

**19<sup>TH</sup>** CENTURY ORIGINALS



# THE STORY OF THE MUSIC BOX

**19** lovely melodies of antique music boxes from the authentic Brown collection ... and a charmingly-illustrated history of the music box.





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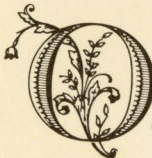
*"... they range from rich, sedate  
bass to trembling little embellish-  
ments of molten silver . . .*

*. . . reproduced with astonishing  
fidelity."*

TEXT AND PICTURES BY GEORGE AND MADELEINE BROWN  
RECORDING BY EMORY COOK





 once upon a time — only yesterday — the world was a very different place. There were no engines and no rushing tensions. There were no radios and no commercials. There were no buttons to press — just to wear. And men were very different too, except for the age-old dreams of travelling at great speeds, speaking over vast distances, and pressing buttons.

With such dreams and so many dreamers, something was bound to happen. It did, of course, in the Industrial Revolution, which is another story. Ours concerns the music box, man's first successful attempt to hear his own musical works, when and where he wished — at the drop of a lever.

Our story really begins around 1750, while continents were still virgin. Switzerland is the setting, and ingenious clockmakers, the heroes.





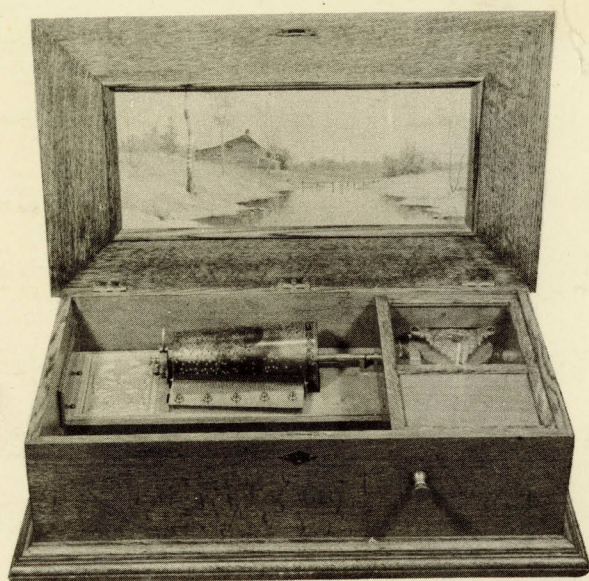
There, skilled fingers fashioned watches, snuff-boxes, lavalieres and animated toys that tinkled barely recognizable measures. The crude mechanisms were not yet capable of playing a true musical scale, but they were marvelous indeed to the eyes and ears of all who observed.



Skills grew in other countries and one Mr. Willard of Boston was proud to tell the readers of the *Baltimore Gazette* in 1773 that... "Benj. Willard, who, at his shop in Roxbury Street, pursues different branches of Clock and Watch work, has for sale Musical Clocks playing different tunes; a new tune every day of the week, and on Sunday, a Psalm tune."

Throughout the childhood of the music box, music was only a secondary attraction, the function of the snuff-box or clock itself being the major reason for possessing one. But somewhat later, in the early 1800's, Swiss craftsmen devised a mechanism that





could actually play the chromatic scale  
— and the music box grew up.

The secret was in the clever inter-  
working of three basic parts:

1. a coiled spring, borrowed from the clock — the source of power.
2. a steel comb, split into reeds of different lengths and breadths—the notes.
3. a brass cylinder, studded with projecting pins — the player.

Pressured by the spring, the cylinder would revolve, the pins would strike the different reeds, and since the pins were placed in carefully plotted positions, they would strike the right notes at the right time. Result — a note, a tune, a sonata — produced as though by magic.

