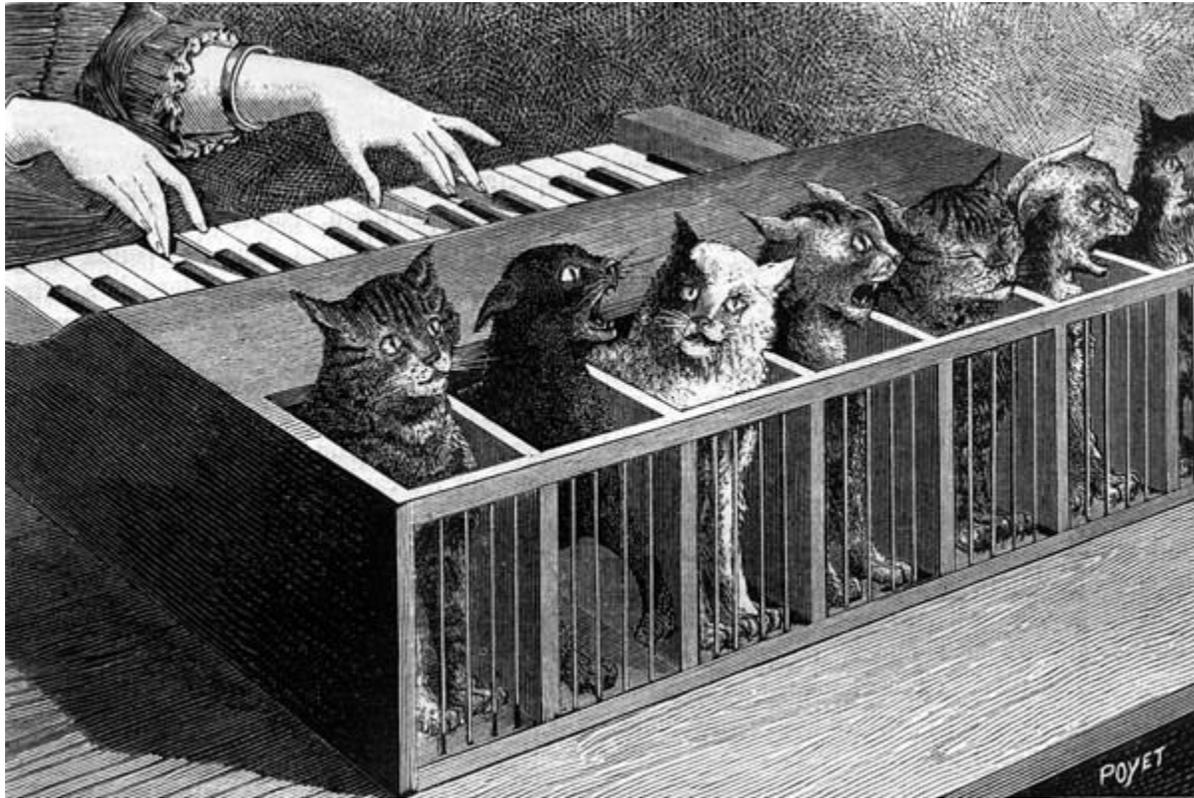




## Romancing the Foam No. 112

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The cat piano cracks me up. I first read about it in Carolyn Purnell's [The Sensational Past: How the Enlightenment Changed the Way We Use Our Senses](#). The instrument first appeared in 1549 when Philip II, King of Spain went to visit his father, Holy Roman Emperor Charles V in Brussels. Philip wanted to impress his father, so he assembled a procession that included a cat piano played by a bear. A massive bull with flaming horns and a small devil dancing between them led Phillip's procession, followed up by a boy sewn into a bearskin riding a horse, then a brightly clothed Archangel Michael. A chariot containing the cat piano and bear came next in front of a procession of wolves, monkeys, deer and other animals dancing wildly to the piano's music. King Phillip's instrument consisted of 16 cats confined in a box with their tails sticking out and arranged according to the tone of their yowl. Pressing a key on the key board would yank the cat's tail producing the appropriate meow. In a 1650 work the German Jesuit scholar, Athanasius Kirchner, recommended the instrument for its ability to reduce the melancholy of princes by moving them to laughter. In an 18th century book - *Rhapsodies on the Application of Psychological Methods of Cure to the Mentally Disturbed*, Christian Reil proposed the cat piano (aka katzenklavier) as a remedy for chronic daydreamers: "A fugue played on this instrument - when the ill person is so placed that he cannot miss the expressions on their faces and the play of these animals - must bring Lot's wife herself from her fixed state into conscious awareness."

