

A visit to Siegfried Mechanisches Musikkabinett by Juliet Fynes

For a special anniversary Juliet and Chris tell of their decision to go on a Rhine/Moselle cruise. The choice was largely dictated by a wish to visit Siegfried's Mechanical Music Museum in Rudesheim. In this article Juliet sets the scene:- "The first few days were spent gently cruising up the lovely meandering Moselle River, between steep tree-topped, vine-clad hillsides, and the occasional picturesque towns and villages clustered on the narrow banks. Our stately progress was interrupted by a number of locks, brutal post-war concrete structures that added nothing to the scenic beauty of the river. We also had to pass under a few very low bridges that necessitated the lowering of the superstructure on the top deck This included the roof of the bridge, leaving the comic sight of the captain's head sticking up through a hatch whilst a couple of crewmen made sure that all passengers remained seated.

The couple eventually arrived at Siegfried's Mechanical Music Cabinet and Juliet goes on to describe her experience. "The conducted tour got off to a rousing start with 'The Lorelei' played by the Weber Maestro Orchestrion, a whole orchestra and jazz band in one instrument. After a demonstration of a magnificent Symphonion we were led into a part of the cellars, where facing us was a very pretty oriental-looking 80 key Gebruder Bruder Fair Organ, circa 1910, which had been rescued in a sorry state from Budapest. The catalogue listing claims it has the musical effect of a band of 40 men. The tour continued briskly upstairs through several rooms, with one or two instruments per room played for us, I was particularly pleased to see and hear the Hupfeld phonoliszt -Violana playing 'La Donna e Mobile'".



A Uncommon Ducommun

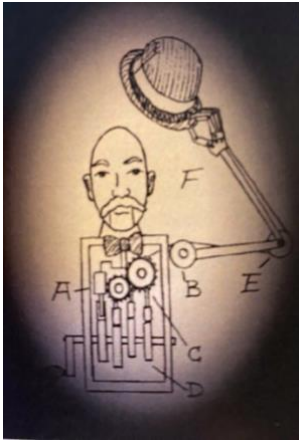
AMBC thanked Sheila Kearney for releasing her valued possession to our care and inspection together with the story behind her purchase and supporting information supplied at the time of purchase.

Her story begins: "When I was growing up, my step-father who was an antique dealer, bought several music boxes and at the age of 12, I was considered old enough to be trusted to play the musical boxes on my own. I was captivated by the lovely sound they made and I am still captivated. This eventually led to me purchase via Ebay a Ducommun Girod orchestral music box and a few more boxes since but none so beautiful as the first.

The article provides an appraisal of this box together with the history behind it.

Extract:- "Both lid and front are superbly finished with the finest quality marquetry. Although the organic dyes of the floriate design may have faded a little and the polish finish not original, the quality shines through. The lid has two bands of double stringing on top with the outer pair curved to match the rounded comers of the lid. The underside of the lid also has a line of double stringing as does the frame of the inner glass lid. The front of the case reflects the lid with two twin bands of stringing. Thus the case is quality throughout with possibly one minor exception — the sides and back have a form of scumble finish simulating another wood cut in light and dark bands. The finish seemed to be original and extremely well done although untypical of the grained-type of scumble."





Morris Museum Conference

The Morristown museum in New Jersey announces that it will be hosting the first ever AutomCon celebrating automatons and related kinetic art. The museum is the home of the Murtough D Guinness Collection of Mechanical Musical Instruments and Automata. Full details of the conference are included here.

The Snuff-Box according to Grove

'A Dictionary of *Music and musicians* (A.D. 1450-1880)', edited by George Grove, D.C.L., was conceived as a result of Grove's observation that "The want of English works on the history, theory, or practice of Music, or the biographies of musicians accessible to the non-professional reader, has long been a subject of remark." He commenced work on it in 1874. Volume one of the first edition was published in 1879, when it was anticipated that it would be in two volumes. Volume 2 appeared in 1870, by which time the edition had become three volumes. In 1883 Volume 3, by that time of four volumes, was published and George had become Sir George. The final volume arrived in 1889, by which time the entire edition had grown to 3,125 pages. Further editions followed, the third one published in five volumes in 1927/28, now edited by H C Colles MA. The first edition goes on to consider a MUSICAL SNUFF-BOX and provides a definition and fine detail of such a device.

The Eldorado Barrel Piano Orchestrion by David Evans

Some years ago David acquired a small and somewhat derelict piano orchestrion which, with the aid of Herbert Jüttemann's excellent book 'Orchestrien aus dem Schwarzwald' (Bergkirchen, Germany, 2004) he has been recently researching.

