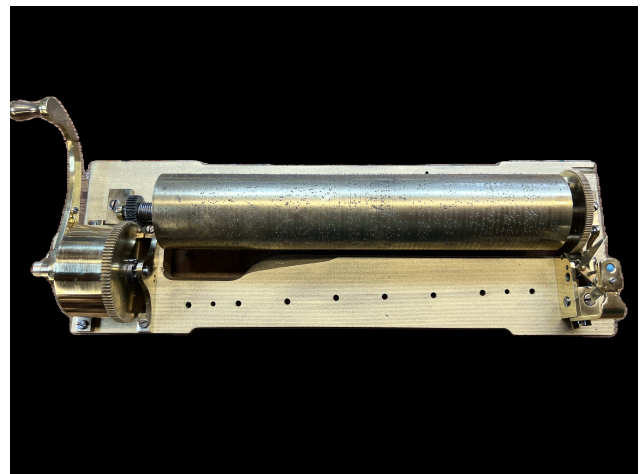


Fig 5: The re-assembled movement.

Re-pinning is beyond my skills as it requires the cement inside the cylinder to be removed. Then the cylinder is immersed in sulphuric acid which eats all the steel pins. The cylinder is then mechanically polished, the 4,000+ new pins inserted, cement replaced and pins honed to be all the same length. A long process. I took the box to a professional musical box restorer in July 2023 and collected it a year later.

The mechanism, particularly the cylinder, look beautifully shiny after restoration (See Fig 6), but before he played it the restorer said. “I’ve honed the comb to its original tuning using the original tuning information marked on the comb base. There are more than twice as many sharps & flats on this comb than on any other mechanism I’ve ever worked on!” The sound was extraordinary, it was kind of haunting. I couldn’t wait to get it home and play it many more times.

Neither could I wait to do more research on the



Fig 6: Restoration completed.



Fig 7: The Romanian tune sheet.

original and pristine tune sheet, (See Fig 7) which I'd already ascertained was written in Romanian, and clearly dated 1882, but I had not had time to delve deeper.

Normally Google is a great tool for researching tunes. I'd had about an 85% success rate in the short period that I've needed more information about composer, first performance dates etc. for my other boxes, but not this time. Using 'translate' I did determine that the word "Hora" meant Folk Dance and that tune 3 is (literally translated) "Crossing the Danube March", tune 4 is the "Romanian National Dance" and tune 6 translates as "Mary's Waltz". Other than that – nothing!

I decided to email retired musicologist and fellow collector, Thomas J. Mathiesen in the United States, who says: The large number of "sharps and flats" is necessary because the music of the region does not use a western scale of twelve equal semitones in the octave. It uses an anhemitonic pentatonic scale (i.e.,

a scale with only five tones and no semitones) and a so-called "uncertain mode," in which the third, fourth, and seventh steps can be in "natural position" or a quarter-tone or semitone sharper. Thus, to produce this variety on a comb, each octave would need 14 pitches. Yes, well ... over my simple head I'm afraid! However, Tom continues ...

The word *Hora* in this context is an ancient Romanian and Israeli term for "A circular folk dance". The plural is *hore*.

The tune titles beginning with *hora* may in fact be descriptions of the place or region with which the *hora* is associated. All five of these tunes are traditional folk melodies. The most important features are the rhythm and form, since these affect the dance steps. Early ethnomusicologists collected these tunes by going out into the villages and recording them (usually with wire or wax cylinders). Latterly, two of the most famous 'collectors' were the Hungarian composers Zoltán Kodály and Béla Bartók, who used some of these tunes as the basis for their own compositions.

And so, to the tunes themselves:

1. **Hora Frumusica**

Frumusica is the name of one of the communes in Romania.

2. **Hora Sirba**

Sirba is Romanian for Serbia.

3. **Crecerea Duneri Marsu** (Crossing The Danube March). The calligrapher may not have fully understood the title. The correct spelling should be Crecerea Dunaøii Marøu.

4. **Romanul Dantu Nationale** (Romanian National Dance).

Again the calligrapher has not got this quite right. It should be *Romanul Dantu National* (Dantu being Serbian for dance).

5. **Hora Plovni**

Plovni is Croatian for dredgers or sailing vessels. A circular *hora* might suggest some sort of flowing or sailing image.

6. **Marien Valse** (Mary's Waltz - possibly Austrian)

There are numerous waltzes with this title,

including ones by Josef Bayer, J. Ohys, J. Gungl, and Johann Strauss Sr. This tune does not match the composition by Strauss Sr., and scores or recordings of the versions by Bayer, Ohys, and Gungl have not been located.

7. **Nu Mai Sint Ce Am Fost Odata** (I am not what I once was).

Another calligraphy error. This should read *Nu mai sunt ce-am fost odata*.

8. **Hora Vlasceanka**

Spelt this way, the only reference that can be found points to this being Czech for 'a native', so maybe a native dance.

It is fairly certain that this box would have been made to order and probably used to teach and/or practise different dances over many years.

So the bottom line here is that this is a very rare mechanism. A one-off built to order. I feel exceptionally lucky to have stumbled across it. Furthermore, by restoring it to its original state, an important piece of history has been saved.

The bottom line here is that I have, almost unwittingly, saved this unique box with a very rare and unique set of tunes from being scrapped as the cost of restoration is probably way more than its current auction value. But it's not just about the monetary value, to me it's about the history and the interest, not to mention the unique sound of these tunes.

The tunes can be heard by visiting

<https://www.bernysmusicboxes.co.uk/878-langdorff--fils.html>

where you can also find a full restoration diary.

434 Ernst Holzweissig Nachf. in Leipzig.

XXI THEIL. Uhren.

Wecker-Uhren mit Musikwerk. — Musical alarm. — Réveille-matin à musique. — Despertadores con música.

No. 1100/1. Musik-Wecker, nicklirt, „Jocker“. 1 Stück spiel. *fl.* 7.50.

No. 1100/2. Musik-Wecker, nicklirt, „Jocker“. 2 Stücke spiel. *fl.* 8.25.

Musical alarm, nickeled, „Jocker“. Réveille-matin à musique, nickelé, „Jocker“. — Despertador con música niquelado „Jocker“.

„Nen-Humorist“, Höhe: 23 cm. No. 3551. Holzgeh. 1 Stück spiel. *fl.* 7.50 „ 3551¹/₂ „ 2 „ „ „ 8.—

„Standard“, Höhe: 22 cm. No. 3558E. Holzgeh. 1 Stück spiel. *fl.* 8.75 „ 3558¹/₂E. „ 2 „ „ „ 9.25

No. 1101. „Frieda“, Musik-Wecker, Holzgehäuse. 1 Stück spielend. *fl.* 8.—

No. 1101¹/₂. „Frieda“, Musik-Wecker, Holzgehäuse. 2 Stücke spielend. *fl.* 8.50.

„Major“, Höhe: 32 cm. No. 3556E. Holzgehäuse. 1 Stück spielend. *fl.* 10.— „ 3556¹/₂E. „ 2 „ „ „ 10.50

No. 1102. „Anna“, Musik-Wecker, Holzgehäuse. 1 Stück spielend. *fl.* 8.25.

No. 1102¹/₂. „Anna“, Musik-Wecker, Holzgehäuse. 2 Stücke spielend. *fl.* 8.75.

Bei Baarzahlung innerhalb 30 Tagen 2%.

2% discount for cash within 30 days. — Escompte de 2% pour les paiements au comptant dans le délai de 30 jours. — 2% al contado dentro de 30 días

A selection of musical alarm clocks available from wholesaler Ernst Holzweissig of Leipzig in 1903, from their catalogue.

