

MECHANICAL MUSIC WORLD ISSUE 15 WINTER 2018/19

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AMBC Christmas Meeting November 24th 2018

Starting in the Old School canteen for tea, coffee and biscuits, the festive air was given a good start when Roy Collins brought an interesting Duo Art piano roll by Hungarian composer Dohnany. For those interested in the details it was his virtuoso Rhapsody, opus II, roll number 0351 on a re-cut roll by Julian Dyer. The performer, Frank Laffitte, was a celebrated Anglo French pianist of the 1970s whom Roy had met and who was a lecturer at the Guildhall School of Music. Frank performed for many Duo Art rolls and it is still fascinating to hear a 'live' performance from a paper roll originally cut nearly 50 years ago.

Then it was back to the atmosphere of the former school days in persuading members to leave these initial festivities and transport themselves to the School Room for an introduction by Ted to the day's entertainers. The Chairman opened the meeting with a reminder that, despite rising costs four high quality Issues of Mechanical Music World have been produced each year since AMBC's foundation, and at a very reasonable cost that includes P&P.

At the June 2018 AGM members granted committee the right to increase membership subscriptions, which will be applied for the membership year 2019 to 2020. At this November meeting members accepted unanimously a change in the AGM date to the first meeting after the start of the membership year on the 1st March, which this year will fall on 28th April 2019. Existing Clause 3.13 states: The AGM should be scheduled for the first week of June. The proposed amendment is: The AGM will be scheduled for the first members' meeting after the commencement of the membership year on 1st March. Votes will be by show of hands. After this introduction the final meeting of the year.

After this introduction the final meeting of the year started. It was so well attended that parking at the old school, with old friends and new, meant members politely shuttling their cars back and forth to allow each other space, not just to park but to transport their treasures to the school room for play and display

The article continues giving details of the many items brought in, including a fine key-wind Ducommun-Girod 8 air musical box serial no. 14123. Roger Booty then demonstrated a 14-note OrguINETTE that had the label of an English maker – Maxfield. The meeting certainly produced a bumper display of instruments.



My EMG Gramophone by Edward Murray-Harvey investigates an unusual model

Edward begins his article:- "I acquired my EMG gramophone in the 1970s. It is an early model and has a Wilson Panharmonic horn made by the London Scientific Supply Company. The soundbox is one of the early EMG soundboxes based on the Gramophone & Typewriter/HMV 'Exhibition' soundbox. (It



may be interesting to remember that the 'Exhibition' box was used on all G&T/HMV gramophones from 1904 to 1924, and modified versions were used on EMG gramophones, including mine, for a few years after that.) The clockwork motor is a single-spring COLLARO Model M2. You may be wondering what model of EMG gramophone I have.

The answer is that I don't know. What I can tell you is that the gramophone bears an Ivory tag which tells us that at the time it was built, the firm EMG Hand-Made Gramophones located at 247 High Holborn, London WC.1. Richard Howard (an acknowledged specialist in EMG machines - Ed) likes to think that my gramophone is Model VIII, which it somewhat resembles, but I myself would beg

to differ. What makes me want to differ? The main reason is the address. Contemporary advertisements showing the model VIII, and even presumably earlier) Model VII, give the company address as Grape Street. And as I have mentioned above my EMG seems to have been made when the address was High Holborn, i.e., before the premises moved to Grape St."

Edward's article which is fully illustrated continues with fascinating details of his gramophone.

In Days Gone In Days Gone By

Hints and tips from the experts at 'Amateur Work magazine, March 1893 on putting a new wrest plank in a pianoforte!

An Unusual Musical Toy by Juliet Fynes

"This little object is certainly unusual", Juliet's article begins. "I have been unable to find anything like it despite intensive internet searches. As to being musical, I am afraid some of the glorious boxes we feature in MMW would, if they could speak, be affronted to share these pages with such a bit of nonsense. However, it is interesting in as much as it presents a puzzle. It consists of a cardboard cylinder roughly 4.5 inches tall and 2.25 inches in diameter, fixed to a circular wooden base by a metal band. The inside surface of the base is covered with metal, into which are driven a series of nine metal spikes of increasing length arranged in a circle. It is capped with a cardboard disc from the centre of which a thread holds a metal ring on a wire which dangles into the middle of the metal spikes. When the cylinder is agitated the ring strikes the spikes producing a jangly sound similar to wind chimes.



I was drawn to it by the illustrations around the cylinder and on top. At first sight the parade of animals, wearing clothes and walking upright, seemed to indicate a children's toy. On closer inspection I noted that they were all carrying flags of different nations and wondered if it might be commemorating a political event. The only writing is the Patent Number 91216, which dates it to about 1909.