Imagine for a moment the wonder of our great-great-grandfathers listening to a delicately plucked reproduction of a tune the whole village whistled. Or the wide-eyed awe of a 19th century Alice watching the dolls pirouette to the fragile tones of her new music box — wonderland! Or milady weaving while her exquisitely carved

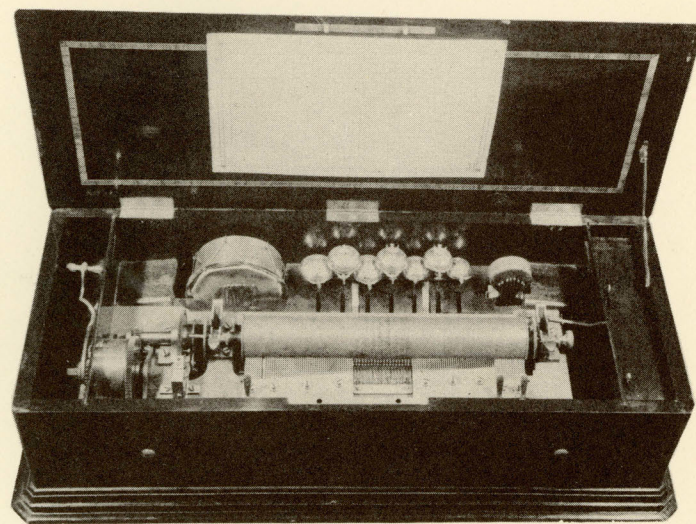


sewing box tinkles out her favorite song from the Victorian hit parade. . . .

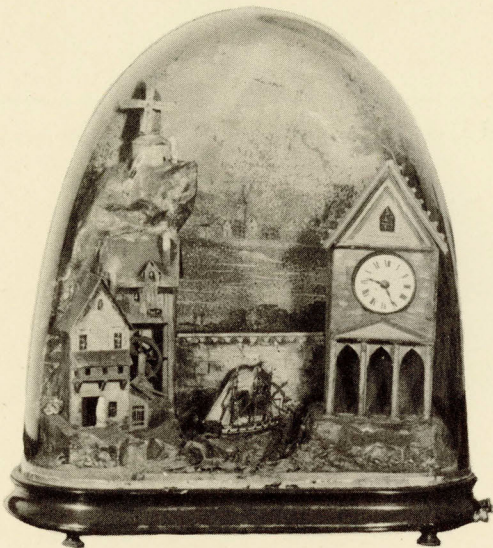
Such was the charm of the music box that everyone wanted one – at least one, and many homes boasted several. The industry grew rapidly. New clockmakers and mechanics entered the field. The music box became more and more complex. Larger and still larger brass cylinders were installed. Levers were added for pianissimo and fortissimo. Vibrating tines, having a wider musical range, were created. Tiny silver and golden bells, castanets and miniature drums were synchronized to the music of the tines. Panels of glass protected the delicate

mechanism from dust. The arts of the cabinetmaker and painter were adapted to producing more exquisite boxes.

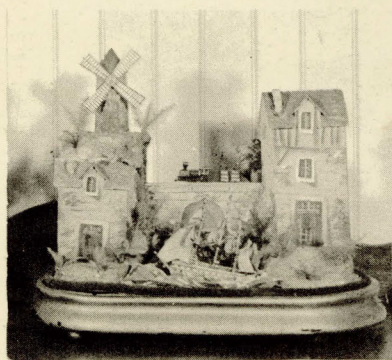
By 1820, music boxes that could play as many as ten tunes from a single cylinder were devised – melodies that ranged from simple folk songs to operatic arias. Numbered metal dials per-







mitted a choice of tunes from the boxes' repertoire. The music box had become the juke box of the nineteenth century. Within the next few years it had become so popular that contemporary composers were filling their