Musical Box Agents, Part 1

Valogne of Paris

by Paul Bellamy

The late HAV (Anthony) Bulleid had a wonderful sense of humour. When once asked how musical box makers sold their products he told me his answer to the person should have been 'blindingly obvious': AGENTS!

But Anthony was never offensive and the person who asked the question got a polite answer to what seems to be a simple question. Agents were the backbone of all musical box sales, often working in a world-wide network of distributors, middlemen, buyers, retailers and sellers. Many agents falsely claimed to be the maker.

Before Anthony died he asked me in collaboration with Ted Brown to review and update his work, particularly his book *Musical Box Tune Sheets* and its many supplements.

Agents often falsely claimed or otherwise inferred to be the maker. Typical of these was Frenchman Thibouville-Lamy who sold many musical boxes including cylinder musical boxes and thousands of small hand-wound children's musical boxes called manivelles made by French musical box maker L'Épée.

The story of the agents will always be incomplete because they were just a part of the transient manufacturing-sales process. They were also at the end of that process so the following may also be a statement of the blindingly obvious.

Makers and entrepreneurs in the Western world acquired their knowledge and accreditation via trade organisations. There were basically two types, merchant guilds and craft guilds. Merchant guilds were mostly associated with town and cities to ensure goods met local needs as well as the distribution and sale of goods to far off places. The craft guilds covered every trade and type of manufacture and were very important in maintaining and developing a local economy. They were structured as a hierarchy of masters, journeymen/craftsmen and apprentices.

There were silversmiths, goldsmiths, jewellers, wool merchants, corn merchants, cloth makers (haberdashers) or similar form of organisation. This applied to the Swiss watch and clock making industry and its off-shoot, the musical box makers.

Craft guilds policed and promoted the quality and skills of their members by setting standards. They investigated complaints, levied fines for poor workmanship and were active against what they considered to be unfair competition. They also acted as a union to control the numbers of members and regulate prices and earnings. Members paid dues to sustain the guilds. This was certainly the case for Geneva and its clock and musical box industry.

Skilled trades needed quality materials and this was essential for the making of clocks, watches, musical boxes. They had to be of the highest possible quality. At the time, circa 1800, the finest steels used for making small musical novelties were produced in the UK. They reached Switzerland via various routes other than through the French Republic. After the defeat of Napoleon in 1815 the situation may have eased. Musical movements once made for musical clocks became musical instruments in their own right thanks to at least two people, François Nicole and his friend François Lecoultre. Others soon followed but they were the true pioneers of the cylinder musical box as a musical instrument in its own right.

Quality English Steel was produced in standard sizes. In the early years of comb manufacture, the dimensions of steel were so small that teeth were made individually. With time and demand the size of steel stock increased so that more teeth could be cut from a single piece of steel stock. By about 1830 stock size had increased sufficiently to cut all the comb teeth from a single piece of steel.

The craftsmen who did so were divided into separate trades. There were iron founders, forgers and smiths. There were makers of springs, combs, cylinders, brackets, arbors, control levers, governors, etc. Then there were the component assemblers who produced spring motors, speed governors, bedplates, unpinned cylinders, etc. Many of these also described themselves or were recorded by historians such as Piguet and Chapuis as makers. Of course they were makers of the bits and pieces associated with the musical box such as sub-assemblies but not to be confused with the established makers such as the Nicoles, the Lecoultres, Ducommun, the Paillards, Mermod, etc.

Mechanical Music World

Next were musical arrangers. They liaised with the makers and their component assemblers such as those who pinned cylinders and tuned combs to ensure a complete tune could be pinned onto a blank cylinder and that there were enough teeth on the comb to play all the notes. As far as is known, not a single name has ever been recorded and yet they were the bedrock of the industry. If a customer wanted a particular tune the arranger would create the score to exactly fit the surface length and surface speed of rotation of the yet-to-be-pinned cylinder and its yet-to-be tuned comb. How many today could do that without the aid of a computer? For those who want to know more, read the works of the late Anthony Bulleid.

Before about 1880 all production, including that of clocks, watches and musical boxes, was based on what was loosely described in the UK as cottage industry but equally applicable to towns and cities all over the world. Paillard of Saint Croix was the first maker to set up a comprehensive factory about 1880 where most of the work was conducted. Even then, their factory was often supplied with components by cottage workers both in Saint Croix as well as those from just across the border in France.

The late HAV Bulleid was cautious when deciding whether or not a particular musical box maker was actually a maker or an agent. In the introduction to his seminal work 'Cylinder Musical Box Tune Sheets' he wrote:

'One has to remember that often musical box makers were small fry compared with the agents upon whom they depended for regular sales and thereby consistent and economically sound production. Naturally these agents liked their name to be seen and remembered by people who bought the musical boxes. So they often claimed or hinted that they actually made the box. This meant in turn that they did not like the real maker to add his name. The net result is that the names of most makers appear only on a few tune sheets. Of course, there are notable exceptions, like Nicole who pushed their name to the English market.'

For this reason, when preparing this first article on Agents, I thought it was about time to look more closely at the little we know about the musical box industry and particularly the agents who were responsible for practically all of the sales.

To summarise the above, musical box makers were

usually supplied with incomplete movements for them to finish by pinning the cylinders with tunes and tuning the matching combs. The basic incomplete movements were produced by a variety of component suppliers and were then assembled by others to produce a basic but incomplete movement for use by the actual maker. An incomplete movement was called a *blanc roulant* (Geneva) or *bauche* (Saint Croix).

Bulleid wrote (Cylinder Musical Box Technology, page 93) that they consisted of a bedplate and most of the components, sometimes even the control levers, except for the snail cam and the comb. The reason for this was that a standard length cylinder could be used to play a different number of airs. A 4-air cylinder would require a comb with closer tooth spacing and therefore more teeth. 6 airs would require a comb with greater spacing and fewer teeth. Snail cams would then be made accordingly to move the cylinder horizontally depending on the number of tunes pinned on the cylinder.

Combs were not made by the musical box maker but were supplied to them, often for finishing off later. The main sources of materials were brass and steel. The small amount of evidence, mainly by the late Luuk Goldhoorn, indicated that most of comb steel was produced from English steel stock. Even early brass bedplates and had dimensions very close to that of UK suppliers.

Comb making, finishing and tuning was precision engineering and a highly skilled process. Unfinished combs needed the services of a skilled comb tuner to ensure each tooth was correctly fitted with a lead weight for bass teeth in order to lower the pitch (very early movements sometimes had brass) as well as dampers. These tuners needed information as to how to adjust the pitch to suit all the pin tracks of the cylinder. Each track had pins that played just one note of the musical arrangement.

Before combs were tuned the comb steel was in the unhardened state, soft enough to be stamped. This may have been done by the comb supplier to ensure it was destined for the actual musical box maker. Comb makers often worked on commission for a number of makers so the name would then act to identify the maker.

Names and initials appearing in many places on a musical movement and its tune sheet, sometimes on the underside of the wooden case but only those

stamped on combs offer the most reliable evidence for the actual maker. Others may be for bedplate assemblers/suppliers and agents.

Tune sheets are also important in identifying the maker but they are far from being absolutely reliable without other supporting evidence. Many were not agent or maker specific and Bulleid described them as 'Unattributed'. Unattributed movements were almost certainly produced by an established maker but then supplied to another maker or agent. With careful research it is sometimes possible to find out. Tune sheet patterns changed with time but some were maker specific, others were not.

Surviving musical boxes frequently have missing tune sheets. Some got lost during their lifetime and were replaced by a different pattern. Even so, it may still be possible to identify where the movement was made and even its date.

