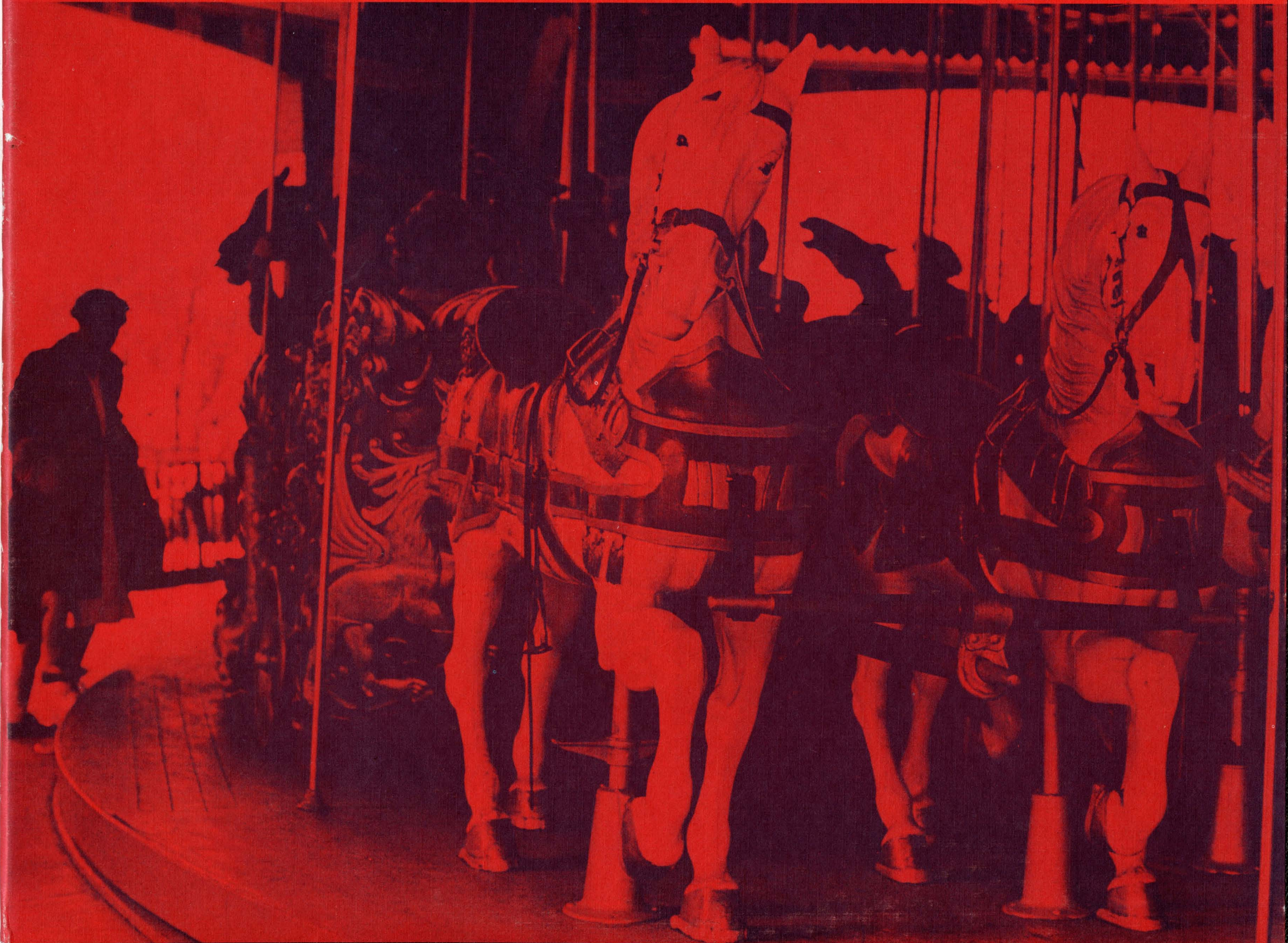


# MUSIC OF THE CAROUSEL

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FX 6128

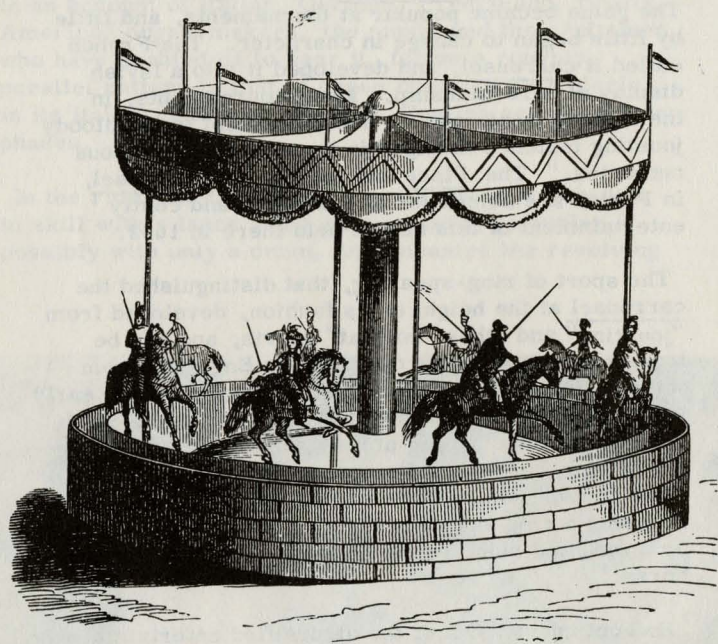
COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

PHOTO BY DAVID GAHR



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# MUSIC OF THE CAROUSEL



## The Merry-Go-Round and Other Mechanical Marvels

"I see a strange species of reeds; surely they have rather sprung up from a brazen field: wild -- nor are they swayed by our winds; but a blast, rushing forth from a cavern of bull's hide, forces its way from beneath, under the root of the well-bored reeds. And a skillful man having nimble fingers stands feeling the yielding rods of pipes, and they, gently dancing, press out song." - attrib. to Julian the Apostate, A.D. 363 (Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians)

The instrument described above is a crude organ without a keyboard. Whether they meant brazen as foreign or brassy, one is not certain, more likely the former. This was one of many instruments related to the bag-pipe which seems to have come to Scotland from remote lands to the East. (In the history of musical instruments there is to be found

## SIDE I

FX6128 A

- Band 1: **INSTRUMENTAL #1**
- Band 2: **DARKTOWN STRUTTERS BALL**  
(Shelton Brooks)
- Band 3: **BILLBOARD** (John Kiohr)
- Band 4: **KISS ME AGAIN** (Victor Herbert)
- Band 5: **INSTRUMENTAL #2**

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## MUSIC OF THE CAROUSEL

## SIDE II

FX6128 B

- Band 1: **SIDEWALKS OF NEW YORK** (Lawlor/Blake)
- Band 2: **INSTRUMENTAL #3**
- Band 3: **TURKEY IN THE STRAW**
- Band 5: **INSTRUMENTAL #4**
- Band 4: **OUR DIRECTOR** (Bigelow)
- Band 6: **THE MARCH OF THE BULGARIANS**  
(Oscar Straus)
- Band 7: **SCHOOL DAYS** (Gus Edwards)
- Band 8: **INSTRUMENTAL #5**
- Band 9: **IN THE SHADE OF THE OLD APPLE TREE**  
(Van Alstyhe)