My first thought was the Boxer Rebellion that took place around the turn of the century, as this had been depicted in a famous Puck cartoon of animal characters representing the European powers. They were led by the Russian bear and British lion, squabbling over the carcass of the Qing Chinese dragon



following its defeat. A Japanese leopard(?) slinks in for a piece, while the American eagle stands back and watches the imperial scramble. Apart from the date being a bit early, these are realistic and very fierce animals, whereas the animals on my little toy are a cheerful looking bunch. They are decked out in rustic attire, parading peaceably along a pathway with chicks and ducklings at their feet, butterflies above and a church and houses in the background". Juliet continues, postulating a scenario to explain the illustrations on her musical toy. But is she correct?

When the Penny drops A visit to the Automatenmuseum in Espelkamp, Germany



Paul Gauselmann developed his early interest in juke boxes into a business operating, and then manufacturing gaming machines. It quickly became the industry leader in Germany and one of the most important gaming machine manufacturers and arcade operators in the world. These machines were not only Paul Gauselmann's business but his hobby too. He was interested in their history, social and cultural context, so set about collecting vintage examples. The first instrument in his collection, acquired in 1985, was the 1948 American Jukebox "AMI B". By 1987 the collection had expanded to 400 items. A 1988 exhibition on the history of slot machines in the Deutsches Museum, München, entitled "When the penny drops", was met with great public and marked the beginning of the Gauselmann project. Collecting, restoring, researching and documenting could not remain the exclusive purpose of these efforts. The Gauselmann family took the decision to make the collection accessible to the general public. With just under 600 historical machines, the Museum Gauselmann

opened its doors in 1995 at the company headquarters in Espelkamp.

The article includes photographs and with explanatory text looks at the highlights of the museum.

An Auction for Every Pocket Sale Report from Auction Team Breker. A collection tells many stories, of the objects themselves, of the time and the place they were produced, of the people who made them and of the collector who gathered all these strands together. On 9th November 2018, Auction Team Breker offered the mechanical music collection of the late Luuk Goldhoorn, the famously private author and historian of Utrecht, The Netherlands. Goldhoorn was a respected and generous researcher, as a glance through the acknowledgements of almost any recent book on the mechanical music industry will confirm. In addition to his many detailed articles in the specialist press and contributions to the Dutch Museum "Speelklok" in Utrecht. Goldhoorn was best remembered for his reference work on 19th century Austrian musical boxes, which he described as a forgotten craft. The Goldhoorn collection was unusual in its depth and its focus: 174 lots of pocket-sized musical snuff boxes, watches, sewing necessaires and original documentation from the earliest days of the musical box.

In offering this personal, highly academic collection, questions about availability and demand came into play. Would a collection of this size and specialist nature find buyers, would it overwhelm the market? Here Breker's unparalleled international advertising campaigns and combination of traditional and live bidding (via three internet platforms in America, Europe and China) came into play. The policy paid off, with a resounding 100% sold rate for the collection and enthusiastic bidding from Cologne to Canberra.

Objets de vertu with rare musical formats attracted some of the heaviest bidding. Here we see Lot 193: Symphonium Eroica Style 38 Triple-disc musical clock circa 1895 which sold for \$71,700 one of the many pieces up for sale.....



A Sur Plateau Musical Snuff Box Chris Fynes describes an early artefact

Chris describes his 1814 musical snuff box with an incredibly detailed set of photographs. "This silver gilt musical snuffbox recently came into my possession giving me the opportunity to photograph and examine it more closely. It was probably originally bought as a rich man's toy during the Regency period.



The case is stamped with a London hallmark and the letter 'T' dating it to 1814. The makers mark is identified by the letters 'WT' sitting within a rectangle with canted corners, this is likely to be William Troby who was registered between the years 1811-1823. On the inside of the lid are scratched a series of numbers, most probably related to various repairs throughout its long history. It plays 'The Sailor's Hornpipe'. This tune first appeared in a dance known as the "College Hornpipe" in about 1797. It is now mainly associated with Sir Henry Wood's Fantasia on British Sea Songs featured in the Last Night of the Proms. The musical movement itself is not signed by any maker but bear all the characteristics of those produced by Piguet et Meylan".....

The Elephant in the Room David Soulsby visits L'île de Nantes



David recently travelled to the French port of Nantes, about 400 Km from Paris, in search of a four storey mechanical elephant. It was housed in one of the huge warehouses on the site of the former Loire shipyard. It is part of the 'Machine de L'île' project led by François Delarozière and Pierre Orefice for the urban renewal of the area, since the docks closed in 1987. David first visited the Galerie des Machines where machinists described their work and demonstrated some of the other mechanical inhabitants. By the time he had left the gallery, the elephant

was making *his* way across the square. It is 12 metres wide and 21 metres long, constructed of over 48 tons of steel and wood, set in motion using 62 cylinders, 46 of which are hydraulic, 6 pneumatic and 10 gas-powered. It travels at speeds of up to 3 km/hr. It allegedly costs Machines de L'île €200,000 a year to run it.