For example, known musical box makers added their serial numbers in sequence, independent of the type of movement. Serial numbers were fundamental to Bulleid's work in publishing his tune sheet charts. They were often written on tune sheets and stamped on bedplates. Gamme numbers were also recorded. These are mostly to be found on tune sheets and sometimes scratched on the face of the lead weight of the lowest bass tooth. Both numbers were important to the maker and should be considered as part of the production control process having little or no meaning for the purchaser/owner.

Gamme numbers were unique to the maker. In French the word can be interpreted as 'range'. It is best to think of it as the unique range of tuned teeth from bass to treble needed to play all the pins on the cylinder i.e. the precise pitch of every tooth on the movement's comb.

The gamme number applies to all the tunes on its tune sheet but the same gamme number (i.e. tuning scale on the comb) can accommodate other different tunes on a similar musical box by the same maker. It can be a bit confusing unless one accepts that many different tunes can be arranged to play on a comb tuned to a particular scale. Makers often used the same gamme to accommodate a different selection of tunes for another musical box. Gamme numbers as well as serial numbers are usually written on the tune sheet (S for serial G for gamme). For a different set of tunes they sometimes added 'bis' after the number. Bis can be translated as

'encore' but it is better translated as 'repeat'. Gamme numbers and serial numbers in tune sheets are sometimes written under the wrong S and G. If in doubt, most serial numbers can be confirmed when they are stamped on the bedplate.

Valogne

Having got this lengthy preamble out of the way for this first in a series of articles about Agents it is time to consider some examples:

1. Figs. 1A to 1D are for a movement with the bedplate stamped Valogne confirming he was a French agent based in Paris. This key-wind musical box had a single unstamped comb with 92 comb teeth. Fig. 1D shows his name and location, Paris plus a serial number. There was no tune sheet. This makes identification of the maker difficult. However, key-wind movements were mostly pre-1860 and single-piece combs post mostly post 1830.



Fig. 1A. The simple fruitwood case for a key-wind Valogne musical box.



Fig. 1B. See Fig. 1A. The un-restored single comb with some missing teeth.



Fig. 1C. See Fig. 1A. Typical controls of any standard early key-wind movement.



Fig. 1D. The Valogne bedplate stamp hidden in the shadows of Fig. 1B.

The use of three control levers (stop/start, tune change and instant stop) to just two control levers (stop/start, tune change) also occurred almost coincident with the change from key-wind to lever wind. The reason for the instant stop lever and the abandonment of its use is not known. It was probably an instant stop used by those setting up and making adjustments. It definitely was not for use by the purchaser. In fact it was the cause of much damage when used to stop a movement in full play leaving pins and comb teeth engaged causing damage to cylinder pins, dampers and teeth.

The number 6533 is a serial number and most likely that of the actual maker. Bulleid's tune sheet Charts 1 to 15 are the last and latest of his work as found in Supplement 3 of his book Musical Box Tune sheets. An updated and extended version is to be found in AMBC's book: Musical Box Tune Sheets, Makers, Agents & Dates. (Still available from AMBC).

If this is a maker's serial number it is low enough to indicate a Geneva maker but some dating evidence is required. Supposing the date was estimated or known to be somewhere post 1830 and, say, pre 1850. It would be too early for Nicole (Chart 11) but possibly one of the Lecoultries (Chart 8, Lecoultre Frres, David Lecoultre). It is unlikely to be Métert & Langdorff (Chart 7) but L'Épée or even Ducommun Girod cannot be discounted.

Had more details been provided/advertised for this example it might have been possible to narrow the choice down if more details were known. However the following examples may also help in this respect.

2. Fig. 2 is a general view of another key-wind movement with the name Valogne stamped on the bedplate. Although the tune sheet is missing the

tunes were stated as: Motif du Lac, La Marseillaise, Valse des Huguenots, Grand Marche de Juive. The serial number was given as 11224 and the bedplate was stamped with T.F/o (see Fig. 2A) and VC (see Figs. 2B & 2C).



Fig. 2A. A similar Valogne movement to Fig. 1A.

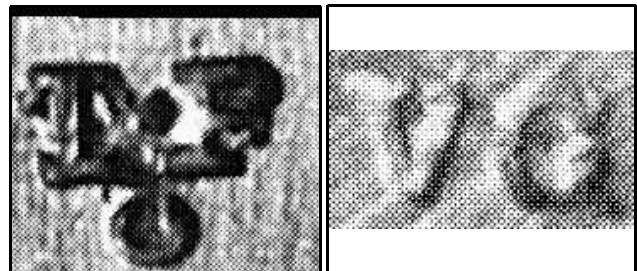


Fig. 2B (left): The T.F/o bedplate stamp for Fig. 2A, also found on F. Nicole and D. Lecoultre movements.

Fig. 2C (right): The VC bedplate stamp for Fig. 2A.

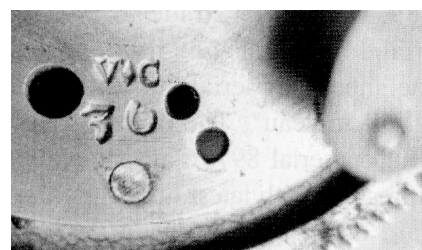


Fig. 2D: A typical VC stamp often found on cylinder end caps.

The initials T·F (without /o) are found on Nicole, David Lecoultre, Métert & Langdorff and unidentified movements all circa 1830/40s. It was also seen on a movement stamped with the name 'Valogne'.

Bulleid thought it was a repairer's mark. It could also be a founder's or component supplier's mark.

3. Figs. 3A - 3C are for another 4-air key-wind single comb movement with the name Valogne

stamped upside-down on the bedplate, Fig. 3B. The tune sheet is Fig. 3C but it also has no serial number and was never recorded by Bulleid. The tunes are all early and written/performed before a reasonable estimate of the date the movement was made. (Note: Bulleid depended heavily on performance dates on the basis that his estimated/predicted date line could not be before that date.) The estimated date is late 1840s.



Fig. 3A. Another 4-air key-wind single comb movement with the name Valogne stamped upside-down on the bedplate, Fig. 3B. Serial number unknown but estimated as 1840s.



Fig. 3B. The Valogne stamp upside down, see Fig. 3A.

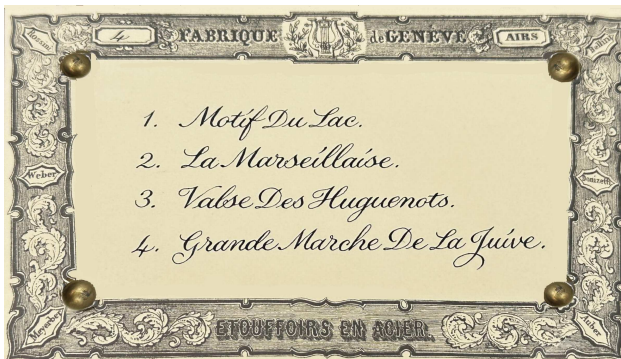


Fig. 3C. The tune sheet for Fig. 3A.

4. Fig. 4 is a digitally enhanced version of Bulleid's 290 for a 6-air segmented comb key-wind movement with cylinder 10¼ inches long. The latest tune, La fille du regiment by Donizetti, was first

performed in was 1840. The number 11446 was written in the bottom cartouche with V.L.G. printed in the top cartouche. However, 12753 was stamped on the bedplate and hand-written above the top border of the tune sheet, indicative of the actual maker.

