

# The Life and Times of the Concertina:

the adoption and usage of a novel musical instrument  
with particular reference to Scotland

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## Introduction

### Background

I first became interested in the concertina during the early 1970s when I acquired a second-hand instrument from a Glasgow music dealer and taught myself to play Scottish dance music on it. A number of local folk revival players, competitions at music festivals and authoritative performances and gramophone recordings by leading singers and groups backed my assumption that the concertina was primarily an instrument of the “folk traditions” of the British Isles.

In 1982, a chance encounter with an elderly musician introduced me to other areas of concertina playing, including sacred music, bands, the music hall and many forms of popular music. It was clear that these pockets of musical activity were on the wane and, although they were seemingly at odds with my taste for traditional music and song, I set out to record the music and testimony of their musicians for posterity. My initial objective, therefore, was the protection, preservation and publicising of residual musical forms in a manner similar to the practice of “rescue archaeology”<sup>1</sup> in my day to day work as a local authority conservation officer.

This field work, complemented by library research and wider reading, led me to re-assess my view of the concertina as a “folk” instrument. It became clear that the variety encountered in the field was typical rather than exceptional; the concertina had never been associated with any simply defined musical area, class or group but had enjoyed a number of functions reflecting the richness, contradictions and complexities of music and society in the modern period.<sup>2</sup> Developments in the form of the instrument or changes in its pattern of use could not be explained simply as a single linear path of continual improvement but required to be viewed as a complex of involvements and responses across a range of performance situations, musical sub-cultures and institutions which were continually emerging, changing or passing away. Furthermore, I no longer viewed instruments simply as the tools of the musician’s trade - the apparatus for the creation and communication of sound - and recognised

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<sup>1</sup> Bruno Nettl talks of “urgent anthropology” as a motivation in ethnomusicology in The Study of Ethnomusicology: Twenty-nine Issues and Concepts (Chicago, 1983), p. 274.

<sup>2</sup> Ruth Finnegan has illustrated the richness and complexities of musical activity in everyday life in her recent investigation into music making in Milton Keynes, The Hidden Musicians: Music-making in an English Town (Cambridge, 1989). Her synchronic study found that “musical practices are upheld through a series of socially recognised pathways which systematically linked into a wide variety of settings and institutions within the city” (p. 299).

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the importance of the associated extramusical meanings and functions conditioned by the cultural and historical contexts of their use. I became interested in how the concertina had been used in the one hundred and fifty years of its existence and fascinated by the fact that it had been “invented”. The idea of a novel instrument raised questions relevant at a time when new, electronic devices were appearing almost daily. Who played the instrument at any particular time? What did they use it for and what kind of music did they play? How did they play? What were the forces that led to its adoption? Given the integration of existing instruments into society, the meanings and functions attached to them and the complex web of vested interests in their development, production and consumption, what were the special circumstances which influenced the fortunes of a new musical invention? These questions are addressed in this thesis.

### **Historical and Theoretical Framework**

Any attempt to map and understand the processes involved in the adoption and use of a musical instrument requires an approach which recognises the breadth of the musical field and accommodates its complexities, interpenetrations and contradictions. It should position the development and use of the musical instrument within their social contexts and should embrace a dynamic historical perspective which reflects the constantly changing nature of the musical landscape. I have sought to achieve this through the expansion of conventional historical musicology with inputs from other disciplines.

Organology, the study of musical instruments, has a long pedigree. Laurence Libin<sup>3</sup> has described the western tradition of private and public collections of musical instruments assembled for a variety of purposes: for their use in performance; to serve antiquarian and ethnological purposes; for their financial value; for veneration as visual art; as illustrations of technological development; or simply as curiosities from another age or culture. Such collection, along with the gathering of data from literary and iconographic sources, musical scores, accounts and inventories, has allowed the generation of an enormous body of material and literature concerning the history, construction, scientific description, classification and comparison of musical instruments.

Organology tends to operate as an adjunct to, rather than an area outwith, conventional historical musicology and shares its primary concerns and ideology. There is, for instance, the same interest in the development of the modern “classical” repertory, an evolutionary sense of historical progress and an emphasis on the contribution of “great men”, whether as composers, virtuosi or master instrument makers. Pursuit of “authenticity” and “historical truthfulness” are central and feed a lively dialogue regarding the selection and interpretation of repertory, appropriate

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<sup>3</sup> Libin, Laurence “Musical Instruments: Collections” NGDMM Vol. 9 (1980), pp. 245-254.



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performance practice and musical instrument design. Evidence from musical scores is paramount and there is little consideration of non-classical uses or interest in non-orchestral instruments. Collections of musical instruments might embrace instruments from the “folk” and “popular” areas but in general more attention is paid to their origins and physical form than their use. Developments in musical instruments can often lack sufficiently rich explanation. At worst, instruments are seen as having almost organic or magical qualities: “the harp first appeared in Scotland during the ninth century” or “the piano-forte had developed pedals by then”.

The “early music revival”<sup>4</sup> is an important site of organological activity whose principal area of concern is a “Golden Age” conveniently removed from the changes wrought by the industrial period, although the 19th century now attracts much interest. Primitive, ethnic and popular instruments can be legitimised through “early music” but only on the movement’s own terms. It is not surprising therefore, that the modern free-reed instruments have received little attention.

