

## MUSIC WORLD Issue 24 Spring 2021

**Brémond 'Mandolin Orgue Extra'** by David Evans

**Musical Boxes with Bells** by Paul Bellamy

**An Automaton Fire Engine Clock** by Juliet Fynes

**Auction Team Breker's April Sale**

**Wagram, Washington, Waterloo** by Juliet Fynes

**Lecoultre & Falconnet Overture Box** by Chris Fynes

**Street Clocks in England** by David Soulsby

**Brémond 'Mandolin Orgue Extra'** by David Evans

David's article starts with the history of the Greiner & Brémond company. "Baptiste-Antoine Brémond was born in Geneva in 1834, he joined Théodore Greiner, an established maker of musical boxes, and perhaps provided marketing experience, as Brémond was described as a merchant at that time. The firm was called Greiner & Brémond and was located at rue Sismondi. The partnership lasted for five years after which Brémond continued on his own until 1902. More information about Brémond can be found in the AMBC book 'The Music Makers Switzerland' by Paul Bellamy. Surviving boxes by the firm seem to indicate that they aimed at the quality end of the market".

David continues with the description of his box with accompanying photographs. The case is beautifully finished in burr walnut, the domed lid decorated with double kingwood banding with boxwood stringing either side, the front and ends are similarly decorated, the canted corners also inlaid similar banding. The back of the case is veneered with book-matched rosewood. The whole stands on a moulded ebonised plinth with four shallow block feet. The ebonised inner lid is also inlaid with kingwood and boxwood banding. This lid seems to have never had a leather lifting tab, the small shaped block at the front centre appears to be original. The case measures 34 1/2" over the feet x 14 1/4". The dating chart suggests circa 1875.

Other Brémond features mentioned in Bellamy's book include a small vertical wood block just in front of the winding lever, the BAB monogram on the cock and the serial number 15261 in ink on the bottom of the case." .....



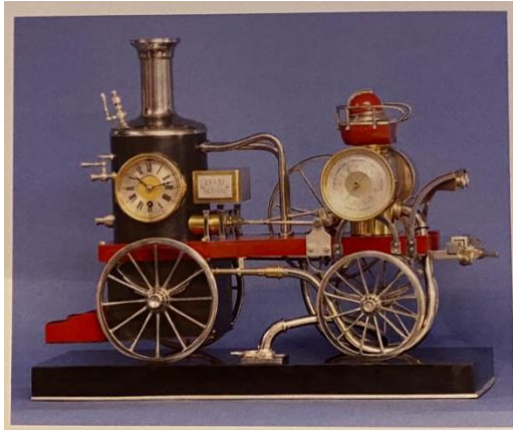
**Musical Boxes with Bells** by Paul Bellamy

The late Arthur Cunliffe's register of musical boxes mostly of the cylinder type, called cartels, listed a very large number of those made by Nicole Frères. More of these survive than any those from any other maker. The reason is uncertain but probably due to the fact that the 1800's were the days of the Great British Empire, as a powerhouse of trade, and able to convey Swiss musical boxes all over the world. Many Swiss makers had agents in London.

In 1815 Napoleon was defeated and the longstanding conflict between the British and French was brought to an end. Switzerland became free from French restrictions that had inhibited trade, particularly in Geneva. 1815 is the foundation date of at least two makers, one of which was Nicole Frères of Geneva.

Although the USA was also a major market for the Swiss musical box industry, other makers such as Paillard seemed to dominate that market; the products of the Nicoles did not seem to have much impact. The dynamic USA was always in the habit of casting aside the old to replace with the new and that is why there was not much of a surviving legacy of musical boxes. The British and European cultures tended to hang on to the artefacts of the past. It is reasonable to assume that the pattern of development of Nicole Musical boxes was closely aligned with that of other makers and the market as a whole.....

### An Automaton Fire Engine Clock by Juliet Fynes



The illustration shows an exceptionally rare early 20<sup>th</sup> century automated fire-engine industrial clock. The red painted, silvered and gilt-bronze case stands on a black marble base and depicts a horse drawn steam powered fire engine. It is 17.5 ins wide, 7.25 ins deep and 14.5 ins high. The clock dial has a silvered chapter ring with Roman numerals for the hours and Arabic numerals marking the five-minute intervals. It has a balance wheel escapement and is wound through the front. The silvered barometer dial is in French. A similar known example was lettered in English. The animation movement is housed behind the barometer and

accessed by a hinged door and hinged from the back.

Three piston drive rods turn the large wheel which can be seen in motion on YouTube.

### Auction Team Breker's April Sale

The Spring Auction team Breker, of Cologne Germany, hosted an exciting sale celebrating two hundred years of audio-visual technology.