The city is the birthplace of Jules Verne and so there is a strong tradition of celebrating the weird and fantastical. His book "The Steam House" described a wheeled house pulled by a steam powered mechanical elephant. Another of his books "20,000 leagues under the sea" is celebrated on the same site by the Marine Worlds Carousel populated by mechanical models of sea creatures. This operates on three separate levels all rotating independently. The article has page of photographs of the elephant as well as many of the other mechanical marvels.

Debian's Court Case

A part of Debain's patent application, and the part under dispute with L'Épée, was: "Having thus described the nature of my said Invention, and the manner of performing the same, I would have it understood that I do not confine myself to the precise details shewn and described, so long as the peculiar nature of either part of my Invention be retained, but what I claim is; First, the arranging mechanical apparatus, as herein described capable of being acted upon by moveable surfaces having suitable projections or indents as before described and I also claim the arranging surfaces F capable of acting on suitable apparatus to give motion to the keys of pianofortes or such like keyed musical instruments, as herein described. And, secondly, I claim the arranging apparatus having spring tongues or reeds, as herein described, whereby the same may be readily applied to and detached from pianofortes or other similar keyed musical instruments as herein described. In witness whereof, I, the said Alexander Debain, have hereunto set my hand and seal, this Twenty-two day of February in the year of our Lord One thousand eight hundred and forty-seven.

A Large L'Épée with Bells & Drum David Evans describes a new acquisition

In 1833 Pierre Henri Paur from Mont Béliard, Switzerland, started a musical' box factory in Sainte-Suzanne, in the Franche-Comté district of France with the intention of creating a French musical box industry using Swiss workers. (In those days before the EU, it was easy to move from one European country to another). He had experience as a comb manufacturer in Geneva and no doubt understood the other necessary steps in manufacturing complete instruments. Little is known of his methods or output, but his attempts ultimately failed. In 1839 he was joined by Auguste L'Épée from Neuchâtel, Switzerland, a former director of the Japy clock company in Beaucourt. Paur died a few months later

and L'Épée bought and took over the running of the enterprise. He launched the fashion in France of adding musical movements to snuff-boxes, watches, fruit dishes et al which had up until then been a Swiss monopoly. In 1845 he had thirty workers and by 1850 the factory was expanding and involved Auguste's sons, Henry and Edouard. In or around 1857 L'Épée invented the manivelle for children, which necessitated a further expansion of the factory facilities required to make them. In 1861 new workshops were built though later in the year the French piano manufacturer Debain sued them for infringing their copyright for the mechanical interpretation of music (Debain of course had by then introduced their Antiphonel planchette piano player and copyrighted the whole basic principal). The French government finally intervened in 1865, as the L'Épée factory output was considered of great benefit to the French economy, since the majority of its production was exported.

The long delay in resolving the issue cost the L'Épée organisation a great deal of money, but another new factory was nevertheless built in 1869. Two years later Sainte-Suzanne became the centre of a major battle in the Franco-Prussian war and the village was occupied by Prussian troops. The factory was taken over and used as a field hospital until it was destroyed by the invaders, including large numbers of finished musical boxes. resulting devastation culminated in Auguste's death in February 1875 at the age of 77.

For several years the factory had been run by Henry, Edouard and their brother-in-law though they kept the original name for the business, and by 1878, 350 workers were employed. The company diversified into gramophones and other mechanisms, though musical boxes were produced until 1914.

The box under consideration is L'Épée serial number 24,568 in the first group of serial numbers on the Tune Sheet Book dating chart in Supplement 3, which dates it to 1864. Its tune sheet does not appear in the Tune Sheet Book and is a variation on TSB.No. 283. The tune sheet has the heading "Musique de Genève à 12 Airs, Cylindre 20 Pouces, à Tambour, 7 Timbres". It is a 12-air box with a 21 1/4" (54 cm) cylinder, a musical comb of 79 teeth, with a drum comb with nine teeth to the left of the bass end and a bell comb of seven teeth to the right of the treble end. The percussion combs are secured with short screws threaded into the cast iron comb base so that they are fixed relative to the musical teeth, and the whole comb assembly can be removed as a single unit. The total length is 21". The bedplate has the stamp of agent S Woog. Samuel Woog acted as an early agent for the importation of L'Épée's musical boxes into England. He died in 1865 and his business was taken over by his son Jules, and later by Adolphe Woog. Their initials in an oval quite often appear on L'Épée bedplates. A.V. Bulleid and Paul Bellamy (see Mechanical Music World Issue 9, the article on musical boxes with bells) conclude that exposed bells first appeared about 1860, so this box is relatively early in the 'Bells in Vue' period