In attempting to address the shortcomings of conventional organology, I have adopted models and concepts from contemporary ethnomusicology, a multidisciplinary approach whose methodology and techniques have long recognised the value of the study of musical instruments. Early in this century, the pioneers of “comparative musicology” undertook the systematic classification, description and plotting of the distribution of musical instruments in their attempts to understand and explain the origins, development and geographical diffusion of music. More recently, Alan Merriam identified instruments as part of the “culture inventory” of a people and a “particularly sharp tool for analysis”,<sup>5</sup> while Bruno Nettl stressed the view that the study of instruments “can - and should be - integrated with description of musical culture and musical style”.<sup>6</sup> Mantle Hood made an important advance when he separated organography, the description of musical instruments, including their physical features, acoustical properties and history, from organology which also covers the “equally important but neglected aspects of ‘the science’ of musical instruments, such as particular techniques of performance, musical function, decoration (as distinct from construction) and a variety of socio-cultural considerations”.<sup>7</sup> Around the same time, Oler<sup>8</sup> suggested the term ethno-organology to cover the study of musical instruments in culture.

In a flow chart (Fig. 1.1) illustrating the scope of “the study of instruments as objects and as aspects of biological and social musical activity”, Wachsmann maps “currents of ideas about musical instruments”<sup>9</sup> to describe the full range of factors the ethnomusicologist should consider. The constructional details (material, design etc..)

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<sup>4</sup> Haskell, Harry *The Early Music Revival: A History* (London, 1988), pp. 24-25.

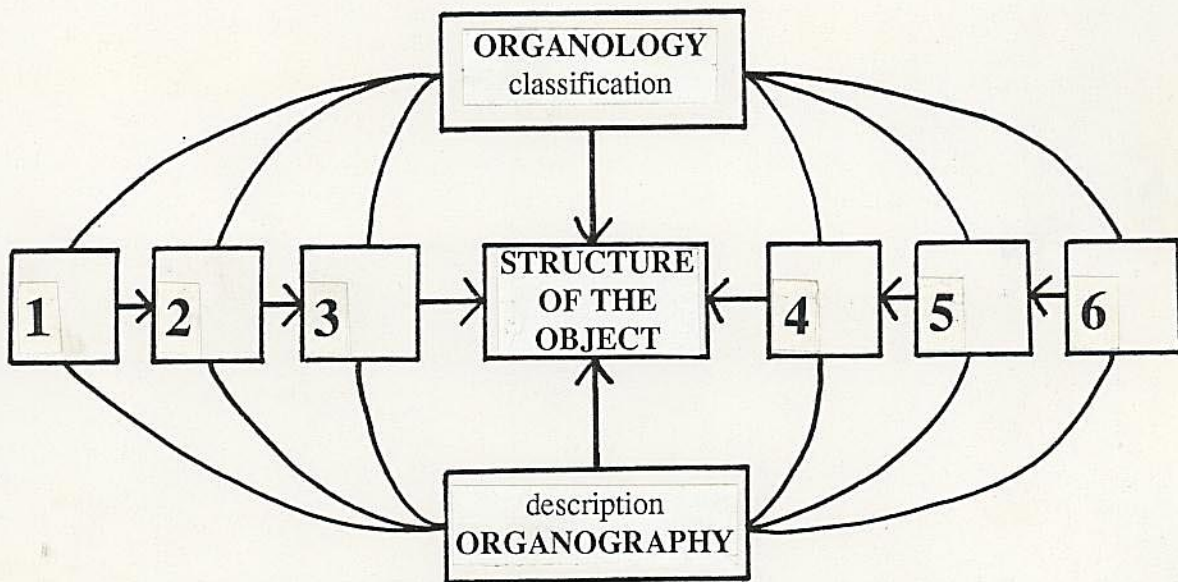
<sup>5</sup> Merriam, Alan *The Anthropology of Music* (Evanston, 1964), p. 45.

<sup>6</sup> Nettl, Bruno *Theory and Method in Ethnomusicology* (New York, 1964) p. 215.

<sup>7</sup> Hood, Mantle *The Ethnomusicologist* (New York, 1971) p. 124.

<sup>8</sup> Oler, W.M. “Definition of Organology” *Galpin Society Journal* XXIII (1970), p. 170.

<sup>9</sup> Wachsmann, Klaus “Musical Instruments: Classification” *NGDMM* Vol. 9 (1980), p. 238.



- 1 beliefs and symbolism
- 2 sociology
- 3 history and development
- 4 performance
- 5 corporeal determinants
- 6 music

Figure 1.1 Wachsmann Model.  
 Source: Wachsmann, K. "Musical Instruments: Classification"  
 NGDMM Vol. 9, p.238.

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of the instrument are placed at the centre as a common ground linking organographic and organological concerns while lateral links connect the two fields through the relevant musical and contextual aspects which have a bearing on the instrument's form. This is a particularly useful model on account of its comprehensiveness but, although it does employ curved lines bypassing the centre to indicate that details of construction need not be of primary importance, it is limited in assisting an understanding of adoption and abandonment. This would require a framework which puts processes and musical activity rather than instrument form at the centre.