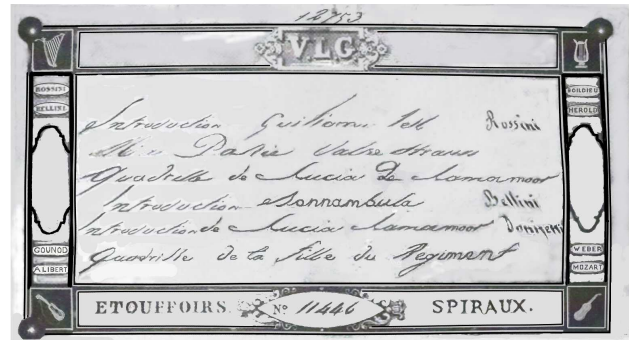


Fig. 4. A 6-air segmented comb key-wind movement circa 1850 with V.L.G. printed in the top cartouche.

Bulleid's caption to 290 is: 'Agent Valogne is the owner of these initials, seen on musical box tune sheets since the first days of external controls and comb teeth in small groups and the latest tunes dated 1828'.

It is unclear what he meant by his reference to segmented combs and the date 1828. The latest tune on the tune sheet is La Fille du Regiment performed in 1840.

Segmented combs were replaced with single piece combs about 1830 so the tune sheet might have been for a single comb movement. He also noted that the first tune was pinned 'on the dots'. These were the reference dots punched in the cylinder tune gap used to set up the movement, the first dot aligning with the circumferential lines of the cylinder. This was a convention typical of Saint Croix makers whereas Geneva makers tended to pin the last tune on these tracks. However, for very early Geneva makers this convention for identifying the location of the maker is unreliable.

Possible conclusion: The serial number and possible date (post 1848) aligns with L'Épée and, with a stretch of imagination, David Lecoultre (Bulleid's Chart 8)

5. Fig. 5A is a tune sheet headed V.L.G. for Valogne with serial 3809. It has 6 tunes, the latest tune is 1835. The heading *Forte Piano Expressif* means loud and soft passages, possibly interspersed with crescendo and diminuendo. Specialist in this type were brothers David Lecoultre and Henri-

Joseph Lecoultre who used a single comb movement to produce the effect using cylinder pins with pins bent forward to produce different effective heights.

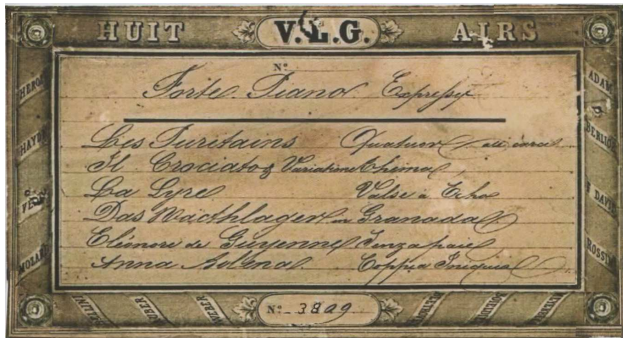


Fig. 5A. A tune sheet headed V.L.G. for Valogne. The G could be for Granger, a partner of Henri Lecoultre from 180 to 1844.

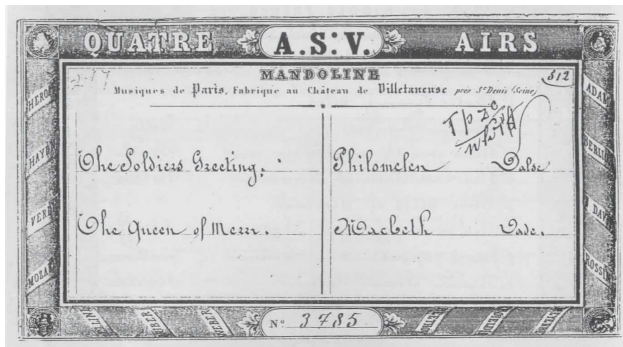


Fig. 5B. See Fig. 5A. A.S.V for Alexandre Soulle of France circa 1847. The V is likely to be for Valogne.

Fig. 5B is for serial an identical tune sheet this time headed A.S:V for Alexandre Soulle of France. Bulleid had two examples, serial 3785 (Bulleid 69) and serial 4168 (164). He estimated their dates as 1871/1872 but gave no reason for doing so. The latest tune date for both was 1850 so that puts Bulleid’s dates in doubt as being too late so maybe it was a typing error.

Soulle’s tune sheets are headed ‘Musiques de Paris, Fabrique au Château de Villetaneuse près de St. Denis (Seine). This was castle Villetaneuse in the location of St. Denis bordering the river Seine. The latest tune is from Verdi’s Macbeth performed in 1847.

Note: If 3809 and 3785 are the serial numbers both movements could be a very early L’Épée example (Bulleid’s Chart 6) but both have closer alignment with Henri-Joseph Lecoultre (Chart 8).

Bulleid did not explain the V in A.S:V. The same pattern was also used by agent Valogne for a Lecoultre Granger movement. Granger was in

partnership with Henri-Joseph Lecoultre from 180 to 1844. Thus: V is most likely to be for agent Valogne.

Summary.

Finally, the sparse evidence above is sufficient to demonstrate that Valogne was an agent for possibly at least one of the three Lecoultres. He could have been an agent for others such as L’Épée but there has been no evidence so far to support that possibility; it would certainly have clashed with L’Épée’s known agent, Thibouville-Lamy.

Although very few movements for Valogne have been recorded it is because few have survived. There is little doubt that he was a high class Paris merchant and would be responsible for the sale of many cylinder musical boxes.

Unfortunately, many past restorers also did not have the time or inclination to record details of specific movements. The most comprehensive record was produced by the late Arthur Cunliffe. It is in the custodianship of MBSGB who may be able to respond to questions. Arthur Cunliffe was a colleague who worked co-operatively with members of musical box societies all over the world. Anthony, Ted Brown, Arthur Ord-Hume, myself and many others were active in providing him with photographs and other details.

I hope this article will go some way to encourage others who have these rare surviving items to build upon and publish our limited knowledge of this important musical box agent, Valogne of Paris. Please pass any information you have to MBSGB so that they can update the Cunliffe Musical Box Register.

A Different Way to Play Records

David Evans discovered another oddity

Allen-Hough Eastern Office in New Home

Now Located in Pennsylvania Building in Central Business Section—J. B. Price Reports an Increasing Demand

J. B. Price, Eastern sales manager of the Allen-Hough Mfg. Co., Racine, Wis., manufacturer of Allen portables and the Phono-Link electric pick-up, announced this week the removal of the company's Eastern offices to the Pennsylvania Building, 225 West Thirty-fourth street, New York. The new Eastern home of the Allen-Hough Co. is located in one of the most convenient business sections of New York, being adjacent to the Hotel Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Terminal and convenient to all local systems of transportation. There is ample room in the new offices for the demonstration of Allen portables and the Phono-Link, also an attractive showroom.

In a chat with *The Talking Machine World* Mr. Price stated that the demand for Allen portables had increased steadily in Eastern territory, with a number of jobber appointments the past few weeks covering important sections



J. B. Price

of the East. The Phono-Link pick-up is meeting with the enthusiastic approval of the trade and during the past month Mr. Price closed arrangements for the merchandising of this pick-up with fifteen new distributors in New England and with four distributors in New York State.

In the November 1928 edition of *Talking Machine World* the Allen-Hough Company of Racine, Wisconsin announced that 'it is now located in the Pennsylvania Building at 223 West Thirty-fourth street' in the central business section of New York city (Fig 1). Their Eastern sales manager, Mr J B Price, reported to the journal that the demand for their portable gramophones had steadily increased in Eastern territory and that the Phono-Link pick-up was meeting with enthusiastic approval of the trade and that fifteen new distributors in New England and four in New York state had been signed up.

In the same journal, Don Allen, president of the Allen-Hough Manufacturing Company, disclosed that he had completed a tour of the South and met with distributors. Apparently the merchandising of the company for the current season and for 1929 was to be of a most ambitious nature (Fig 2).

