

## Mechanical Music World 34 Autumn 2023

### Chairman's Message

#### Q David Bowers Award presented to Paul Bellamy

#### Eastbourne Auction Results

#### Old London Amusements Paul Baker discovers an old report

#### AMBC Meeting Report September 10<sup>th</sup>

#### Auction Report Mechanical Music sale in Eastbourne

#### Breker's next sale

#### The Magic of the Silver Swan David Soulsby visits County Durham

#### Swiss Friends of Mechanical Music's meeting

The Chairman, Deputy Chairman, secretaries, webmaster and all the committee wish all members a blessed and merry Christmas and a safe and happy New Year.

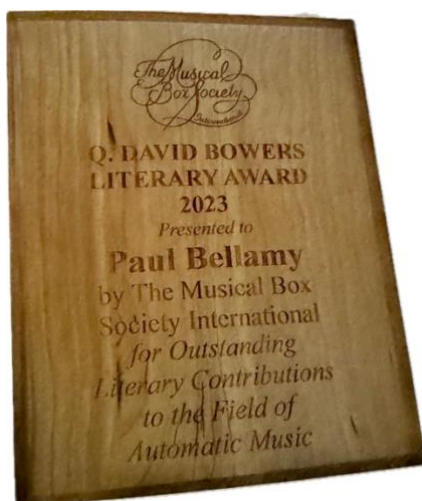
### Q David Bowers Award

Paul Bellamy on his recent award:

It has been a great pleasure and privilege to be awarded a third Q. David Bowers Award 'for outstanding literary contributions to the field of Automatic music'.

Quentin David Bowers is a well known numismatologist and a recognised author on the subject. He is a member of the Musical Box Society International and author of major works on the subject of musical boxes. MBSI established The Bowers Award to recognise and encourage others to put pen-to-paper. To do so can be quite a daunting task and needs the co-operation of others who are expert in the subject.

Paul describes his background and thanks the numerous people that have helped him in his authorship of three books for AMBC all funded by donations and sales.



### Eastbourne Auction Results

The results of this popular auction, shown here in detail, later in this issue are presented by lot, the description of these having been given in the splendid on-line catalogue.

The sale total was £49,619, sold by value at 99% to 46 buyers.

### Old London Amusements by Paul Baker

Paul Baker provided this extract from 'Gramophone and Talking Machine News' published in September 1924, written by A. Dobbs who looks back to this bygone age of the 1880's & 1890s. Written just a few years after WWI, Dobbs expresses social views and attitudes of the times. "In viewing the present-day entertainment for youth (Gramophone wireless, kinematograph), how simple were the amusements that prevailed at this time for the rising generation. Reproduction of sound had been accomplished but had not become a world-wide industry for the pleasures of all. Speaking from personal recollection, the home amusements comprised a Lilliputian theatre and a tin magic lantern smelling horribly of paraffin. Oft-times at these lantern displays the performance came to an abrupt end owing to the lamp overheating and setting the apparatus ablaze. As regards music, we had



perhaps a musical box or portable organette (with perforated music discs) worked by hand, each member of the family taking it in turn to play.

Out of doors, the programme was more varied in character, as there was quite a numerous collection of itinerant performers on the streets of London. For a while, the city was patronised by travelling Deutscher bands, some members of which bore a striking resemblance to Gambrinius, the tun-bellied King of Beer. There was a general feeling amongst the public that the members were sent over here for espionage purposes. Most assuredly they were not."

The original article continues painting a vivid picture of the amusement opportunities and limitations of the times.

