

# A Glossary of Band Organ Terms

by Scott Olson, "Gavi Man" for the Missoula, Montana carousel

**Accompaniment:** the section of pipes used to form the chords that accompany the melody. Usually low in volume and octave range. Normally 9 to 17 notes.

**Band organ:** a pipe organ that plays automatically, usually with percussions, and imitates a band of five or more musicians.

**Barrel organ:** an organ that plays via pinned cylinder.

**Bass:** the low octave pipes that provide the musical foundation with the accompaniment. Normally 3 to 12 notes.

**Bells:** percussive; tuned metal bars similar to a xylophone.

**Bellows:** a mechanical device that provides air pressure or vacuum for the organ.

**Book music:** cardboard sheets with holes punched in them, glued together to provide "books."

**Calliope:** a set of steam or air whistles played by keyboard or rolls. These are *not* band organs. Pronounced cally-ope in circus and carnival vernacular. Very loud.

**Cob:** a pinned cylinder.

**Counter-melody:** the section of pipes that in most U. S. music follows the melody. In European music the counter-melody plays against the melody, or carries the melody while the melody section adds embellishment. Usually 13 to 19 notes, based on reed pipe voices.

**Fairground organ:** band organs are

called fairground organs or fair organs in Europe.

**Flute pipes:** imitate the sound of orchestral flutes. Flat, hollow sound.

**Frein:** the harmonic brake that gives string pipes the bowing effect.

**Gaviman:** the person that tends the organ in a circus or carnival (Scott).

**Key:** mechanical device that tells the pipes, percussions, or other functions to turn on and off.

**Key frame:** holds the keys, the cylinder or music passes over the key frame.

**Melody:** the section of pipes (17 to 26 notes) that plays the main theme of the song.

**Military band organ:** a band organ with brass trumpets and trombones. Imitates a military marching or concert band. Usually have bells as well.

**Monkey organ:** a small, portable, hand-cranked organ.

**Music:** books or paper rolls.

**Note:** one particular musical frequency played by one or more pipes.

**Pallet:** a valve that lets wind into the pipe chest to play a note.

**Paper rolls:** specially treated paper with holes punched in it, rolled onto a core. Similar to a player piano roll.

**Percussion instruments:** drums, triangle, bells, claves, wood blocks, etc. op-

erated by pneumatics.

**Pierement:** the Dutch street organ.

**Pneumatic:** a mechanical "motor" that converts wind or vacuum to motion.

**Rank:** a set of pipes, i.e., if there were 22 notes in melody and the organ had 88 melody pipes, you would have 4 ranks in melody.

**Reed pipes:** these pipes have a metal reed that vibrates to produce a sound imitating the trumpet, trombone, clarinet, saxophone, etc.

**Scale:** the order in which the notes and functions are arranged on the music and key frame, cylinder or tracker bar.

**String pipes:** the pipes that imitate the violin, cello, etc.

**Tracker bar:** the wood or metal bar with holes in it that reads the paper roll or keyless book music.

**Unit valve:** a pneumatic valve that channels pressure or vacuum. Goes between the tracker bar and pallet pneumatic as a relay.

**Vacuum:** air that is rarefied or below atmospheric pressure. Measured in inches of water column.

**Wind:** compressed air measured in inches of water column.

**Windchest:** supplies compressed air to the pipes via pallets. The pipes are mounted atop the windchest.