GERMAN TOY MAGIC LANTERNS – PROJECTING PHENAKISTOSCOPES

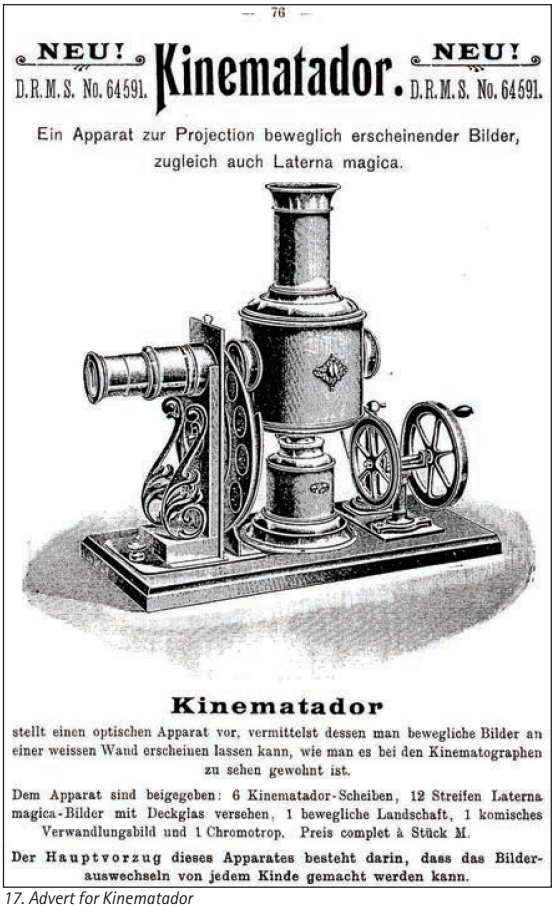
Part 2 – Ernst Plank, Nürnberg

Helmut Wälde

In my view the firm of Ernst Plank was the most creative manufacturer of toy magic lanterns in Germany – and, of course, Plank produced projecting phenakistoscopes. In this second part of the series, I will discuss the different versions and picture discs produced by Plank. They can be dated between 1896[1] and sometime before 1902.[2] I know of the following five variants – the Kinematador No. 790 and four types of the Kinematograph No. 788.

THE KINEMATADOR (CATALOGUE NO. 790)

We know the name Kinematador and the Ernst Plank catalogue number (No. 790) from an early advert (Fig. 17).[3] Fig. 18 shows how the picture discs can be changed on the Kinematador. The lens stand is fixed by a cotter pin on the base. The rotating shutter on this model is made of thick black cardboard with three slots, although there are also variants without any slots in the shutter. The use of cardboard clearly runs the risk of warping. When the disc is turned by cranking the wheel at the back, the shutter automatically turns in the opposite direction to the picture disc. One full turn of the wheel moves the picture disc on by three pictures while the shutter makes a full turn between each picture.



— 76 —

NEU! D.R.M.S. No. 64591. **Kinematador.** NEU! D.R.M.S. No. 64591.

Ein Apparat zur Projection beweglich erscheinender Bilder, zugleich auch Laterna magica.

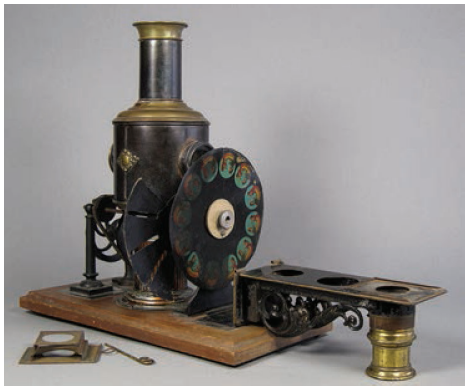
Kinematador

stellt einen optischen Apparat vor, vermittelst dessen man bewegliche Bilder an einer weissen Wand erscheinen lassen kann, wie man es bei den Kinematographen zu sehen gewohnt ist.

Dem Apparat sind beigegeben: 6 Kinematador-Scheiben, 12 Streifen Laterna magica-Bilder mit Deckglas versehen, 1 bewegliche Landschaft, 1 komisches Verwandlungsbild und 1 Chromotrop. Preis complet à Stück M.