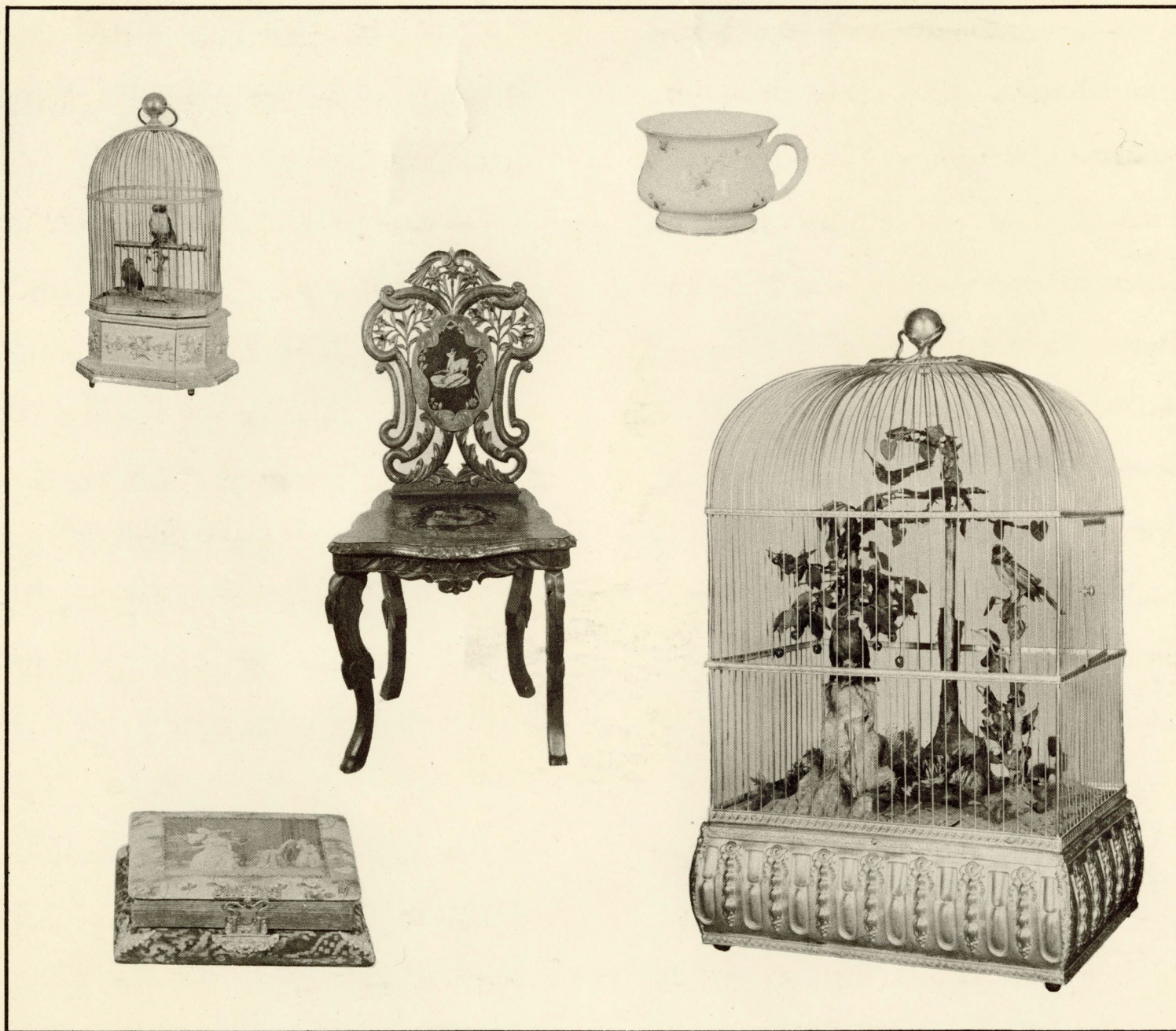


scores with trills, arpeggios and obli-gattos to fit the musical range of the machines. And the demand was so universal that their Swiss producers — Mermod, Bremond, Paillard, Rivence, Blanchard — were as well known as the brand names of our foremost American record players today.

The Swiss held their monopoly in the music box field until the last few decades of the nineteenth century. Then, contributing to the gaiety of the '90's, there appeared a series of mass-produced, low-cost machines bearing the "Made in U.S.A." stamp.

