

the most **cheerful** museum
in the Netherlands

MUSEUM SPEELKLOK

Carillon clocks, musical boxes, Flötenuhren, pianolas, the singing nightingale, orchestrions including the famous *Violina*, street, fairground and dance organs; Museum Speelklok has it all. The Museum attracts many thousands of visitors every year. They come from The Netherlands and abroad; a colourful company of young and old, music lovers and specialists, thoughtful listeners and excited fans. Although they differ widely, they have one thing in common: they enjoy the surprise, allure and enchantment of the sounds of the museum's rich and varied collection of automatic musical instruments. For many people, this is their first contact with the world of automatically playing instruments. The museum's collection is displayed so as to tell the history of mechanical music.

Guided tours

Guided tours (on request in English and at no extra charge) start every hour, on the hour, when the instruments will be playing their repertoire varying from Viennese waltzes and tangos to tear-jerkers and the very latest hits. The guides also tell you some of the unusual and interesting stories behind the items in the collection. The personal and often amusing anecdotes turn each guided tour into a lively event.

Restoration Room

To visitors of the museum who have become interested to find out more about the skill and craftsmanship of the museum's restorers, the Restoration Room provides a fascinating insight into their work. Visitors can see restoration work in progress. Only on reservation (reserving tickets during office hours: +31(0)30 231 27 89. The entrance fee to the museum includes a visit to the Restoration Workshop.



Opening hours

Tuesday to Sunday and public holidays from 10.00 to 17.00.

During school holidays open on Mondays.

Closed on: Mondays, New Year's Day (1 January), the Kings Day (27 April), 25 December

The museum

Museum Speelklok collects, preserves, presents and restores an extensive and internationally renowned array of self-playing mechanical musical instruments. The museum houses one of the world's foremost collections of automatic musical instruments and one of its major roles lies in spreading its knowledge of the collection to a wider audience.

The museum was founded in 1956, following a successful exhibition entitled "From Musical Box to Street Organ" held in that same year. The museum opened its doors to the public in 1958, when its home was in a wing of what is now St Catherine's Convent, in the Lange Nieuwstraat in Utrecht. The Utrecht Foundation for Municipal Recreation, as it then was, and the Friends of the Mechanical Organ - a group which continues to be active to this day - took the initiative and oversaw the birth of the National Museum 'From Musical Box to Street Organ', as the museum was then called.

The museum's aim was - and still is - to encourage interest in self-playing musical instruments. The large numbers of visitors to the museum confirmed that this aim was being achieved in practice from the very earliest days. The collection itself grew steadily and by 1971 it needed a larger home and moved to the former Main Post Office, on Achter den Dom 12 in Utrecht. The museum soon outgrew these premises as well, and in 1984 it moved to the fully restored

'Buurkerk', itself dating from the Middle Ages, where the renamed Museum Speelklok is still to be found today. So far, about 2 million visitors have made their way to the museum in the Buurkerk. After major refurbishment work in 2004 and 2005, the building is now fully modernised and offers a welcoming environment for its visitors and a worthy home to the museum's collection of more than 1,100 instruments.

The Collection

The museum's collection consists of automatic musical instruments from the 15th century to the present day, together with their music programmes and documentation.

But what do we mean by an "automatic musical instrument"? The museum's definition is: *"An automatic musical instrument is an instrument that comes with a programme enabling it to play music without the aid of a human performer."*

Our collection would seem to fit in with this definition very well. The clocks here sound on the hour, half hour and quarter hour by playing music on bells, strings or pipes. At the flick of a switch, the musical boxes play the musical comb by means of musical programmes using cylinders, disks or books. Even the pianos and the automatic playing orchestras, or orchestrions, fall within our definition because they play by means of programmed wooden cylinders, perforated paper rolls or even memory chips, all without the need for human hands playing. Finally, the barrel organs, which range from the canary organ or 'serinette' to the dance organ, also all come with musical programmes, which may be on a wooden cylinder, a paper roll or a cardboard folding book, enabling them to make music automatically, even though they might need a human hand - or a motor - to set them in motion.

Sometimes people ask "Why does the museum not have any gramophones?" The answer is quite simple: a gramophone is not a musical instrument, whereas the items in this collection are.

What are the advantages of automatic musical instruments? What you hear is *live* music, even though no musician is involved. Automatic musical instruments do not play wrong notes and their performance displays greater virtuosity than any human musician could achieve: most of the museum pieces have almost as many mechanical 'fingers' as they have keys. From a historical perspective these instruments are an exciting source of knowledge and also fuel our imagination; what you hear is, after all, the same musical performance as the original owner heard, many centuries ago.

Museum Speelklok

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The museum is a short walk from Utrecht Central Station, or take city bus 2 and get off at Damplein. Parking: car parks at Springweg and Hoog Catharijne.

More information

For more information, interviews or a visit to the museum, please contact the department Marketing & Communication, phone: + 31(0)30-2326089, e-mail lbieren@museumspeelklok.nl.