Their advertisement in *Talking Machine World* was certainly ambitious - see Figures 3a and 3b.

Allen-Hough Plans Ambitious Program

Don Allen, president of the Allen-Hough Mfg. Co., Racine, Wis., recently completed an extensive tour of the South, where he conferred with the Allen-Hough distributors, Gus Blanchard, of the Southern Aluminum Co., and Chas. M. Jones, of the Aluminum Specialty Co., at New Orleans, in the distributing headquarters of that organization. The merchandising program of the Allen-Hough Mfg. Co. for the balance of this season and for 1929 is said to be of a most ambitious nature. New merchandise is about to be introduced, and it is believed by the Allen-Hough executives that distributor and dealer activity throughout the country will respond favorably to the program now being announced.

Fig 2: A further statement in the same edition of *Talking Machine World*.



Figs 3A & 3b: First page of Allen-Hough advert in Talking Machine World on 27th October 1927.

The Allen-Hough Manufacturing Co., based initially in Racine, Wisconsin, specialized in the production of portable gramophones (Fig 4).



Fig 4: Allen-Hough Model 5 portable.

The company was founded in October 1927, as indicated by a report in "Presto Times" dated January 26, 1929. This report noted the company's rapid growth, expanding from a payroll of 12 to 100 employees and achieving a daily output of 500 units. The company's president was Don T. Allen, and George P. Hough served as the secretary. A portable gramophone by Cecilian appears to be virtually identical to the Allen-Hough model 5.

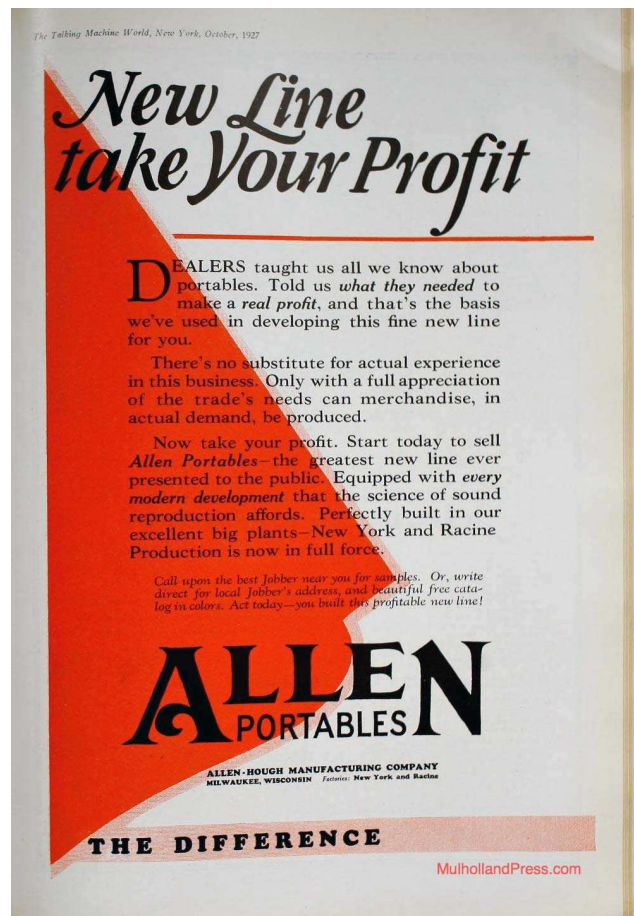


Fig 3b: The second of a two-page advertisement in Talking Machine World.

In 1929, Allen-Hough Manufacturing Co. acquired a Milwaukee-based phonograph company named Carryola. After this acquisition, the company operated under the name Allen-Hough Carryola Co. Allen-Hough made one of the first drop-type consumer record changers sold to the public in around 1929. It was used in the Columbia models 990 and 991 as well as in the Zenith model 75 radio/phonograph. It is understood that Don Allen assigned his work on the record changer to RCA in the early 1930s.



Fig 5: The Phono-Link pickup.

The Phono-Link pickup (Fig 5) mentioned above is an odd device. It was intended to stand on the motor board of your gramophone in such a place that it could play a record with the best tracking available to it, and its connecting wire would be connected to any radio that has gramophone connectors, so that your acoustic gramophone can be used to play records electrically. The device has a volume control at the side of its head (Fig 6) that also centralises the needle holder in the magnetic path.

An exuberant advertisement in Talking Machine World in November 1928 (Fig 7) predicted great sales for the 1929 improved Phono-Link, selling at only \$7.50.

How successful were the sales by the distributors is not at present known, but the Reliable Radio Company of Broadway, New York, advertised in Radio World in November 1930, describing the Phono-Link as famous (Fig 8). They were offering the device at a mere \$3.32, rather suggesting that they were trying to clear unsold stock at cost!



Fig 6: The 'Volume Control'.

The Talking Machine World, New York, November, 1928

CASH BUSINESS FOR YOU

WITH THE 1929 PHONO-LINK

NEW! IMPROVED!

NOW every phonograph owner may enjoy improved electrical reproduction of his favorite selections. The 1929 Phono-Link enables you to offer your trade a better, more durable, more beautiful unit than ever before. Amazing volume. Clear resonant tone. Faultless reproduction with least wear on records because of its light weight. Beautiful double nickel-plate finish. And at a price low enough to give you volume sales, high enough to insure you a generous profit.

Comes in two models. One for use through the detector tube, the other for use with the plug-in jacket with which most sets are now equipped. Complete and ready to operate . . . on any radio! Every person to whom you've ever sold a radio is an immediate prospect for Phono-Link. Just tell them about it and you have a sale. Take your profit now, while the demand is greatest. Write or wire nearest jobber for samples. Or write us for his name and address . . . at once!

Phono-Link
PATENTS PENDING

Allen-Hough Manufacturing Co.
RACINE, WISCONSIN
FACTORIES, NEW YORK AND RACINE
Makers of the Famous Allen Portables

\$7.50
list price

This compact, attractive display lets you sell the Phono-Link on sight. Quick profits with small sales effort!

Note—The new Phono-Link may also be had in beautiful gold-plate finish at only \$1.00 additional list.

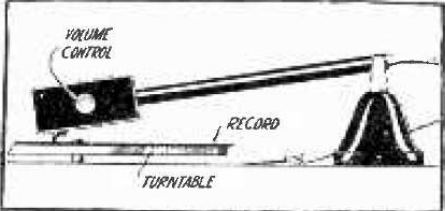
For manufacturers, the Phono-Link is available in special design under your own name. Details gladly supplied upon request.

Fig 7: Talking Machine World issue of November 1928.

The Prime Manufacturing Company.

This company began as an assembler and marketer, as were most sellers of talking machine sundries. It added a large die cast line early on which purchased the Union metal interests in the early 1920s, and moved the machinery from Ohio to WI. There were relatively few die casting plants making these parts as the tooling was expensive relative to the parts'

**PHONOGRAPH \$3.32
PICK-UP Only**



The famous Phono-link, made by Allen-Hough, enables playing phonograph records electrically, on your set. Volume control is built in. Adapter, free with each order, enables immediate connection to your set. Instruction sheet enclosed. Order Cat. PHL @ \$3.32.

RELIABLE RADIO COMPANY
Room 504, at 1562 Broadway, N. Y. City
(Between 48th and 47th Streets)

Fig 8: The Reliable Radio Company advertisement in 'Radio World' issue on November 1930.

commercial value, hence the similarities between so many different brands. Prime began manufacturing adapters to play regular discs on a Diamond Disc machine. They were sold in a number of different boxes, bearing a number of different trade-marks, and were fitted with a number of reproducers (i.e. soundboxes). They were sold under the Prime, Edison, Kent, Arto, Symphonic, Honest Quaker, Audak, Union and Oro-Tone branding (Fig 9). Prime also manufactured some other accessories, including motors and complete portable phonographs at Edison's request and they carried the Edison name on the record carriers.