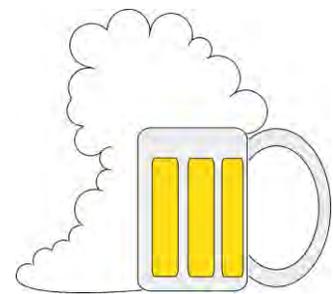


While some scholars contest the existence of the cat piano – there is no evidence that one was actually built – when I first read about it I grabbed the concept as a solution to the Donald's penchant military parades down Pennsylvania Avenue. A procession of the order of King Philip II's with cat pianos and dancing wild animals would wreck less havoc on the streets of Washington than columns of 70 ton Sherman tanks. King Philip II is an appropriate role model for our commander in chief as like Trump he suffered through bankruptcies in 1557, 1560, 1569, 1575, and 1596. He also dressed well. This strikes me as much more fun than tanks and would probably better fill the mall with throngs of onlookers. Combined with its pomp, its ability to put a smile on the face of powerful princes, and its ability to awake day dreamers from their slumber, the cat piano might not only save the

streets of Washington, assuage the President's ego issues but might also breathe life and sanity into our entire government. If nothing else, it provides ample reason to sit back and enjoy a beer.

For this issue I have selected beers that one might drink while listening to or contemplating the cat piano and whatever procession it might encourage. Brouwerij Huyghe Delirium Nocturnum (8.5% alcohol by volume) immediately comes to mind. The name means nighttime delirium or confusion. It is a Belgian Dark Strong Ale. These big bold beers are also known as Trappist Quadruples, with the versions produced by the Trappist monasteries usually drier than the Abbey versions produced by commercial brewers which are usually sweeter and fuller bodied. Delirium Nocturnum smells of dark dried fruit, fruit, light fruit cake, spice, hints of anise, faint tobacco, and some rich caramel. It drops brilliant deep mahogany brown with ruby highlights blanketed by 3" of light tan foam with a fine bead and good retention marking the glass with thick Belgian lace. I am bracing for something thick and rich, bordering on cloying but this hits the tongue surprisingly light and drier than I expected.





The flavors start with dark dried fruit, raisin, fig, banana, traces of anise, faint root beer, a hint of tobacco, alcohol, caramel, and dark sugars leading to a moderately high bitter, drying finish. Malt flavors are medium, yeast flavors are medium high and hop flavors are medium low to low. The alcohol is gently warming and not hot or harsh. The body is medium light to medium and the carbonation is above average, but it is very soft and creamy. This big, full flavored beer is light on its feet and provides a nice mix of malt and yeast flavors balanced by hop bitterness. I rate it 90.

OMNI Brewing Company Loonacy has a name that strikes me as more than appropriate for pomp and processions and at 8.0% alcohol by volume, (45 International Bittering Units) has the strength to promote all orders of silliness. It is a Belgian Golden Strong Ale. Tart, ripe fruit lead the aromas. The

second whiff reveals stone fruit, a hint of tobacco, traces of banana, light bread crumb, traces of lactic acid and bubble gum. Yeast aromas are medium high, malt aromas are medium and hop aromas are low. A 2" lacy white blanket of foam with good retention and a very fine bead tops a slightly hazy gold column. Moderately bitter malty caramel leads the flavors joined by rich fruit, peach, and banana. It is mildly sweet but dries out finishing fruity with a balancing bitter and a hint of tobacco. The finish reminds me of marmalade. The beer has just a touch of Brett in it or the brewer has found a very interesting Belgian yeast strain and has treated it very well. The yeast flavors are medium high, alcohol flavors are medium, the hop and malt flavors are medium low, and the hop bitterness is medium plus. The texture is exquisite. The body is medium light, dry and creamy with medium high very soft carbonation. The alcohol is mildly warming and not hot or harsh. I am enjoying this beer. It combines a rich texture with complex, layered flavors and a fruit-filled palate followed by a pleasant balancing bitterness. I rate it 85.

My selection of Insight Brewing Terror Bear (7.5% alcohol by volume, 21 International bittering Units) pays homage to the bear playing King Phillip's original version of the cat piano. It is an American IPA brewed with Citra and Mosaic hops. The



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first whiff smells of onion, pine and garlic but a swirl of the glass drives this off to bring tropical fruit flavors of melon, oranges, citrus, papaya and a hint of mango to the forefront. It pours gold with a light haze under a 1" white to light cream-colored cap with fair to good retention. A dash of caramel lightly sweetens well developed and layered big tropical fruit flavors with citrus, melon and a hint of lemon drop. There is a trace of savory herb and spice in the background. A moderate bitterness leads, mellowed by the malt, the finish producing lingering fruit and bitter flavors. The fruit flavors are medium high and the malt flavors are medium. Terror Bear is very creamy with medium soft carbonation and a medium body. This is a very drinkable and flavorful IPA. I rate it 80.

These three beers are all flavorful, potent and have a light body for their size making them very easy to drink. After a bottle of two of these, you might want to avoid operating any heavy equipment but they will definitely put in the mood for the cat piano and its attendant procession.

Since the last Romancing the Foam, I have added reviews of 6 local breweries, 4 local restaurants, added a category of books to read while drinking beer, added 70 book reviews and added 60 beer reviews. Find them here: [Material Added Between 12-8-17 and 2-15-18 Page 1](#) and [Material Added Between 12-8-17 and 2-15-18 Page 2](#)