In practice, ethnomusicology has confirmed its theorists' concern for musical instruments through the gathering, organisation and interpretation of data relating to the nature and use of musical instruments within their cultural contexts. Ethnomusicology offers the advantages of an agreed ideal of bias-free analysis, attention to both oral and written sources, the study of music in its performance setting and an emphasis on comparison with findings from elsewhere. It also offers a number of models which are useful in the study of the use of musical instruments in culture. The theory and method of modern ethnomusicology relies heavily on the work of Merriam<sup>10</sup> who, in his proposed fusion of musicology and anthropology, established a research model comprising three connected analytical areas (Figure 1.2): conceptualisation about music influences physical, social and verbal behaviour in relation to music which in turn conditions the music sound itself. The circular form allows feedback which controls both change and stability in the system. The model is simple and effective and has been at the core of much of the work within the discipline during the past 25 years. It has, however, attracted criticism on account of difficulties in making effective homologies between its three areas and its exclusion of other considerations such as a historical perspective, aspects of musical change and the role of the individual. From the point of view of my own project, I must agree that this model over-emphasises social processes at the expense of the concerns of historical musicology.<sup>11</sup> More recent theorists have moved away from a static view of music cultures towards a picture of complex, dynamic systems in which change is an ever present component, open to analysis and interpretation and requiring specially developed concepts and terminology.<sup>12</sup>

Working with musicians in the field, I have been concerned that my own study of musical instruments should recognise the role of the individual in musical culture, particularly in relation to change and innovation. Ethnomusicology has been found to be weak in this area, the decisions and choices of individual musicians or singers

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<sup>10</sup> Merriam, The Anthropology...

<sup>11</sup> Rice, Timothy "Towards a Remodelling of Ethnomusicology" Ethnomusicology 31 (1987), p. 473.

<sup>12</sup> For example: Blacking, John "Some Problems of Theory and Method in the Study of Musical Change" Yearbook of the International Folk Music Council 9 (1978), pp. 1-26 and "Identifying Processes of Musical Change" World of Music 28 (1986), pp. 3-15; Nettl, Bruno "Some Aspects of the History of World Music in the Twentieth Century: Questions, Problems, Concepts" Ethnomusicology 22 (1978), pp. 123-136; Kartomi, Margaret "The Processes and Results of Culture Contact: A Discussion of Terminology and Concepts" Ethnomusicology 23 (1981), pp. 227-250.

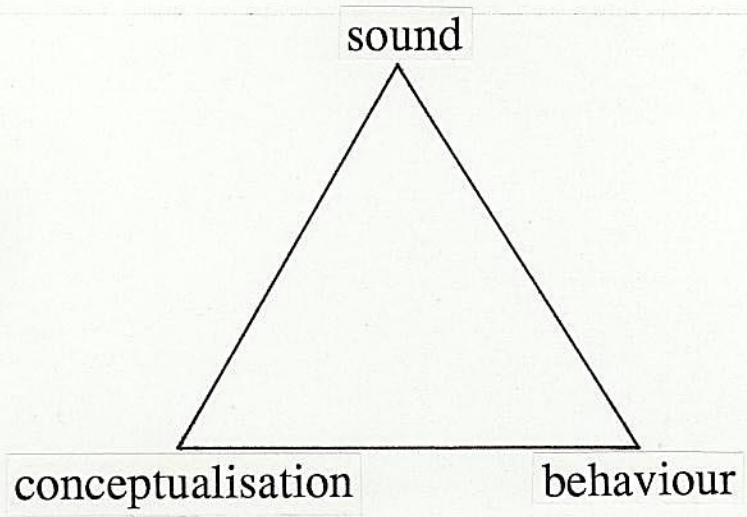


Figure 1.2 Merriam Model.  
Diagrammatic Interpretation.

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being too often overshadowed by consideration of the group.<sup>13</sup> In addressing these concerns, I have found the model recently proposed by Timothy Rice<sup>14</sup> particularly useful. This involves a structure (my interpretation is given in Figure 1.3) which accepts Merriam's earlier model but flexibly embeds it on a lower descriptive and analytical level. In my project, this embraces details of musical instrument form as well as use. Merriam's three considerations feed separately into a principal, interpretative and explanatory level which is concerned with processes rather than specific products or events. Drawing inspiration from Clifford Geertz,<sup>15</sup> this takes place in three interacting formative areas: "Identifying three primary causes, rather than one, has the advantage of allowing for complex, rather than simplistic, explanations. Claiming that historical, social and individual forces work to shape music suggests that all these branches of musicology will be needed to capture a sophisticated understanding of music".<sup>16</sup>

Historical Construction is concerned with change and tradition while Social Maintenance of Music embraces "the way music is sustained, maintained, and altered by socially constructed institutions and belief systems",<sup>17</sup> including aspects of economics and patronage, social organisation, the politics of production and consumption, musical organisations, performance conventions etc.. Individual Creation and Experience involves the consideration of individual behaviour, style, performance, composition, repertory, creativity etc. and balances tendencies towards any over-rigid explanation or generalisation of music based solely on social structure. Rice also suggests that an understanding of these three processes contributes to our deeper appreciation of how people make music and, ultimately, the place of music in humankind as a whole.

At the interpretative level, each of Rice's three fields is tied to the other two by a flexible, two-way relationship in which each process can be explained in terms of the others. For example, in my consideration of the use of the concertina in sacred music (Chapter 9.0), I have worked with living musicians. Field work has led to the gathering and analysis of data relating to their behaviour, conceptualisation and music (Merriam's categories) which, in turn, feed into the three areas in the Rice model. Thus, I consider the individual's beliefs, music and performance. Determining class, political, economic and other social relations are also considered, including the

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<sup>13</sup> Bruno Nettl in The Study of Ethnomusicology: Twenty-nine Issues and Concepts (Chicago, 1983), p. 183 notes that "it is important to be clear that we are talking about changes in behaviour of human beings" while John Blacking ("Identifying Processes...", p. 3) states that "musical and cultural changes are not caused by culture contact, population movements, or changes in technology and in means and modes of production: they are the results of decisions made by individuals about music-making and music or about social and cultural practice, on the basis of their experiences of music and social life and their attitudes to them in different social contexts".