American inventors varied the traditional Swiss design by changing the





Music boxes appeared in the form of any number of novelty pieces.



cylinder to a flat disc covered with tabs and adding another set of tines. The volume of sound was doubled. And, since the discs were flat, they could be stamped out cheaply, and as fast as new tunes became "pop" tunes. Repertoires swelled as folk songs, sentimental ballads, minstrel melodies, jigs and reels, and popular waltzes tinkled their tuneful way through the music box.

Manufacturers vied with each other in the novelty of the boxes' design. Music boxes, large and small, simple and intricate, could be found

concealed in chairs, jugs, books, family albums, toys and even in the lowly commode.

Paderewski, the famous pianist and composer was a music box enthusiast. It was a standing joke in his household that of all the music that was available to his guests, the most popular invariably was his "chamber" music!

The bells that heralded the new century sounded a closing knell for the music box era. Life was changing and a little man with a big horn and the name of Edison had



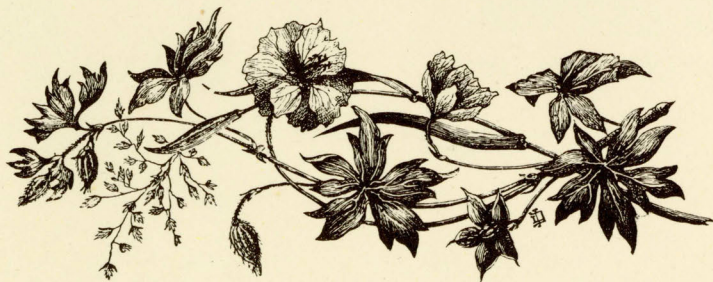


worked a miracle. Sound could be recorded! Fidelity became a new musical truth with which the mechanical illusion of the music box could not compete.

From living room to attic to limbo moved the music box — along with the gentle graces of the century it represented. It had been born in an age of powdered wigs, lace jabots and tallow candles. It had experienced the transition from delicate handcraft to factory-made mechanism and had

flourished in a world of growing industrialization. But it could not survive the sophistication of electronics.

Today, the tinkling strains of an old music box bring a quick rush of sentiment — a nostalgia for a fair past we may never have known, yet have not quite forgotten. Somehow, in these days of crowded wavelengths, its strange lilting notes fill the air with a piercing sweetness that for a moment seems to rise above the roar of our own turbulent times. Listen . . .





## *this is no ordinary recording*

It will be found actually to transmit a fuller frequency range than ever before available on long-playing records

### SIDE A

1. Jingle Bells (A)
2. Adeste Fideles (C)
3. Skaters' Waltz, Waldteufel (B)
4. First Noel (A)
5. Prayer from William Tell, Rossini (A)
6. Nightingale Song, Necke (B)
7. Angel's Serenade, Valaque (A)
8. Stabat Mater, Rossini (D)
9. Jingle Bells (A)
10. Auld Lang Syne (E)

### SIDE B

1. Hark The Herald Angels (A)
2. Ave Maria, Gounod (A)
3. Song of the Virgin Mary (F)
4. Monastery Bells, Lefebure-Wiley (B)
5. O'Santissima (F)
6. Cloister Bells (B)
7. Holy City, Adams (C)
8. Hunting Chorus, Weber (A)
9. Bells of Cornville, Metra (B)
10. Silent Night, Gruber (A)

The letters in parenthesis refer to the specific historical music box in the Brown collection from which each of the melodies has been recorded—including the clicks and clanks of the cylinders and discs fashioned by the great artisans of the 19th century.

MUSIC BOX CODE (A) "Household" Regina—(B) "Concert" Regina—(C) "Console" Regina  
(D) Capitol—(E) Swiss "Coffin" Box—(F) American Olympia

*George and Madeleine Brown are the  
American authorities on the 19th century music box*

Their collection is the only one of its kind in America.

UNBREAKABLE 33 1/3 LONG PLAYING

<sup>a</sup>  
SOUND *book*

by

*Book Records* INC

680 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