an uneven development and often similar developments that were separate in space and often separate and almost simultaneous. So that we do not care to present these facts as gospel, even though they have been, so far as we know, carefully documented. To put it another way, we are no sticklers for chronology and believe even less in the "bigger and better" school of progress. We have heard the flute of a Greek shepherd and we have decided that this flute, hand-made as it was made thousands of years ago, affords an esthetic satisfaction that is immeasurable. Similarly, the complexity of organ stops should be of satisfaction chiefly to the manufacturer, the composer and the organist, i.e. to the craftsman involved; we do not hear the one reed or the numerous organ stops, we hear music.) But, getting back to our

theme, the ancestor and, in one form or another, familiar relative of the carousel (merry-go-round), the cylinder organ, dates far back. Some form of mechanization came to the organ family of instruments a very long time ago.

A fascinating account of "Mechanical Music of Olden Times," by Hugo Leichentritt, turned up in an old issue of Musical Quarterly (January, 1934) and though it doesn't concern itself with carousels, it will nonetheless be of considerable interest to any who wishes to explore the scope of mechanical music. Mr. Leichentritt describes such music, in its special sense, "as music produced without the direct assistance of the player, or music transmitted over allong range." In brief, quite a range of instruments and devices from the Aeolian harp, which sang when the wind sang, and the hurdy-gurdy to General Sarnoff's mechanical marvel, an electronic "maestro" that is capable of making Caruso's voice sing "Unchained Melody," which he never did in real life, if anyone cared to so degrade Signor Caruso's great voice or so demean General Sarnoff's enormous gadget.