### AMBC Meeting Report September 10<sup>th</sup>

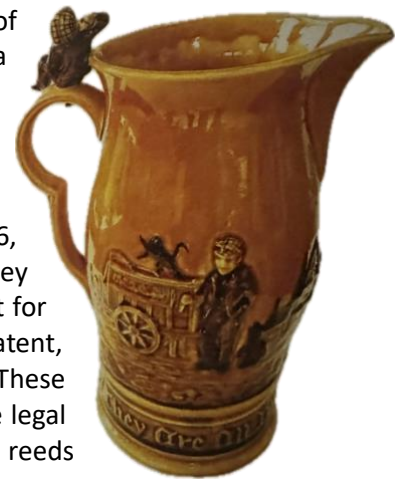
Bernard Novell demonstrated a Cuendet cartel movement that he had restored. The case needed some work to reset loose veneers and he explained it was achieved quite easily by warming up a piece of flat oak and then placing it over a piece of greaseproof paper and under light pressure over the affected area. The warmth of the oak was sufficient to cause the glue under the loose veneers to re-bond. He then refurbished the casework retaining its original patina. The cylinder needed re-pinning, work undertaken by the restorer James Preddy.



Another member brought along two musical boxes to demonstrate the maker Henriot. Instead of two Henriot's one of them turned out to be a Nicole. Did that matter? Not at all! We now had the opportunity to listen and compare two very fine examples of great musical box makers.

Paul brought along four examples of musical jugs from the 1930's to play a variety of tunes, including the 'Lambeth Walk' of course...

Roger Booty gave a rendition of his Ariel organette made about 1892 by Maxfield and Sons of London. It cost 12/6,



equivalent to nearly £100 today. Even so, it was good value for money because 'after sales' for the punched paper rolls created a healthy profit for each instrument sold. The legend on its lid declared it: 'By Royal Letters Patent, The Ariel, Double Voiced Automatic Organ'. How British and how quaint! These letters patent were granted solely by the monarch of the time and were legal instruments. This musical instrument had every right to that title. Its twin reeds were in perfect tune and harmony.

Anna Svenson demonstrated her 11 pipe serinette, a form of small hand cranked barrel organ. The name comes from the French word for canary because they were used to teach canaries to sing the tunes pinned onto the barrel. Of course, the tunes did not follow the normal convention of pitch and tune arrangement. The serinettes were first made in France as long ago as the early 1700s. A major manufacturing centre was the town of Miracourt. The cases were usually made of walnut. Most have their pipes standing vertically at the rear of the case. This example had them lying horizontally under the case, which stood on short legs.

No meeting at Ted and Kay Brown's Old School is complete without demonstrating novelties. On this occasion there was a musical alarm clock. Although the name of the maker is not on the clock the case is identical to those made by the German maker Junghans. The distinguishing feature for this example is the dial, with its Turkish features, making it quite a rare surviving example. Other novelties were a musical doorbell and a musical drinks pourer.

### **Auction Report Mechanical Music sale in Eastbourne**

We are deeply indebted to Laurence Fisher who organised and conducted the auction. The venue was superb with a selection of rooms that allowed the viewer to see and play, under controlled conditions of course, the huge range of instruments. Laurence set out to create the type of specialist auction that we once enjoyed in the 1990s. The items ranged from the smallest and least expensive to the fine, rare and virtuous, thereby satisfying every possible collector's and restorer's taste. Laurence described it as an 'analogue auction'; there was nothing digital about no phone bids and no screens. The article sets out the most attractive lots in the auction complete with accompanying photos.



### **Breker's next Sale**

Breker's the German auction house is one of the leading sales rooms for technical antiques and collectibles of every description. Some of the highlights of the Auction on November 4<sup>th</sup> in Köln Germany are seen and described here, including the Pathé Actuelle which plays an internal horn 'loudspeaker'.



### **The Magic of the Silver Swan**

A special exhibition celebrating 250 years of the world famous silver swan was held at the Bowes Museum, County Durham. This article describes in detail this amazing automaton



and some of the other more modern simpler pieces on display.

### **Letters to the Editor**

Letters on diverse topics from three contributors are included.

### **Swiss Friends of Mechanical Music's meeting**

The Swiss friends of mechanical music will be celebrating their 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary on April 27<sup>th</sup> 2024 and invited presidents and representatives of affiliated clubs to join their celebrations.