

CABINET OF CURIOSITIES

MUSIC BOX

Leipzig, Germany

Paul Lochman

19th cent.

Wood, metal and paper

H 17,5 x L 34 x W 34,5 cm

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The invention of the first music box with metallic discs is assigned to Paul Lochman and was produced by the Symphonion Company, that started the activity in 1885, in the town of Leipzig, Germany. Therefore, in that year, another innovation in the music reproduction story was brought in, representing an achievement of great importance as a contribution to solve the problem of the music boxes with metallic cylinders, that would play a limited number of melodies, usually between four and ten.

The Symphonion music box is remarkable for the wide diversity of types, styles and models that were produced. No other music box of this kind has ever existed with so many varieties. Discs of the same diameter could be found but in different scales, in order to adapt to two different types of mechanism. This company was also a pioneer in the use of electric engines in musical discs boxes and the first model was equipped with an electrical engine that was announced in 1900. In 1903, the company, that turned the German city of Leipzig in the centre of the metallic discs industry, had made in just one year five thousand machines and one hundred thousand discs.

Still at the end of 19th century, as an alternative to metallic discs, it came out the carton bands, where the music was no longer “written” in the protrusions, becoming dictated by holes in the paper, in a process that would then move bellows. These metallic discs and carton bands were the predecessors of the vinyl discs that would come out in the 20th century 50's. After one and a half century of innovations, the first steps were taken to reach the amenities that we take as granted in our days like dining with a background music without the need of hiring a band.

This particular box was acquired by Angra do Heroísmo Museum to Pedro Francisco da Rosa, a resident of Fayal, on the 28th of February 1975, and is part of the Musical Instruments Management Unit.

Bibliography:

Ord-Hume, Arthur W.J.G. *The Musical Box - A Guide for Collectors*, Schiffer Publishing Ltd. 1995. p. 302