Fig 9: Adaptor to play needle-cut 78s on an Edison Diamond Disc machine. This one branded Oro-Tone and with their soundbox.



Fig 10: The inside of the Phono-link (right) showing the horseshoe (C-shape) permanent magnet with the insulated wire coil slightly to the left at the bottom. The "volume" knob (at the right) simply forces the armature/needle holder against a strong flat spring until it is central in the air gap. This does, no doubt, change the volume, at the expense of any lateral compliance the thing might have had, and at the expense of extreme wear on any record played using the device.

The court case summarised below occurred when Allen-Hough claimed that motors supplied by Prime Manufacturing Company were not up to the required specification.

Prime Manufacturing Co. v. Allen-Hough Carryola Co., 245 N.W. 70 (Wis. 1933)

Wisconsin Supreme Court

Filed: January 10th, 1933

Precedential Status: Precedential

Citations: 245 N.W. 70, 210 Wis. 72, 1933 Wisc. LEXIS 290

Docket Number: Unknown

Judges: Fairchild, Fritz

Author: Fairchild

The following opinion was filed November 9, 1932:

Fairchild, J.

The learned trial judge in his comprehensive opinion says:

"As to the answers made by the jury respecting the

representations that the junior motors were capable of playing two ten-inch records and that the master motors were capable of playing three ten-inch records without rewinding, the court is of the opinion that it appears without contradiction that the defendant had sufficient opportunity to test the capacity of said motors and could easily have discovered any failure of the motors to play the number of records respectively indicated. It appears also beyond dispute that assuming the motors were free from defect in workmanship and material and were properly adjusted (a matter which was covered by an express warranty), the motors were capable of playing the number of ten-inch records indicated without rewinding."

When the opportunity which defendant had of familiarizing itself with the condition of the business and the market of the Carryola Company is given proper consideration, there can be no doubt of the correctness of the ruling of the trial court on the motions to change the answers to the questions relating to the timely rescission of the contract, as to questions covering the issues of false representations as to capacity of the motors, and the record discloses no jury question as to the issue relating to the existence of a patent incumbering the motors.

A study of the material evidence offered and received convinces us that the characteristics that color and distinguish the surroundings of the transaction affecting the "right of defendant to rely on the representations now excluded from consideration are present to as great a degree and affect in the same way the complaint of the defendant based upon representation as to satisfaction of the customers with motors on which the trial court based its rule for a partial retrial of the case. Did the defendant have the right to rely on any statement of Mr. Wild that the motors were satisfactory to the customers? The plaintiff insists that if the statements were made they were, under the circumstances, mere expressions of opinion, trade talk or puffing, and therefore not the basis of a claim such as is made by the defendant, who claims that there was a jury question as to the buyer's right to rely upon the truth of the statement. The phrases used do suggest trade talk and opinion as distinguished from a fact statement; but as the defendant contends, whether or not an opinion so expressed may be relied upon is, under some circumstances, a jury question.

Another question which will direct our attention to the controlling point may be stated: Did the seller in this instance have superior means of knowledge as to the truth of the representation concerning the satisfaction of the customers to that which the defendant had and was bound to resort to, or was the source of information peculiarly within the control of the plaintiff? The statement complained of, if used during the negotiations, was made to Mr. Allen or Mr. Hough, whose relation to plaintiff appears in the statement of facts to have been a close relation. Mr. Allen, a former employee and vice-president of the plaintiff at the time, was a moving spirit in the affairs of the defendant.

In determining the effect of such an expression of opinion or statement of fact on the mind of one to whom it is made, his connection with the affairs of those with whom he is bargaining affording him knowledge of the truth or falsity of such statement, is a proper source of investigation to be resorted to for the purpose of ascertaining whether or not there was a misleading in fact because of a right to rely on the statement.

In *Brustman v. Dunn*, 161 Wis. 306, 154 N. W. 361, cited in the opinion filed below, representations were made as to lands covered with water from the time such representations were made until after the deal was consummated, leaving the purchaser without opportunity to discover the falsity of such representations. The case of *Jacobsen v. Whitely*, 138 Wis. 434, 120 N. W. 285, dealt with the purchase of a large stock of merchandise and the representation was as to the amount of the total assets. After the sale, which occurred without reasonable opportunity to ascertain the truth, a deficiency was discovered and suit was brought to recover damages for the deceit. The evidence showed an inability on the part of the purchaser to discover the exaggeration until after the trade had been made. The court held that a jury question existed as to the right to rely on the statements so made. *Barndt v. Frederick*, 78 Wis. 1, 47 N. W. 6, is of similar import. All these cases are authority for the doctrine that, in bargaining with another, one must exercise his faculties; he cannot close his eyes to the apparent and understood, or overlook information acquired by him so recently and under such circumstances as to be fresh in his recollection. He must use his judgment of matters known to him and within his capacity to judge. Experience and

knowledge possessed by him must be used in ascertaining facts and forming opinions upon the 'character and value of property for which he is bargaining. The essential elements required to sustain an action for deceit on the ground of representations made as to character of property bought do not exist where the situation is such that a buyer is familiar with the character of the particular property so purchased. Where his association with the seller of the enterprise he is buying has been such that he is in as good or better position to know the exact situation as is the seller, he cannot plead that he has been misled. The law is pointedly set out in the rule that the misrepresentation must not only be as to something material, but the complainant must believe the false statement to be true, must have relied on it, and must have been deceived by it.

The facts in this case are such that the defendant is chargeable with the knowledge possessed by Allen and Hough. The evidence shows that Allen was engaged for some time in developing plaintiff's phonograph business, the very business which he afterwards purchased. The motors had got on the market, had been used quite extensively, and this under the sales management of Allen, Hough acted as salesman of these articles for the plaintiff during a similar period. Both Allen and Hough knew the position Mr. Wild held with the plaintiff, knew that his attention was confined in the main to other branches of the plaintiff's business. Allen was sales manager when the subsidiary company was developing the phonograph business from 1925 until he left plaintiff's employ in April, 1927, was with plaintiff when the motors were first used in the phonographs, nor did this relation end in April, 1927; for under an arrangement made about that time, the defendant company secured from the plaintiff the exclusive selling rights of the Carryola Company's portable phonographs and for a time this constituted about ninety per cent of defendant's business. During this time defendant was necessarily familiar with the market which consumed these articles. Thereafter the defendant entered into active competition with plaintiff, and defendant's agents called on persons known to be buyers of portable phonographs, kept informed of the kind of goods plaintiffs and others were putting on the market, and called on many of plaintiff's customers. The technique of competitive selling seems to have been possessed in a high degree by both Allen and

Hough; and their acquaintance with the concerns that made the market for this product afforded them an opportunity not only of knowing the reaction of the trade to the Prime motors, but must necessarily have given them a knowledge of the quality thereof. About September, 1928, while Allen and Hough were active in the selling of portable phonographs, there was suggested to the defendant the purchase of the assets of the subsidiary company which was manufacturing and selling the portable phonographs of the plaintiff. The defendant was given an option to purchase. This option lapsed, other arrangements were made, and finally the contract of February 5, 1929, was entered into. A dispute having arisen as to how many motors should be included in the inventory, discussions followed; and again there appears to have been made the statement that the motors were satisfactory to customers of the plaintiff. There was a compromise by a reduction in price, and the final bill of sale and orders involved in this litigation were agreed upon.

