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### Chairman's Report

Ted congratulated one of our sister societies, the Swiss Friends of Mechanical Music (SFMM), who are celebrating their 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a society and offered congratulations to their President Peter Both, and best wishes for their continued success.

Ted also asked other members to consider writing an article for a future issue of Mechanical Music World. Topics such as a recent prized acquisition, a restoration, an expedition to visit a collection, the fruits of some research etc. would be welcomed for sharing with other members.

He also thanked Laurence Fisher for the magnificent auction that he had organised in Eastbourne, and was pleased to announce another one was being planned for later this year. Ted was hopeful that a Chactonbury Ring meeting would be arranged in April.

### What has Two Arms and Six Feet? by David Evans

David reveals the answer - an Ultraphon Gramophone! His article goes on to describe how the Berlin inventor, Heinrich J. Küchenmeister developed this machine, a gramophone in a cylindrical cabinet. It had 2 sound boxes, 2 tone arms and 2 offset internal horn openings. Both needles ran at a fixed distance in the same record groove, whereby a small time shift of the audio signal was achieved during playback, providing an echo or pseudo-stereo effect.

David continues to describe a number of developments and the recording artists such as Marlene Dietrich who made recordings for the Ultraphon. They came in a range of shapes but all seem to have been cylindrical in structure, in the style known as Bauhaus.



### Put Another Nicole in by Paul Bellamy

Paul reminds us that there has been a lot written about the Nicole family, including in his book *The Music Makers of Switzerland*.

Extract:- "There were two parts to the family, François Nicole and his bachelor brother David (of whom we know very little) and cousins David-Elie Nicole and his brother Pierre-Moïse Nicole. There were close marriage connections between François Nicole and his friend François Lecoultré. Just like the Lecoultré families who had two branches, the Golay and Pignet clans, so did the Nicoles. François was born about 1766 and registered as an horologist at Nyon in 1787 along with his brother David. By 1810 François was working in Geneva as a musical box maker at rue Chevelu 60. His cousin Pierre-Moise Nicole, born about 1789, was living in Geneva. By 1822 both Pierre and his brother David-Elie were living at rue des Etuves just around the corner from François. It is natural to conclude that they were part of a joint family enterprise although there is no actual proof. Pierre and David are

known to have had the money to establish a separate workshop, which was a short walking distance from François' premises".

### Discovering Automata in British Museums by David Soulsby



David travels to a number of museums in England on the look out for automata exhibits. The V&A is a rich source of material. Here he found the famous, almost life sized, Tipoo's Tiger to the miniature Swiss musical snuff boxes with delicate animated scenes on top. From a scene of a graceful tightrope walker to another of depicting galleons on a stormy sea. Travelling on to Waddeston Manor in Buckinghamshire reveals a marvellous mechanical elephant and then to Derbyshire to

take in a number of automata at the National Trust's museum of childhood. The article concludes at the Weston Park museum in Sheffield. Here are displayed some modern pieces built by Matt Smith in 2006 depicting the lives of local inhabitants that had once lived or traded in Scotland Street in the heart of the city.



### All things Bright and Beautiful

Paul Bellamy unearthed correspondence from yesteryear relating to the Mechanical Music Digest forum (MMD). This musical exchange enabled questions to be asked, answers to be given and the knowledge to be shared amongst its worldwide membership, who pay a small subscription to take part. One such topic was Hymn boxes and in particular those from Nicole Frères. Two of the MMD, Carol and David Beck provided information and photographs about these boxes. Paul has drawn on this correspondence to provide a unique insight into the Nicole Frères 3 per turn 18 air Forte Piano hymn box. He provides details of all hymns and oratorios associated with this box together with interesting photographs. Well worth a read to appreciate that there is more to this hymn box than meets the ear.



### **Another Hymn Box by David Evans**

David also considers hymn boxes, in particular a L'Épée box in his collection numbered 53504. Paul Bellamy's recent book "Tune sheets, Makers, Agents and Dates" states that the highest number recorded for L'Épée is 53421, so this box does have the distinction of now being the highest for the maker, thus dating from about 1880.

The box itself is nicely inlaid on a walnut ground with a domed lid and has a 12 inch cylinder playing upon a 79 tooth comb. All the tunes are from American religious music writers and composers. David considers each of these in turn and provides background and biographies of the authors.



### **Organettes used to Accompany Magic Lantern Shows**

The catalogue of T H McAllister from 1882 recommends the use of their Pioneer and Paragon organettes as musical accompaniments to Magic Lantern shows. McAllister of Nassau Street, New York, was a large scale manufacturer of magic lantern projectors, slides and accessories from 1866 until 1942. The firm produced thousands of lantern slides covering a huge range of subjects, but logically only included song and hymn slides for use with the organettes. The Paragon Organette at least was manufactured by the Mechanical Organette Company, later to become the Aeolian Company. The advertisement does not mention the difficulty of playing more than one verse of a song then using an instrument with rolls! The version with endless strips might have been better!

