

FROM THE PAS MUSEUM COLLECTION

CYLINDER RECORDINGS FROM THE GERHARDT COLLECTION

The technical and mechanical evolution for recording sounds began in 1877 when Thomas A. Edison was searching for a way to record the human voice for business dictation purposes. Although this venture failed to prosper, the use of the medium for recording and distributing music gradually captivated the public as a means for private entertainment.

In the early stages of development, the recordings were produced on small cylinders that were mounted horizontally on a rotating spindle. A needle vibrated in the etched grooves, which produced an amplified sound via a brass horn. Xylophone and bells were two of the most popular instruments used for recording during this acoustic cylinder era, which lasted from ca. 1887 to 1929.

The PAS Museum's Edwin L. Gerhardt Xylophone Marimba Collection includes two machines used to play cylinder recordings, as well as several hundred cylinder recordings of various artists. The recordings exist on different types of cylinders, including two-minute wax, "gold-moulded," celluloid, Amberol, and Blue Amberol. The Amberol-type cylinders have a playing time of four minutes.

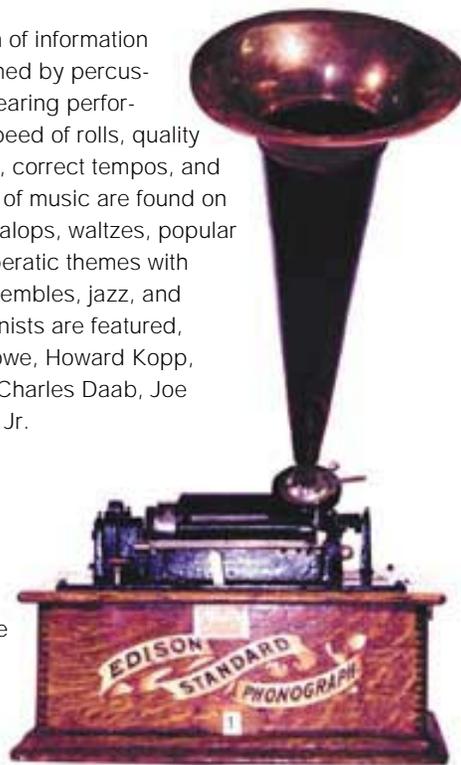
These recordings provide a wealth of information regarding the types of music performed by percussion artists, as well as a means for hearing performance practice concepts such as speed of rolls, quality of instruments, types of mallets used, correct tempos, and musical interpretation. Various types of music are found on these recordings including polkas, galops, waltzes, popular song transcriptions, classical and operatic themes with variations, Guatemalan marimba ensembles, jazz, and ragtime. Many well-known percussionists are featured, including Tommy Mills, Charles P. Lowe, Howard Kopp, William Reitz, El Cota, William Dorn, Charles Daab, Joe Green, and George Hamilton Green, Jr.



A case for a single Edison Amberol cylinder.



A later Edison Phonograph used to play the "Blue Amberol" cylinders.



An "Edison Standard Phonograph" showing the horn and a wax cylinder on the spindle.



Side view of an Edison cylinder disk, showing the title of the selection and the artist ("Toodles-One Step" performed by the Green Bros. Novelty Band).

Sound Enhanced To hear examples of these cylinder recordings, visit the Members Only section of the PAS Web site by logging on to www.pas.org. Featured tunes are "Triplets – Fox Trot," composed and performed by George Hamilton Green (recorded December 1919, Edison Cylinder 3968) and "Caprice Viennois," composed by Fritz Kreisler and also performed by George Hamilton Green (recorded ca. December 1917, Edison Cylinder 3155).