Der Hauptvorzug dieses Apparates besteht darin, dass das Bilder-auswechseln von jedem Kinde gemacht werden kann.

17. Advert for Kinematador



18. Changing discs on the Kinematador

The disc-moving mechanism is constructed like an extended 'Maltese cross' with twelve slots (one for each image). A pin or 'nose' on a small wheel on the drive shaft then engages with each slot in turn (Fig. 19 – and see also Fig. 26). The picture disc stops after each full turn of the small wheel. The mechanism looks as if the six-slotted Maltese cross of T.H. McAllister's circular choreutoscope had been extended to twelve slots.

19. Kinematador movement

The lantern has a separate guide frame for wooden framed or long glass slides.

20. Kinematograph (1)

THE KINEMATOGRAPH (1) (CATALOGUE NO. 348/7 88)

I can find no printed source for this variant and therefore I am not sure if it was called a Kinematograph or still a Kinematador. This variant has a square-shaped lamp-house of Russian metal. The lens stand has ornamental embellishments similar to the Kinematador (Fig. 20) and is also fixed by

NOTES

1. The D.R.M.S. (= D.R.G.M. – copyright of the design *(see Part 1)*) No. 64591 dates from 1896.
2. The reprints of the Ernst Plank catalogues from 1902 and 1903 no longer list these magic lanterns.
3. Image © Auction Team Breker, Köln, Germany (www.Breker.com).

a cotter pin on the base. It seems that this model was manufactured in the same early period as the Kinematador No. 790.The burner tank is very tall in order to line up the flame behind the lens. The lantern has a similar changeable guide frame for toy magic lantern slides as the Kinematador No. 790 (Fig. 21).

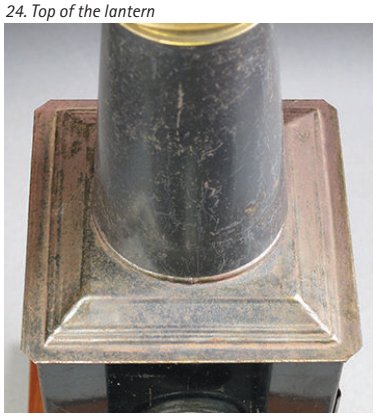
The mechanism is constructed in the same way as the Kinematador and works by turning the wheel at the back (Fig. 22). The rotating shutter is made of metal and has no slots. Unfortunately the lid of the original box has no label but the box does have a handwritten number 348/788 on one side (Fig. 23) and that was clearly the catalogue number for this lantern. The pressed roof of the lamp-house has a distinctive structure (Fig. 24).

21. Tall lamp unit

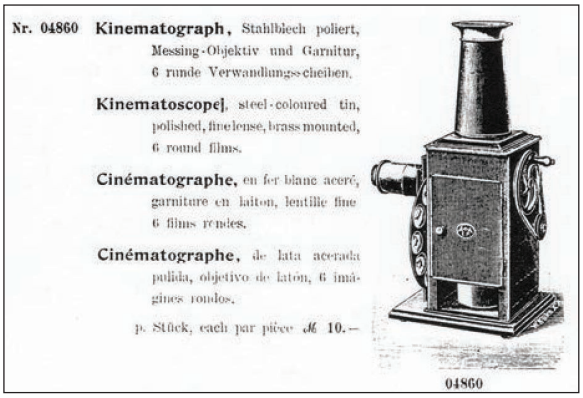
22. Back view

23. Box with number

24. Top of the lantern



THE KINEMATOGRAPH (2) (ASSUMED CATALOGUE NO. 788 – RUSSIAN IRON, STRAIGHT CHIMNEY)



Nr. 04860 **Kinematograph**, Stahlblech poliert, Messing-Objektiv und Garnitur, 6 runde Verwandlungs-scheiben.

Kinematoscope, steel-coloured tin, polished, fine lense, brass mounted, 6 round films.

Cinématographe, en fer blanc acieré, garniture en laiton, lentille fine 6 films rondes.