Testimony concerning the different conversations in which the statement that the motors were satisfactory to customers was made, shows clearly the situation which we have attempted to describe. It must be borne in mind that the contract which was finally entered into between the parties warranted the motors to be free from defects in material and workmanship, and there is nothing in the case which suggests a violation of this warranty other than the evidence which gathers around the alleged misrepresentations. If the motors would not carry the specified number of records, without rewinding, they were advertised to do, and the defendants knew or ought to have known that that condition existed, then they knew or ought to have known that these motors would not be satisfactory to customers who bought them expecting them to perform to that capacity, and there would be no jury question. In *Swoboda v. Rubin*, 169 Wis. 162, 170 N. W. 955, Mr. Justice Owen very clearly pointed out circumstances under which expressions of opinion may and may not be relied on as statements of fact. He there says :

"In the absence of an express intent to defraud, the determination of whether-or not certain representations are statements of fact or of opinion depends upon whether or not the person to whom the representations are made may, under all the facts and circumstances of the case, including such

The Defender of Time and the Grand Puppeteer

By David Soulsby

France has always been a happy hunting ground when it comes to discovering large-scale outdoor automata, for example the Dragons at Blois (MMW 33 Summer 2023), or the Elephant at Nantes (MMW 15 Winter 2018). Surfing the internet revealed two more interesting creations both built by the same artist, Jacques Monastier. The first entitled “Le Défenseur du Temps” (Photo 1) commissioned in 1975 by an innovative real estate company to enhance a new apartment complex being built near the Pompidou Centre in Paris. It is a huge automaton clock, over 13 feet high and weighing around a ton, constructed in 1979 and officially opened by the Mayor of Paris at the time, later to become France’s president, Jacques Chirac.



Photo 1: The Defender of Time Automata in Paris

Next to the dial of the clock a soldier perched on a rock brandishing a sword and shield fights against a bird, a dragon, and a crab, representing air, earth, and water. Every hour from 9 am to 10 pm, he fights one of the three animals programmed randomly. At noon, 6 pm, and 10 pm, all three strike at the same time.

While the man fights, he is accompanied by sounds of breaking waves, rumbling earth, or biting wind, depending on the animal selected. The characters have skeletons of welded steel beneath sculptures of hammered brass and gold leaf. The rock on which they perform is composed of oxidised brass. In its original configuration, a master electronic quartz circuit board controlled the random attacks and used six cam timers and five tape recorders.

In 1995 the clock's quartz crystal was replaced by a radio clock, and the tape recorders by a CD player. Unfortunately, due to a lack of finances to maintain the clock, it was shut off in 2003 and allowed to decay. It was granted a new lease of life two decades later when it was taken down, and refurbished, under the direction of the artist Cyprien Gaillard. He carried out a number of modifications to enable it to be integrated into his exhibition entitled Humpty-Dumpty. When the show ended the initial settings of the clock were restored as imagined by Monastier, and “The Defender of Time” was returned to its original location and restarted in February 2023.

In search of Monestier’s automaton I rode the Paris Metro to Les Halles station and soon found it located in a courtyard off a quiet side street. The clock is a globe on the top of a spire of rock rising from the promontory where the main protagonists stood. The brass figures are impressive. The hollow-eyed soldier with sword raised (Photo 2), the cockerel with wings thrashing, about to strike (Photo 3).



Photo 2: The Defender with Raised sword



Photo 3: The cockerel prepares to strike

Most impressive was the larger animal, the scaled dragon clinging under the rock with the movement of its chest rising and falling to the tick of the spherical clock (Photo 4). The crab was tucked away behind the protruding rock.



Photo 4: The throbbing heart of the Dragon

I had arrived just before 12 p.m. one of the times at which the trio of foes attack as one. A series of drumbeats announced that the automata were ready to begin their duel. A gong began to sound out the 12 strokes of the hour. Then with the accompaniment of loud clanking of his joints the soldier, his sword raised behind his head bends his knees and turns to face each assailant in turn. Suddenly the battle begins, with the sound of rushing wind the cockerel, thrusts its talons forward in fury. With the noise of breaking waves, the crab scuttles sideways and raises its pincers before lunging upwards. The crunch of rocks shifting announces the attack of the dragon as it stretches its head with savage power. The soldier retaliates by

thrusting his sword at his attackers to keep them at bay. The battle ensues for less than a minute before the struggle is over, the moving figures revert to frozen statues and silence is restored. The defender has succeeded in his mission and the clock ticks on.

Monastier's biography and photographs of his major works constructed between 1959 and 2011 are described on his website www.jacques-monestier.com

Next day I continued my journey east to meet Monastier's second large scale automaton, the Grand Puppeteer, which was unveiled in 1991.



Photo 5 Some of the puppets of Charleville-Mézières

This was a 2½ hour drive away at Charleville-Mézières in the Ardennes, the self styled "World Capital of Puppetry Art". The World Festival of Puppet Theatres is held there every two years, and the local museum bore testament to this with a grand display of puppets (Photo 5). I located the Clock of the Grand Puppeteer, in the Place Winston Churchill (Photo 6). The gold faced Puppeteer, an imposing 33 feet high, weighing 5 tons, stands behind his miniature theatre with the curtains drawn. The whole structure in all honesty has seen better days, at the very least a fresh coat of paint is well overdue. Every hour the curtains are drawn back to reveal the hands of the master automaton manipulating the marionette's strings to tell the story of four knights of Charlemagne's court. The legend is told in twelve separate scenes, presented consecutively between 10 a.m. and 9 p.m. At the start of each scene following three sharp knocks, the music starts and a sonorous voice (in French of course) booms out. It announces the time and welcomes the audience to the tableau telling the



Photo 6: The Grand Puppeteer Clock

story of the four brothers of Aymon, and a commentary on proceedings. The head of the puppeteer moves slowly from side to side as if he is surveying his audience below. The activation is via a radio-controlled master clock and the sound from a CD player. The hands are operated with pneumatic actuators and cam programmers. The 12 different scene constructions each weighing nearly 16 stones have their separate giant golden hands with the fingers controlling the action in the tableau. They are moved in and out at the start and end of each scene on treadmills and roller tables.

I was able to visit the reverse side of the Clock, via the Ardennes Museum off the bustling Ducale Square. It is here that all the scenery and the figures are hidden, they are carved in detail, coloured and stand about three feet tall (Photo 7).

I watched one of the performances from the side. After it ended and the curtains closed, the current scene was moved away on rollers (Photo 8) and the next one put in position awaiting the upcoming hourly presentation. The scenes were slid away and stored one behind another in the restricted space at the back.

Not by accident, I had arrived in Charleville-Mézières on Saturday when once a week the whole 12 scenes are presented one after another at 9-15

p.m. Each one is accompanied by a dramatic description from the narrator.



Photo 7: Detailed carved figures on stage

With the aid of Google Translate I pieced the story together: -

Scene 1. Charlemagne, the emperor, invests four sons of the Duke of Aryon - Renaut, Allard, Guichard and Richard into his court.

Scene 2 The queen of fairies gives Renaut a flying horse named Baynard. *

Scene 3 Renaut plays chess with Charlemagne's nephew, Bertholais, who refuses to accept that Renaut has check-mated him and insults and strikes him. But Renaut retaliates and strikes his opponent with the chessboard, killing him.

Scene 4 The knights are banished and Baynard flies them to safety.

Scene 5 They travel to an imposing rock on which they build an impenetrable fortress. Charlemagne searches for seven years without finding them. Then

Mechanical Music World



1.



2.



3.



4.



5.



6.



7.