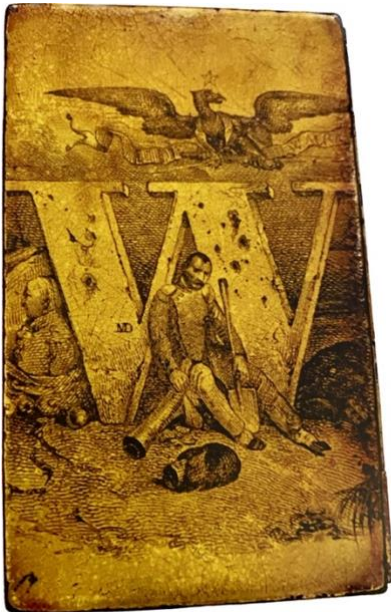
Included are music machines in many forms, from the elegant Art-Nouveau Pathé Concert Model 5 to the striking Wurlitzer 1080 jukebox designed by Paul Fuller in 1947.

Other lots include a Longcase clock with carillon and moon phase, circa 1800 (Sold for £3800); a Regina Style automatic disc-changing musical box circa 1903 (sold for £11950) and an automaton singing bird jardinière by Blaine Bontems, circa 1890.....



### Wagram, Washington, Waterloo by Juliet Fynes

Juliet tells us:- "For reasons of space our collection has always consisted of cylinder boxes. In our small low-ceilinged cottage. Soon every horizontal surface bore a musical box or three. Then it was only a matter of time before there was no room left under the furniture either. So from a few snuff boxes, it became a matter of necessity to concentrate on small movements if we wished to continue collecting. This proved to be a very rich seam to mine. These small boxes can be of fine musical quality but one of the joys is the variety of cases that can be made from materials unsuited to large boxes. We have examples in silver and also wood, tortoiseshell and composition, some with hand-painted pictures, brass plaques or impressed designs on the lid. But my personal favourites are the unassuming tin boxes. I believe the appeal lies in the contrast between what is usually a good quality



early movement and the simple, often scruffy, case.

It is hard to obtain cases for orphan movements, so we were delighted when we were able to buy a tin box to house a rather nice Bordier sectional comb movement that we had owned for some time. It was a bonus that the box bears a very unusual engraving, although somewhat awkwardly printed- sideways on. It depicts a dejected soldier, in the uniform of a Napoleonic grenadier guard, slumped against a large letter W. His bearskin has fallen to the ground and he is holding a spade.....

### **Lecoultre & Falconnet Overture Box** by Chris Fynes

Chris references the picture on the front cover of this issue and those in his article that show a superb early Lecoultre & Falconnet musical box that plays three overtures. The comb has a massive 272 teeth, the cylinder measures 13 1/2 inches long by 3 1/4 inches in diameter. It has a low serial number of 458. The names 'Lecoultre & Falconnet' are stamped twice in small letters on the comb. The case and movement bear many of those characteristics associated with this fine partnership; typically, individual cut-outs for the control levers in the end flap, the mitred corner joints to the case, the comb with hollowed out teeth in the base, the separate brass plate under the steel comb and the fixed lower bearing for the governor fan. It has a beautiful, veneered walnut case with a nicely engraved brass tune sheet in the lid, listing the makers' names and the three overtures. As you would expect the arrangements are amazingly complex with mandolin pinning stretching well into the base, the slow turning cylinder taking about 9 1/2 minutes for three revolutions.



Chris continues giving details of the three overtures. The first is the overture to 'Don Giovanni' or 'Don Juan', on which the story is based, an opera in two acts by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Italian libretto by Lorenzo da Ponte. It was originally premiered at the National Theatre in Prague on October 29th, 1787. The story is about an irresistible and amoral young man, the notorious Don Juan, who woos and takes advantage of a large number of women and his eventual descent into hell. The opera was a great success and remained popular for many years. It also followed the success of Mozart's previous opera, 'The Marriage of Figaro' and its overture, the third tune on this musical box.

The second overture is to the opera 'The Siege of Corinth', an opera in three acts by Gioachino Rossini set to a French libretto by Luigi Balocchi and Alexandre Soumet, premiered at the Salle Le Peletier of the Paris Opéra on October 9th 1826. It was based on the composer's reworking of his earlier Italian Opera 'Maometto II', premiered in Naples in 1820. It commemorated the siege and ultimate destruction of the town of Missolonghi in 1826 by Turkish troops during the ongoing Greek war of independence, the violent story of conflicting passions and divided loyalties. With a spectacular ending to the opera using special effects, Rossini soon made his mark in Paris.....

### **Street Clocks in England** by David Soulsby

There are a number of ornamental street clocks dotted around the UK that have chimes accompanied by the movement of figures or animals. David tells of his mission to track down as many as possible and find out more details of the automata in action. He describes a number of these that he found in London including George and the dragon skirmishing outside Liberty's, and Mr Fortnum greeting Mr Mason outside the famous store in Piccadilly.





He also visits several clocks outside the capital including one at Cheltenham where the clock structure is 45 feet tall and thought to be the tallest mechanical clock in existence. It features a number of eclectic characters. There is a goose that appears to lay a never-ending stream of golden eggs, a family of mice continually trying to escape a snake chasing them on the top. Suspended from the bottom of the clock is a large wooden fish that blows bubbles every half hour, to the tune of "I'm forever blowing bubbles". In all he visits a dozen clocks with photographs and commentary on each one.