Cinématographe, de lata acerada pulida, objetivo de latón, 6 imágines rondos.

p. Stück, each par pièce ℳ 10.–

04860

25. Kinematograph (2)

Unfortunately I cannot show any images of this variant. There is only a picture in a catalogue of the firm Ullmann & Engelmann of Fürth (Bavaria) who also had establishments in Berlin S. (Alexandrinenstr. 99) and London E.C. (113 Fore Street) (Fig. 25). The catalogue is from around 1900 and is printed in four languages (German, English, French and Spanish). The English description is: 'Kinematoscope, steel coloured tin, polished, fine lens, brass mounted, 6 round films'. The picture shows that this variant has a modified lens stand without the attractive ornamentation of the earlier models. The rotating shutter is not visible but is obviously placed in front of the lamp-house. The roof and the chimney have the same shape as the previous variant.

THE KINEMATOGRAPH (3) (CATALOGUE NO. 788 – ORANGE-RED PAINTED MODEL, STRAIGHT CHIMNEY)

26. Kinematograph (3)

This variant obviously followed the previous variant. The lens stand is fixed at the top of the lamp-house by a small latch. The rotating shutter is made of metal and has no slots. The position of the rotating shutter is now inside the lamp-house. The mechanism is constructed in the same way as the previous variants and works by turning the wheel at the back (Fig. 26).

27. Maltese cross detail

Fig. 27 shows the detail of the Maltese cross mechanism with the twelve slots and the small wheel on the drive shaft with the 'nose'. The previous variants have a similar construction. Remarkably, Beale's choreutoscope uses almost the same mechanism – Fig. 28 shows the inside of a Beale choreutoscope.

28. Beale choreutoscope

The roof of the lantern has the characteristic structured shape seen in the previous variants (Fig. 29).

29. Top of the lantern

A fixed guide for wooden framed or long glass slides is integrated into the lens holder.

THE KINEMATOGRAPH (4) (CATALOGUE NO. 788 – ORANGE-RED PAINTED MODEL, ELBOW CHIMNEY)

This variant is mostly similar to the previous one but has a different chimney. The metal shutter has three slots and is also placed inside the lamp-house (Fig. 30).

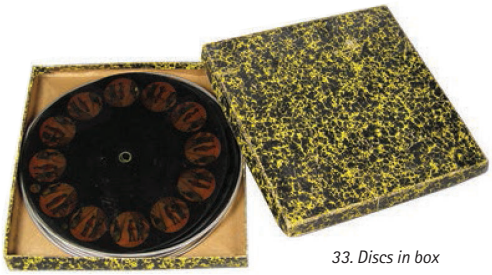
The roof also has a different design (Fig. 31). The lantern shown still has its original box and was made for the French market (therefore it has the French description 'Cinématographe').

30. Kinematograph (4)

31. Top of the lantern

The lid has a label that shows a boy operating the same 'Cinématographe'. The label has a handwritten '788' at the bottom and 348/788 on the side of the box (Fig. 32).

32. Box with handwritten numbers (label and side)



33. Discs in box

The discs and their original box have also survived. Obviously the discs were initially mounted in metal frames and these have become detached but are still present (Fig. 33). It is not clear whether the discs were usually mounted in metal frames or this was a special edition.

I have operated the Kinematador and Kinematograph lanterns and I can confirm that the mechanisms work well. The movement of the projected images is very effective.

THE DISCS FOR THE KINEMATADOR NO. 790 AND KINEMATOGRAPH NO. 788

The designs of twelve sequential images on the discs seem to be the same as on the strips supplied for the Ernst Plank Kinematofor (an Ernst Plank copy of Reynaud's praxinoscope). The Kinematador/ Kinematograph lanterns are rare and when they come to light the discs are often missing. The discs have a diameter of 14.5cm and although the images are made of thick celluloid they are very fragile. They seem to be in danger of drying out, becoming brittle and breaking. A total of ten discs are shown here (Figs 34–43) but possibly more designs would have been offered.

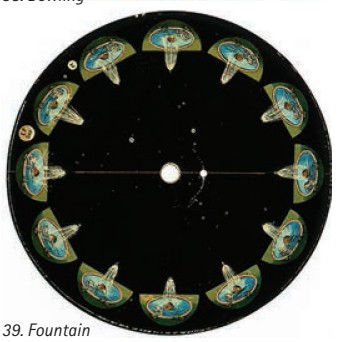
34. Circus

35. Bowling

36. Girl with cats

37. Ball game

38. Soap bubbles



39. Fountain

40. Diving

41. Show-jumping

42. Snowman

43. Acrobats