Ingenuous carillons of long ago used cylinders of wood or iron studded with pins or pegs (many holes, for elaborate melodic patterns, were made, to accomodate the pins or pegs.) The organ roll--the short repetitious tunes are a heritage from the hurdy-gurdy cylinder -- which antedated the player-piano roll, was inspired by Jacquard's (1802) perforated cardboard silk loom.

Little cylinder organs (Serinettes) were used in the 18th century to teach melodies to songbirds. Eppinger of Augsburg constructed a mechanical organ with a robot figure of Pan playing his pipes. This rustic Pan was praised for the "proper articulation, the correct staccato and legato" (of the music.) And (General Sarnoff please note) almost two hundred years ago a Jesuit Father presented to Parisians a Clavecin Electrique, a sort of carillon with keyboard, actuated electrically!

A certain Father Niemecz, a friend of Haydn's, built an elaborate mechanical organ with 112 pipes. This organ played selections by Mozart and Haydn with, a contemporary observed, "the greatest precision, sounding like a big organ." Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven all wrote music for flute clocks as well as for other mechanical music devices. Indeed, it is told of Beethoven that he frequented a certain Vienna restaurant so that he might listen to the music of a flute clock as he dined!

The Pan Harmonikon, with its imitations of various instruments, is most certainly a member of the same ancestral family as the band organ of the merry-go-round, and on a distinguished branch of the family tree, at that, since illustrious composers deigned to write for it. This anticipator of automation provided the works, from the snare drum to the flutes, and a handsome job by an inventor named Maelzel included facsimile musicians and maestro as well, everything but the Union delegate!

Beethoven undertook to write his "Battle Symphony" for this extraordinary combination of a mechanical music-maker and a waxworks contraption. However, a falling out with Maelzel induced Beethoven to change his plans. He completed the score, as we hear it today, for a live orchestra. Maelzel, however, had a real "twisteroo" up his sleeve. At the premiere, December 8, 1813, of Beethoven's

"Battle Symphony" and of the exuberant and beautifully articulated 7th Symphony, the audience was treated to a "grotesque intermezzo"-- two marches (by Dussek and Pleyel) played by Maelzel's mechanical trumpeter in as "pure and agreeable a tone, as the most skillful virtuoso is not able to produce."

## SOUNDS OF THE CARNIVAL

The carousel merry-go-round) derives its name and appurtenances from separate but related survivals of more sanguine encounters. "In the twelfth century," William F. Mangels writes in "The Outdoor Amusement Industry," "Arab horsemen used to play a game in which they threw a fragile clay ball, filled with scented water, from one to another. Spaniards and Italians who saw the game during the Crusades adopted it. They called it carrosello, meaning 'little war'. The game became popular at tournaments, and little by little began to change in character. The French called it carrousel, and developed it into a lavish display of horsemanship. These tournaments, in their refinement, were a sharp contrast to the bloody jousting matches indulged in by royalty in previous centuries." The Place and the Arc du Carrousel, in Paris, are named for an elaborate and costly entertainment of this nature held there in 1662.

The sport of ring-spearing, that distinguished the carrousel at the height of its fashion, developed from "jousting" and other "combat" sports, and can be traced back to the 13th century. In England, from whence it was brought to the United States by the early settlers where it was especially popular in the South, it was known as "tilting at the Quintain," or "running at the ring," from the Italian correre alla quintana. "The game," Mr. Mangels remarks, "consisted of spearing a ring suspended from a post, with a lance, by a mounted rider traveling at the full speed of his horse."

He continues: "Out of the diversified entertainment which was grouped together under the name carrousel for several centuries, the merry-go-round as we know it today emerged in a peculiar way. For the purpose of training young princes for the tournaments, elaborate contrivances were installed in royal courts. They consisted of an ornate post with wooden arms extended outward, like wheel spokes, from the outer end of which wooden horses were suspended. These the young princes mounted, and, as the device was rotated by two servants pushing on the wooden arms, they attempted to spear small rings, held an arm's length away from them, with miniature tilting lances." This is, of course, the origin of the brass ring, that gives the one who spears it with his finger, a free ride on the merry-go-round.

Since only the Nobility participated in these spectacles, and only their children "played at" carrousel, it remained for a Parisian toy maker (accd. to Compton's Picture Ency.) to set hobby-horses on a platform and create, for the children of Paris, a make-believe carrousel. Crude of construction, except for its steeds, it turned slowly with manpower or horsepower to move it, but it delighted the public then as it does now. (Most New Yorkers do

not know that their merry-go-round in Central Park, now the pride of the park with a fine old band organ, was operated by mule power until 1912! . It now has an electric motor and even loudspeakers for recorded carousel music. "The sign says, 'carousel, ' but the kids say 'merry-go-round, ' the mechanic informed us with a grin.)