<sup>14</sup> Rice, Towards a Remodelling...

<sup>15</sup> Geertz, Clifford The Interpretation of Cultures (New York, 1973).

<sup>16</sup> Rice, Timothy. Review of Nettl, The Study of Ethnomusicology in Year Book of Traditional Music 18 (1986), p. 185.

<sup>17</sup> Rice, Towards a Remodelling, p. 475.



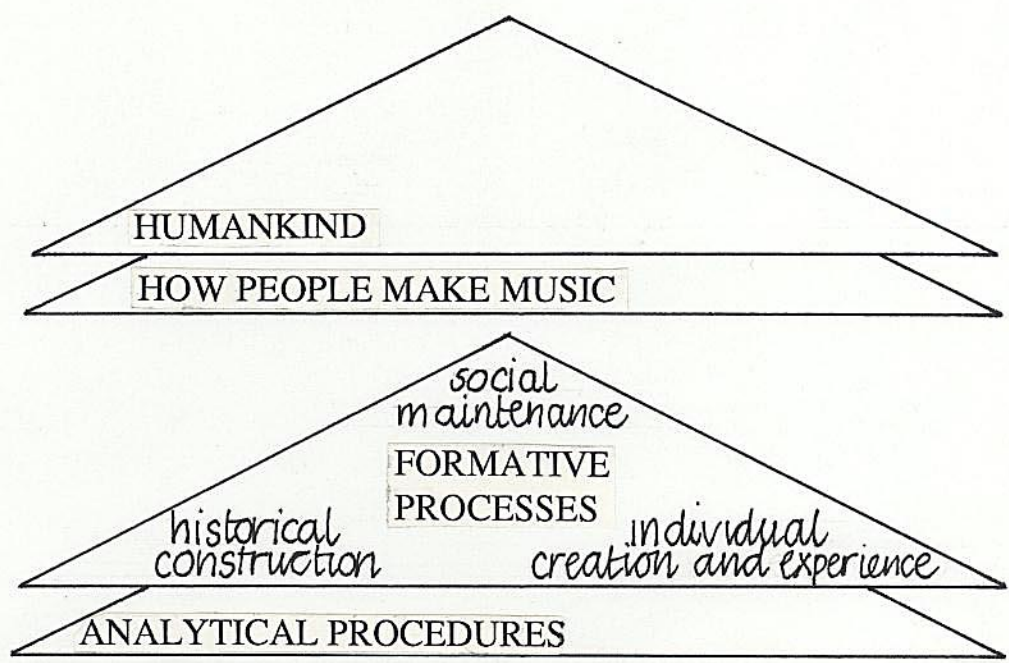


Figure 1.3 Rice Model.  
Diagrammatic Interpretation.

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religious context of the individual's worship and its position and status in society as a whole. Examination of historical determinants brings in consideration of the way these contexts have varied over time, traditions and the individual's personal development.

This model is comprehensive and offers rich interpretative opportunities. It addresses many of the criticisms and omissions discussed previously and brings ethnomusicology closer to the best of historical musicology. It allows both the widest musical field and historical period to be embraced and is thus suited to the examination of the adoption, use and abandonment of musical instruments in the dynamic and culturally diverse society covered by this study. In practice, I have found it a useful framework for adding shape to a wide range of concerns, and the large number of linkages it suggests has offered an effective means of evaluating my work. I have also found the model useful in allowing inputs from other disciplines as required.

Musical instruments, particularly those of the modern period with its "transition from patronage to market-place",<sup>18</sup> can be studied as commodities as well as "things"<sup>19</sup> through the field of economic history. Much can be gained from an examination of the circumstances of their production, consumption, distribution and sale, as has already been effectively demonstrated in a number of studies, including those of Cyril Ehrlich<sup>20</sup> who has advocated greater use of this kind of data.<sup>21</sup> Ehrlich values the method's diachronic perspective, potential for "analytical insights and quantitative sense",<sup>22</sup> avoidance of "dogma" and its illumination of typical rather than exceptional events. Used on its own, however, this approach can at best only describe, rather than explain, the processes behind adoption. Explanations for demand in terms of utility are too crude, placing materialistic and physical needs over cultural or spiritual requirements. Using music as an example, Douglas and Isherwood have levelled criticism at the economists' failure to recognise the cultural implications of consumption, noting that "this minimum watertight rationality leaves the individual impossibly isolated. His rational objectives are tidied out of sight and trivialised under the term 'tastes'."<sup>23</sup> Accounting for the rise in popularity of a musical instrument through an envy theory of needs or a spread of infection model is too

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<sup>18</sup> Ehrlich, Cyril "Market Themes" Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association Vol. LXIV, No. 1 (1989), p. 1.

<sup>19</sup> In Victorian Things (London, 1990), pp. 13-14, the historian Asa Briggs stresses the value of studying everyday nineteenth century things, including musical instruments, "as they were used and appreciated within their own context" and discusses how they exhibit "often surprising links between them: common themes, transfers of technology, shared designs".

<sup>20</sup> Ehrlich, Cyril The Piano: A History (London, 1976) and The Music Profession in Britain Since the Eighteenth Century: A Social History (Oxford, 1985).

<sup>21</sup> Ehrlich, Cyril "Economic History and Music" Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association 103 (1976) pp. 188-99 and "Market Themes", pp. 1-5.

<sup>22</sup> Ehrlich, "Economic History...", p. 188.