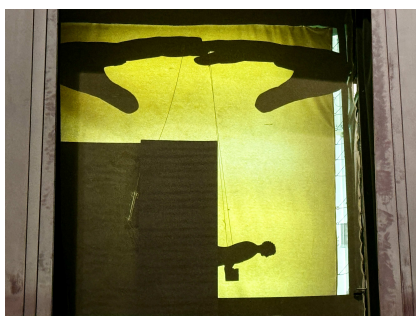
8.



9.



10.



11.



12.

The twelve tableaux presented by the automaton puppeteer

A Coin-operated Café Piano with Organ Pipes

David Evans looks into it



Fig 1

The Capitol Piano and Organ Company A-Roll café piano, actually made by the North Tonawanda Musical Instrument Works, based in North Tonawanda, New York

The North Tonawanda Musical Instrument Works was founded in 1906 and became a leading manufacturer of military band organs and coin-operated pianos and orchestrions. Largely due to business inadequacy it was acquired by the Rudolph Wurlitzer Company in 1909. It had a dynamic sales force and contracted with businesses around the USA to take on the sales of its instruments. Business prospered until 1921 when several of the founding members left to start the Artizan Factories Inc to manufacture fine quality band organs and calliopes, but never grew to great size. Artizan declared bankruptcy in 1930. Much of the stock and materials were purchased by Wurlitzer.

North Tonawanda Musical Instrument Works had been acquired by the Rand organisation, makers of bank equipment, in the mid-1910s. The acquisition of a musical instrument firm was always a sideline to the Rand (later Remington Rand) banking manufacturing company and when they bought the capital stock of the North Tonawanda Musical Instrument

works in the early part of the 20th Century, they started to print labels for roll boxes for Tonawanda. They discovered that the piano works could make and supply wood and metal parts for the Rand index card and record devices for offices, so bought the company in 1917, partly to utilise some extra space in the piano company's factory building.

A new company was set up to operate the sales side of the piano business - the Capitol Piano and Organ Corporation was started by three of the Rands in North Tonawanda in New York State in March 1921. Within three months the name was changed slightly to Capitol Piano and Organ Company, Inc. and a new sales manager was taken on. Several of the older North Tonawanda instruments were given new names and various new designs were put into production.

The instrument shown on the front cover and in Fig 1 is a keyboard style 'A' roll piano with a rank of violin organ pipes and a mandolin rail. Made by the

North Tonawanda company, it is badged with the Capitol Piano and Organ Company name. It dates from about 1925.

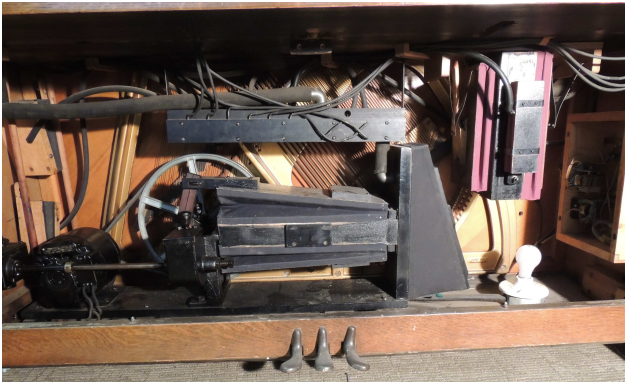


Fig 2: The electric motor and pump arrangement

The instrument is driven by an electric motor belted to a large pulley wheel attached to a crank shaft that is connected to the double-acting vacuum pump. As this instrument has a rank of pipes, it also needs air pressure, and the exhaust of the vacuum pump is connected to a regulated pressure reservoir, covered in red cloth (Fig 2, on the right). there is also a driven shaft from the crank shaft gear box (bottom left in Fig 2) that drives via bevel gears the roll box.

The engineering is massive, designed to give fault-free operation over an extended period. The take-up reel (Fig 3) is driven by a tapered wood roller upon which a rubber tyred wheel splined to the take-up spool axel rotates. This can be moved left or right by the tempo control (Fig 4), an ingenious but simple method of regulating the speed of the paper roll.

A rank of 27 violin-voiced organ pipes (Fig 5) is located on the top deck of the action, adjacent

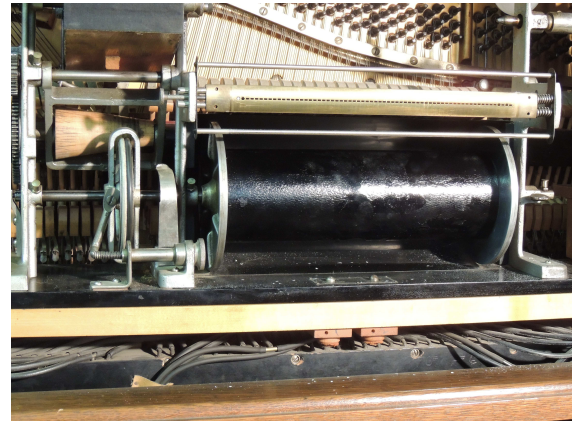


Fig 3: The take-up spool and its drive, via a tapered conical wood roller.

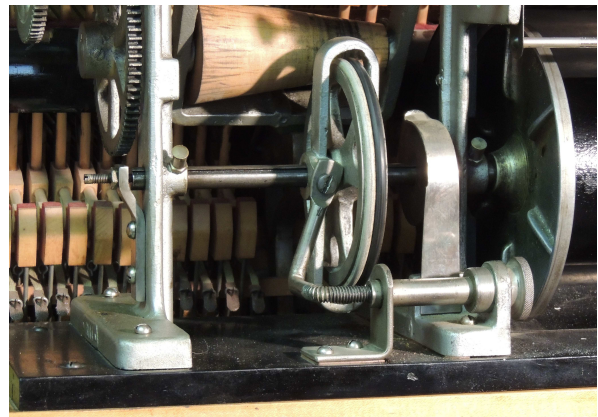


Fig 4: The tempo control.

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.

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Fig 5: The rank of violin organ pipes

to the roll box (Fig 6) and tubed to the top 27 notes of the piano's 58-note roll scale.

Further information about coin pianos can be found in Arthur Reblitz and Q David Bowers' recent book 'The Reblitz-Bowers Encyclopedia of American Coin-operated Pianos and Orchestrons and Related Instruments', published by the Automatic Musical Instrument Collectors' Association in 2020.

The authors report (on page 317) that this model is 'very rare', though they did find a partial view of the instrument.

A brief note on today's monetary values of collectible instruments: a couple of decades ago, this type of instrument would have commanded a price in the thousands of dollars. A year ago we were given this example for the cost of moving it...



Fig 6: The top action

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.

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

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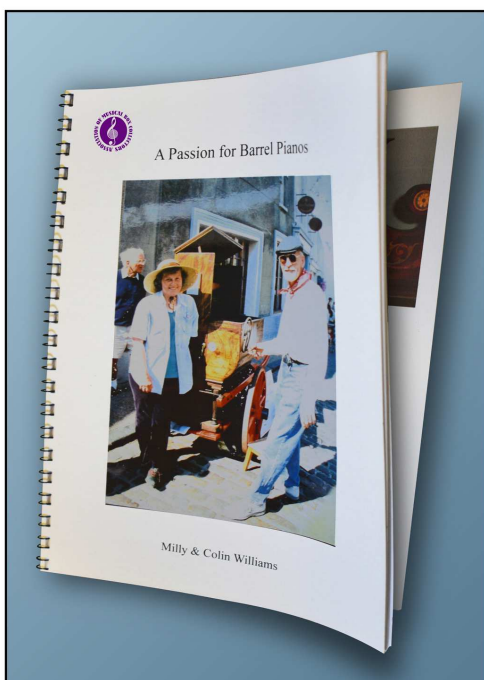
***Disc Musical Box Book** by K. McElhone. £50 + P&P.

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