In 1850 Eliphalet S. Scripture of Green Point, New York, patented a device that gave a gallop to the "flying horses". This overhead system was subsequently improved by others, notably W.F. Mangles of Coney Island. Various types of merry-go-rounds, including the Tonawanda machine -- inspired by an 18th century English roundabout and a copy of which (the Tonawanda merry-go-round) may be seen in the Ford Historical Museum at Dearborn, Michigan -- are discussed in "The Outdoor Amusement Industry" Also of particular interest in this connection is the chapter on merry-go-round music. This treats of hand organs, mechanical organs and organ-makers. In an account of Italian, German, French and, finally, American organ-makers, the music and the craftsmen who have enabled us to hear it, follow a roughly parallel pattern to that of organ music--particularly in its Italian, German, French, English and American phases.

In the riding devices used to train young aristocrats in skill with a lance and a ring, music, beginning possibly with only a drum, accompanied the revolving

wheel. Thus, a drummer supplied the rhythm, slowing down or speeding up the pace of the men doing the pushing. Cymbals and flutes were soon added and such a combination of instruments often supplied music for the early merry-go-round, played by live musicians. But it wasn't long before the primitive cylinder organ was beating their time. This wheezy excuse for automata, cranking out the same short tunes interminably, with notes missing or off-true here and there, like the teeth of an old crone, had all the shortcomings of a beat-up hurdy-gurdy (the hand organ we know by that name; the real hurdy-gurdy was a stringed instrument and none of its charm. Inventors, however, expanded the instrumentation, first to 32 keys, then to eighty and more, thus making possible the military band organ.

The music of the merry-go-round seems always to be evocative in quality, even when recent tunes are played. This is due in part to the fact that it is essentially a band organ (Unless one is intimately acquainted with organs and organ music, one does not think of the organ on concert pieces as comprising or simulating so many facets of the orchestra. On the contrary, many listeners object to orchestral transcriptions of organ music.) But listen to the merry-go-round of Royal American, on Side 2, and you immediately think of specific instruments, beginning with the drums. This simulating of instrumental sounds is something other than imitation yet without the "rendering" of brass band sounds, it would fail utterly of its purpose.



As it is, a vast body of folk and popular music is brought to mind: the hand organ we know familiarly as the hurdy-gurdy, roving street musicians, parade bands like those that stimulated jazz growth, the small brass bands (Italian-American) of many of our cities, that played for feast days and funerals alike, and the music of polka bands, whether of Bridgeport, Pittsburgh or San Antonio, Texas.

In listening to the merry-go-round, musical associations swirl about like the twists and turns of a highland skirt. There is, quite appropriately, the suggestion of a ground bass; the shade of Maelzel's trumpeter with a display of triple-tongue technique; and there are snare drum effects like cymbals, as you hear them sometimes in polka bands. The tunes, also, are a pot-pourri of popular, theatre, brass band and folk selections, as one may note by the titles on this particular record. Moreover, these are sometimes reminiscent of the short, repeated choruses of the old cylinder organs. The merry-go-round is a beautiful grab-bag of musical memories.

Attempts to win over the small fry to newer, more novel and more stupendous innovations, including such mounts as barnyard fowl and jungle beasts, found the merry-go-round mob either backing off in fright or putting up a clamor for their "horsies". It would be salutary to conclude that this country-wide response to a threatened change-over represented an intuitive feeling for the old, an eye for the patina of tradition, but it hardly requires a child psychologist to perceive that familiar and non-familiar concepts had more to do with it. Ducks are for quacking and only a crazy mixed-up adult would be fool enough to ride a tiger! Horses and ponies are to ride....

So the merry-go-round remains much the same in appearance as it did at the turn of the century, though it runs by electric power and may have new calliope pipes. Looking at stirrup and flaring nostrils, it still seems a long way to the saddle. Nor is the crenulated superstructure much changed; it still reminds one of a crown, or of an illustration of one by Teniel in a dog-eared copy of "Alice In Wonderland". And the wooden ponies, still wearing the fancy harness of tournament mounts, prance and plunge to music made possible by scores of organ makers, known and unknown. Maybe the next turn around we'll catch the brass ring!

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- Band 3: BILLBOARD (John Kloth)
- Band 4: KISS ME AGAIN (Victor Herbert)
- Band 5: INSTRUMENTAL #2

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

## SIDE II

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- Band 2: INSTRUMENTAL #3
- Band 3: TURKEY IN THE STRAW
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# WALT DISNEY HOME ENTERTAINMENT CLASSICS

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