<sup>23</sup> Douglas, M. and Isherwood, B. The World of Goods: Towards an Anthropology of Consumption (London, 1979) pp. 19-20.

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simplistic. Ehrlich's explanation of the rise in popularity of the piano,<sup>24</sup> for example, has attracted criticism on account of his heavy emphasis on "social emulation". Russell notes that:

The search for respectability obscures the existence of deep levels of genuine musical sensibility amongst the working classes. The purchase of a piano was often simply another manifestation of the contemporary appetite for music, and an attempt to satisfy it. While musical and social aspirations were undoubtedly mixed in many minds, to view this phenomenon as mere snobbery oversimplifies a complex picture.<sup>25</sup>

Purely economic explanations for abandonment are even less satisfactory. Furthermore, reliable statistics are hard to find, are rarely of a form suitable for comparison and can lead to a bias in interpretation in which the moment of exchange takes precedence over the moment of use. The importance of the second-hand market and the complexity of patterns of use of a musical instrument makes even a crude investigation difficult.

Insights into the development of musical instruments in the modern period can also be gained from such areas as industrial history, product development and the history of technology. Grame, for example, has advocated that organology should pay "heed to the important effects that the material available for construction has had on the history and development of musical instruments"<sup>26</sup> and Chanan,<sup>27</sup> has described the development of the modern piano in terms of both the large number of independent technical advances which were applied to separate parts of its mechanism and the application of mass production processes.

In tackling the complexities of the formative processes in Rice's model, I have benefitted from the perspective of writers working in the field of cultural studies, especially those concerned with popular music. Particularly valuable are their endeavours to "recover the wider experience of everyday life, in leisure as well as work, but to integrate this with an understanding of structure and process in the formation of class structures in a capitalist society".<sup>28</sup> Their interest in a strong historical dimension, discussion of cultural forms through class relations and ideology and examination of the institutions of the modern period (music hall, Victorian

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<sup>24</sup> Ehrlich, The Piano...

<sup>25</sup> Russell, Dave Popular Music in England 1840-1914: A Social History (Manchester, 1987), pp. 143-144.

<sup>26</sup> Grame, Theodore C. "Bamboo and Music: A New Approach to Organology" Ethnomusicology 6 (1962) pp. 8-14, reprinted in David P. McAllister (ed.) Readings in Ethnomusicology (London, 1971) p. 142.

<sup>27</sup> Chanan, Michael "Piano Studies: On Science, Technology and Manufacture from Harpsichords to Yamahas" Science as Culture 3 (1988), pp. 54-91.

<sup>28</sup> Bailey, P. (ed.) Music Hall: Business and Pleasure (Milton Keynes, 1986), pp. xiv-xv.



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popular song, sacred music, bands popular recreations, the folk song revival etc..) are too often ignored or ill served by other disciplines.<sup>29</sup> The value of modern social history in pursuing a diachronic appreciation of the contexts of musical activity has been recognised by a number of contemporary workers<sup>30</sup> in the field of folk music studies.

### **Thesis Structure**

This introduction is followed by a discussion of the concertina within the context of musical instrument development in Europe in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Chapter 2.0) and then by detailed consideration of the invention of the English concertina (Chapter 3.0). The instrument's initial adoption by professional "art" musicians (Chapter 4.0) and middle-class amateurs (Chapter 5.0) is explored before I examine the introduction of the Anglo-German concertina, the principal diversification of the instrument to suit new markets (Chapter 6.0). A number of relatively self-contained areas of working class music making during the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first of the present are then explored: the concertina in the music hall (Chapter 7.0), in concertina bands (Chapter 8.0) and in sacred music (Chapter 9.0). A case study of working class amateur use in Scotland in the early twentieth century based on field work (Chapter 10.0) is followed by consideration of recent revivals of interest in the instrument (Chapter 11.0). The dissertation concludes with a discussion of current developments in the use of the concertina.

While it would be wrong to assume that the history of the instrument's adoption and abandonment has followed a linear path through time, I have found it convenient to organise the chapters of this thesis in chronological order (Figure 1.4). There is a degree of overlap in the content of some chapters, for, in the constantly changing and contradictory map of popular music, it is not unusual to find performers active in, or familiar with the repertory of, different areas of musical activity.

Each subject area has presented its own problems in terms of sources and there is an inevitable imbalance between chapters in the quantity and quality of data. I have not

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<sup>29</sup> The texts in the Open University Press series Popular Music in Britain (Milton Keynes), the material associated with the Open University course Popular Culture: U203, (Milton Keynes, 1982) and Richard Middleton's Studying Popular Music (Milton Keynes, 1990) have been invaluable in this area.

<sup>30</sup> Michael Pickering, in "Song and Social Context" (Ian Russell (ed.), Singer, Song and Scholar (Sheffield, 1986) p. 86), acknowledges the assistance of social history "in bidding farewell to the antiquarian fetishism of curious objects and cultural oddities" while Vic Gammon, in "Problems of Method in the Historical Study of Popular Music" (Popular Music Perspectives (Gothenburg, 1982) p. 16), claimed a method which drew "on the fairly recent tradition of British social history and the history of popular culture which seeks to rescue the life experience of working people from what E.P. Thompson has called 'the enormous condescension of posterity'. To attempt this is to work both within and against traditional historiography".

