Music in Code
Pin Disk Musical Box

RICHARD (OOV):
This musical box uses a disc rather than a cylinder.

PAUL (OOV):
The discs are removable that's the beauty of the system its rather like a record player in that respect and (IV) in fact if remove the disc I can show you some of the mechanism. In fact this is really the first part of the mechanism because the disc is the musical programme. It was a thin sheet of steel and the programme was actually (OOV) perforated from the front of the disk and on the underside you had all these little raised projections. Now these projections were read with a mechanism that laid under the disc laterally across the disc and as the disc revolved then these little projections would interrupt a mechanism, (IV) which lie directly beneath. We have the mechanism here it's a series of (OOV) star wheels and as each one of these little wheels are turned they pluck the tips of the tuned comb.

RICHARD (OOV):
So what was the advantage of the disc over the cylinder?

PAUL (IV):
Quite simply you could have as many tunes as you wished to purchase. Erm the cylinder limited you to perhaps six or eight tunes with this format, well you could have bought dozens of the things. Shall we have listen to it and see what it sounds like?

RICHARD (OOV):
That played for quite a short time. (IV) Do they come in other sizes?

PAUL (IV):
Yes, the larger instruments tended to play longer. I mean this was a sort of a home, domestic model but they were also found in public thoroughfares. Such as this one here, which is coin operated and passers-by if they were so inclined would have dropped a coin in the slot to retrieve the music. And this is the Blue Danube.

RICHARD (OOV):
Because the disc is warped by the mechanism that holds it flat, the disc produces odd bangs and crashes as it turns. But in a crowded café you'd hardly notice such noises.

PAUL (OOV):
As you can hear you got an awful lot of music for your money.

RICHARD (OOV):
You certainly did.

CAPTION:
Desktop Polyphon
Kalliope
German c.1860

CAPTION:
Upright polyphon
c.1860