The instrument has twenty-four piano notes plus another eight reiterating notes, a two-beater snare drum and crash cymbal. It was originally weight-driven, though it did not come with one, and the long-term result of this method of drive was that the case was badly split, almost into two parts. Accordingly, he modified it to electric motor drive instead. There are basically two ways of driving a train of gears either with a large torque from a slow-moving source at the start of the wheel train (such as a weight) or a small torque high speed source applied at the opposite end of the train. He opted to drive the transmission from the governor end with a small electric motor. Fortunately there was more than half an inch of arbor protruding above the top governor pivot bracket on to which a pulley could be attached. Experimentation revealed that the barrel needed to rotate one revolution in about 45 seconds to give a reasonable tempo, which also made the governor balls swing out about half way, so pulley sizes could be worked out from counting the wheel train.

David's article proceeds to tell us full details of his project with photographs he took along the way.

Autumn Meeting 2015

One of the themes for Autumn meeting was the Austrian family Strauss. Johann Strauss was born in Vienna, Austria, in 1804 and died at the early age of 45. His parents were innkeepers and had no

high ambitions for him and apprenticed him to a bookbinder. His musical talents shone through and



he became an accomplished self-taught violinist and violist. He was then fortunate to have as a teacher Ignaz von Seyfried of Vienna who had studied law but was persuaded by others to pursue the study of music. Ignaz did so under the now largely forgotten Leopold Kozelech but also Haydn. Thus JS gained a broad knowledge of orchestration, arrangement and performance. As a 15 year old he played what we nowadays would probably call 'gigs', as a player in private string quartets. He progressed to dance orchestras and conducting; thus music and dance became his passion. Some of Strauss's music was transcribed to be performed on mechanical musical machines as well as gramophones and phonographs. Those at the meeting were treated to a number of different instrument playing 'Strauss'.. Later Paul Baker informed and entertained everyone with gramophone and phonograph examples of barrel piano music. The meeting continued with many other contributions including a musical glove box.

Oh Mr Porter! By Paul Bellamy

Paul introduces his article by telling us the title has nothing to do with the music hall song by Mane Lloyd or the film of that name by comic actor Will Hay. It is merely to draw attention to another Porter, the Porter Music Box Incorporated of the USA. Details Of their product range are readily available on the Internet Including audio samples of instruments. AMBC policy is to address modern as well as old instruments.

Paul's first acquaintance with a Porter was its sound, Nearly every instrument has a distinctive voice, be it a Symphonium, a Polyphon, a Regina or any other make of model of instrument. He heard this instrument before he saw it and wondered why I had no idea who the maker might have been. He expected it to be a finely restored model of one of the early makers and was astonished to see such a modern instrument, (the one illustrated on the cover of this issue of MMW). It is the Porter twin-disc 15 1/2 inch model and plays two identical a discs each machined to be an exact match. Paul continues to sing the praises of the Porter in this interesting article.

Yesterday's Toys Tomorrow's Antiques by Juliet Fynes and Ted Furcht

Juliet describes a well illustrated article on Fisher-Price vintage musical box toys.



An Introduction to Automata – Fred the Head by Ted Brown

Ted begins his first article telling us about Fred the Head (more information in MMW issue 8).

He also describes a whole range of automata including singing birds and a group of Griesbaum whistlers.

An Afternoon with a Wonderful Wurlitzer by Colin Durham

On an October Sunday afternoon AMBC members were treated to a very enjoyable concert at the Rye Academy on the Rye Wurlitzer. Richard Moore, in his opening address, welcomed AMBC, and then introduced the main organist, John Mann who has played the Wurlitzer every year for the past twenty-four years

A large screen displayed the virtuosity of his hands and feet, supplemented by excerpts of his latest 1920s & 1930s black & white film. He played two innovative pieces especially for AMBC members. One depicted a clock shop with all the various chimes, the other a musical box including the sound of the winding key. After an interval, another accomplished organist, Sarah Bryant, took command of the Wurlitzer whilst playing her electronic keyboard as



a piano. They featured a series of signature tunes by famous concert organists of the past and the days of 'steam radio', early film and television as the video screen showed their images. John finished with his signature tune: Sussex by the Sea as he descended into the organ pit only to rise again for a series of well-deserved encores

John, Sarah, Richard and their video/lighting technical team gave the audience an afternoon of musical expertise and nostalgia interspersed with jokes and comedy actions, including audience participation, clapping to a Strauss polka.