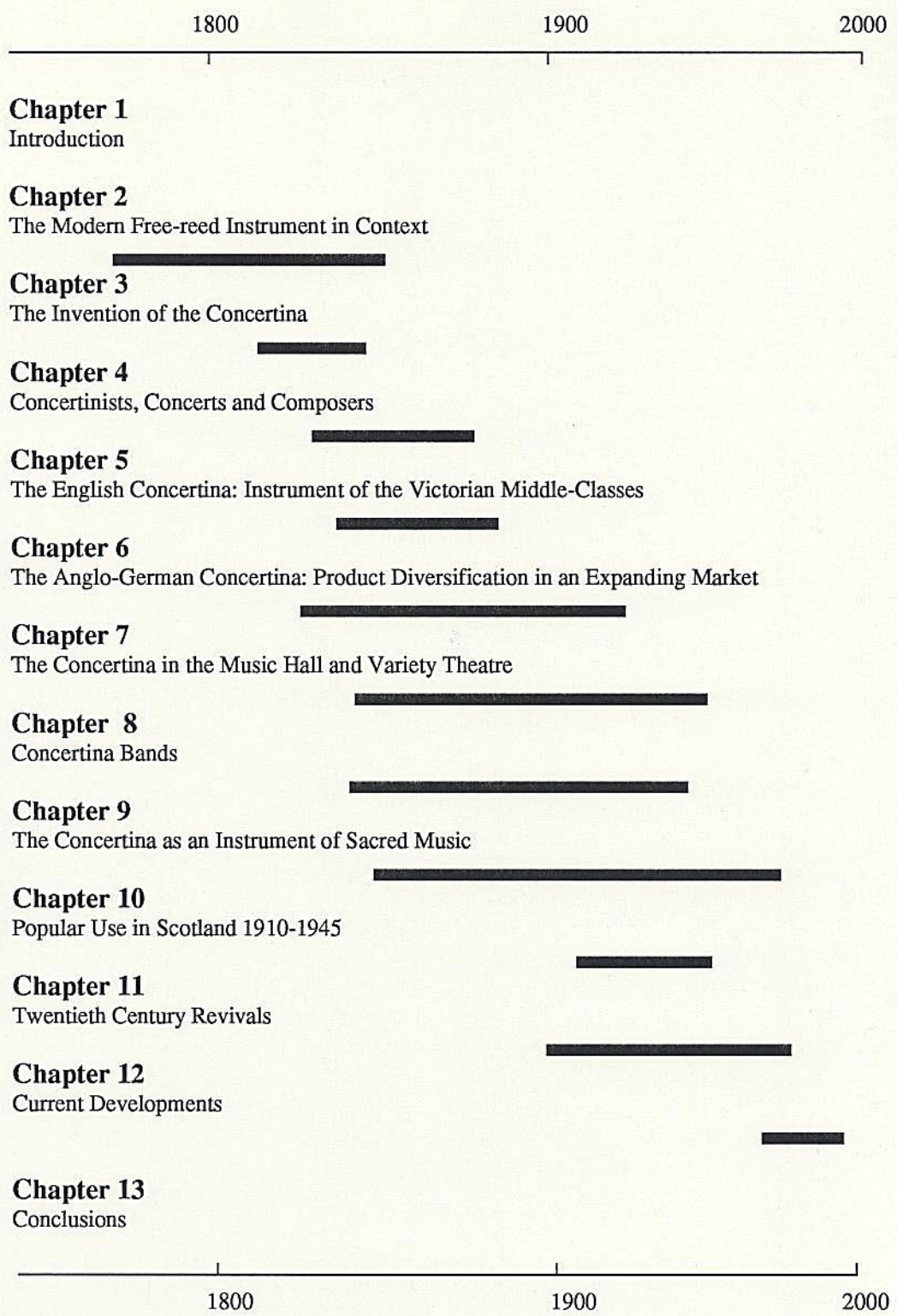


Figure 1.4 Chapter Periodisation.

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attempted to present the corpus of any individual or group or to chart the geographical distribution of the instrument, themes common in some ethnomusicological studies.

### **Scotland as a Case Study**

Scotland has been chosen for more detailed study for a number of reasons:

1. Scotland has rich, well defined and, in some areas at least, well researched musical traditions which form a good framework within which to examine the fortunes of a novel musical instrument. My working knowledge of these traditions offers practical advantages.
2. The study helps address a pressing need to examine aspects of an under-researched site of popular music during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, for in the words of Elspeth King:

The study of popular culture in Scotland is still the preserve of the antiquarian rather than the social historian, a frivolous frill seen in terms of amusements, sports and pastimes and ignored in favour of subjects with more apparent seriousness. This is as true for popular culture of the middle and upper classes as it is for that of the working classes.<sup>31</sup>

3. Despite a long history of urban settlement, research into Scottish popular music has largely ignored the towns and cities<sup>32</sup> and a pessimistic interpretation of the cultural consequences of industrialisation and urbanisation too often causes the period after 1820 to be regarded as bleak and unmusical. Much writing on Scottish music operates within a framework which privileges that which is regarded as “traditional”, in which ideas of folk authenticity are overlaid with “national” considerations.<sup>33</sup> As a consequence certain instruments (viz. the fiddle, harp and bagpipes) enjoy a status and monopoly of attention at the expense of others which are discounted as “modern”, “commercial” or “foreign”, irrespective of their degree of popularity. This is further complicated by the rejection of aspects of modern popular culture in Scotland by intellectuals and writers from the “Scotch Myths” school.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> King, Elspeth “Popular Culture in Glasgow” in R.A. Cage (ed.) The Working Class in Glasgow 1750-1914 (London, 1987), p. 142.

<sup>32</sup> Cooke, Peter The Fiddle Tradition of the Shetland Isles (Cambridge, 1986), p. iv.

<sup>33</sup> See, for example, Francis Collinson’s The Traditional and National Music of Scotland (London, 1966). The concept of musical instruments as “emblems” of national identity “similar to those of flags and national anthems” is discussed by Bruno Nettl in The Western Impact on World Music (New York, 1985), pp. 57-61.

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, Tom Nairn The Break-up of Britain (London, 1977), Colin McArthur (ed.) Scotch Reels: Scotland in Cinema and Television (London, 1982), and David McCrone “Representing Scotland: Culture and Tradition” in McCrone, David, Stephen Kendrick and Pat Straw (eds.) The Making of Scotland: Nation, Culture and Social Change (Edinburgh, 1989) pp. 161-174.

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Rather than confront its inherent complexities and contradictions, they simply dismiss popular culture as part of “that prodigious array of kitsch”<sup>35</sup> which stands in the way of the development of a modern, international and “artistic” culture.

4. The emergence of the concertina and other new musical instruments in the first half of the nineteenth century coincided with the end of a period regarded by some writers<sup>36</sup> as “The Golden Age” of Scottish traditional music, after which native music declined and there was an emerging vogue for more modern, European fashions in music and dance. The new musical instruments, particularly those of the free-reed group, are held highly responsible by some for the decline which is identified in the fortunes of indigenous musical traditions.<sup>37</sup> New instruments are often seen as direct substitutes for older ones which they elbow out of the tradition.

The explicit and implicit denigration of modern, commercially produced instruments, and those associated with emerging, popular as opposed to “traditional” or “ethnic” forms of music, is not limited to writers on Scottish music. It is not uncommon to read of the modern free-reed instruments blamed as causes, rather than symptoms, of the fundamental musical change which their appearance often accompanied. Anna Czekanowska, writing of traditional music in Poland, notes that:

There are non-folk instruments which are transforming performed music. This process, however, starting in the nineteenth century, is slow, but it develops progressively... The changes described lead to the almost total transformation, if not annihilation, of substantial patterns of Polish folk music and of its traditions of collective performance... This transformed quasi-folk music is mostly popular and in real demand.<sup>38</sup>

Lortat-Jacob<sup>39</sup> writes of the accordion having “supplanted” the traditional “launeddas” reed pipe of Sardinia and Buchner comments: “As elsewhere, the original folk instruments of the western European nations are being driven out by the accordion and concertina which are very popular in England and France”.<sup>40</sup> On the subject of

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<sup>35</sup> Nairn, The Break-up of Britain, p. 22.

<sup>36</sup> Hunter, James The Fiddle Music of Scotland (Edinburgh, 1979), pp. x, xiv, Alburger, Mary Anne Scottish Fiddlers and their Music (London, 1983), p. 154 and Johnson, David Scottish Fiddle Music in the Eighteenth Century (Edinburgh, 1984) p. 245.

<sup>37</sup> See, for example, MacInnes, Ian “Who Paid the Pipers?” Common Stock 3 (August 1986), p. 25, Mooney, Gordon A Collection of the Choicest Scots Tunes (Linlithgow, 1982), p. iii, Cannon, Roderick The Highland Bagpipe and its Music (Edinburgh, 1988), p. 21 and Emmerson, George S. Rantin’ Pipe and Tremblin’ String (London, 1977), pp. 107, 113-4.

<sup>38</sup> Czekanowska, Anna Polish Folk Music: Slavonic Heritage, Polish Tradition, Contemporary Trends (Cambridge, 1990) pp. 177-8.

<sup>39</sup> Lortat-Jacob, Bernard “Theory and ‘Bricolage’: Attilio Cannargiu’s Temperament” Yearbook of Traditional Music 14 (1982) pp. 45-54.

<sup>40</sup> Buchner, Alexander (trans. Simon Pellar) Colour Encyclopedia of Musical Instruments (London, 1980) p. 287.

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the accordion in Irish music, Seán ó Riáda expressed the view that “unfortunately this instrument - designed by foreigners for the music of peasants with neither the time, inclination nor application for a worthier instrument - is gaining vast popularity throughout the country”.<sup>41</sup>

In contrast to these “purist” views, I am of the opinion that the industrial period, during which Scotland underwent considerable change, is especially fruitful and see this study as an opportunity to challenge such arguments. The lack of academic attention to the free-reed instruments in Scotland has already been identified by Craig Beveridge.<sup>42</sup>

5. The country has a considerable geographical and cultural diversity, yet is of a convenient scale for study. Distinct traditions, combined with cultural and political integration into the wider spheres of the British Isles, offer a good opportunity for comparative study.

6. A study of the concertina in Scotland could have international relevance in the way that Wallis and Malm found an examination of the popular music industry in other small countries “a practical approach to a complex problem area”.<sup>43</sup>

### **Principal Primary Sources**

Given the interdisciplinary approach, the timespan covered and the contrasting areas of musical activity investigated, the sources employed in this study are many and varied.

Published music for the concertina exists in large quantities and from all periods, but manuscripts are rare. Both can offer insights into popular taste, repertoire, performance and style although the score itself tells us little about the popularity of a piece or about precisely how it was performed. The situation is further complicated by the fact that the concertinist can employ scores prepared for other instruments without rearrangement.

I have been able to make use of commercial gramophone recordings and off-air material from radio and television, archive film and iconographic material in museums, libraries and private collections. Music journals, trade literature, manufacturers’ and retailers’ catalogues, handbills, account books, patents, and a wide range of general ephemera have all proved useful in this project. Although research has not been systematic, published biography, memoirs, reviews, local history

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<sup>41</sup> Our Musical Heritage (Portlaoise, 1982), p. 69.

<sup>42</sup> Beveridge, Craig “Accordion and Fiddle: An Undervalued Musical Tradition” Cencrastus 25 (Spring 1987), pp. 28-29.

<sup>43</sup> Wallis, Roger and Malm, Krister Big Sounds from Small Peoples: The Music Industry in Small Countries (London, 1984), p. xiv.

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publications, newspaper features, fiction and other literary material have offered much to complement other sources. Musical instrument collections (particularly that of Stephen Chambers of Dublin) have been invaluable.

In addition to using the small amount of material held in university, private, national and regional sound archives, I have undertaken my own programme of field recording. The resulting musical and oral data is referred to throughout the text. Material has been archived according to the system employed by the School of Scottish Studies, Edinburgh University, where copies are lodged (see Appendix 1). Field work has presented a number of problems. Several of my oldest informants were infirm or had abandoned musical performance for other reasons and were therefore able to offer oral data only. Furthermore, work with those who used the concertina in a sacred setting required a different approach compared to that appropriate to performers of secular music, who shared their music and information in a different manner. In several cases, approaches to older informants met with suspicion due to earlier insensitive overtures by dealers and collectors anxious to acquire the performer's instruments which attract high prices on the international second-hand market. On more than one occasion, informants kindly offered information but wished their identity to remain anonymous. Unable to interview a number of informants living abroad, I was able to enter into fruitful correspondence. My approaches stimulated a reawakening of interest in the instrument in some performers and with others, I entered into an interactive situation, playing with musicians who often took it upon themselves to encourage and "educate" me.

I have organised a number of public seminars and informal assemblies to bring together players, manufacturers, historians and collectors of the concertina. The proceedings provided valuable oral and musical data and stimulated discussion.

"Doorstep ethnomusicology" of this type can have difficulties through the absence of the "analytical distance" expected in good work in the field. Although I belong to the same broad cultural background and class as most of my subjects, and share their race, language, geography etc..., I am an "outsider" to most of the subcultures studied. On the other hand, however, working within my own culture has offered advantages of understanding of language and social context and has led to an acceptance which might be lost to the foreign student. Although the range of musical contexts examined has required that research be "extensive", I have also taken the opportunity to pursue more "intensive" work within certain areas rich in source material. After an initial period of exploratory and wide ranging research, the restrictions of part-time study forced me to tailor my work to the problems of the project. Nevertheless, I have gathered sufficient material to form a substantial archive which will allow further study by others.

The concertina has presented its own problems in terms of recording. The swinging technique used by some players, the dual manual of the instrument and the tendency of free- reeds to produce intensity "peaks", made recording difficult. These factors,

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combined with the heavy chordal playing of some players, presented particular problems during the transcription of taped music.

Full use has been made of photography but, in retrospect, I regret that I have been unable to employ film and video as an aid to understanding musical performance.

### **Main Secondary Sources and Work Done By Others**

#### **The Concertina**

To date, there has been only limited academic research relating to the concertina. Maria Dunkel's Bandonion und Konzertina. Ein Beitrag zur Darstellung des Instrumententyps<sup>44</sup> presents a comprehensive organography of related instruments as they developed in Germany and includes much relating to the development of British concertinas. Although she makes little reference to the use of instruments, her study establishes the importance of the subject and sets standards for others to follow. A companion organography of the British concertina family is still awaited.

Neil Wayne, concertina collector and founder of a private Concertina Museum, Duffield, Derby, has undertaken considerable research into the history of the concertina. Unfortunately I have not had access to his Annotated Catalogue of the Concertina Museum Collection.<sup>45</sup> His two articles on the concertina revival of the 1970s<sup>46</sup> and a more recent paper on the concertina in the nineteenth century<sup>47</sup> are the most substantial publications in the field. His enthusiasm during the late 1960s and early 1970s was an important influence on the revival of interest in the instrument.

The American writer, Richard Carlin, carried out a programme of field recording in Great Britain during the early 1970s with the assistance of a National Endowment for the Humanities.<sup>48</sup> He subsequently published some of this material on a commercial gramophone recording The English Concertina<sup>49</sup> and in a concertina tutor of the same name.<sup>50</sup> Another modern tutor,<sup>51</sup> by Frank Butler of London, contains a brief, but valuable, introduction to the history of the instrument. The Arts Council of Great Britain aided research into players of the Mccann Duet concertina in England by John O'Mahony of Peterborough in the early 1980s but his findings have not been published. Dave Russell, in Popular Music in England 1840-1914: A Social History,

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<sup>44</sup> (Munich, 1987).

<sup>45</sup> (Belper, date unknown).

<sup>46</sup> "The Concertina Revival" in Folk News Part 1 (March 1974), pp. 4-10; Part 2 (April 1974), pp. 4-10.

<sup>47</sup> "The Wheatstone English Concertina" Galpin Society Journal XLIV (March 1991), pp. 117-149.

<sup>48</sup> Grant No. AY-2245-75.

<sup>49</sup> Folkways Records FW 8845 (1976).

<sup>50</sup> The English Concertina (New York, 1977).

<sup>51</sup> The Concertina (New York, 1976).

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refers to his researches into concertina playing in the North of England<sup>52</sup> and Carole Pegg discusses the concertina in East Sussex in her academic and published work.<sup>53</sup> Reg Hall has recently published an in-depth study of the concertina player Scan Tester of Sussex<sup>54</sup> and the tradition of Anglo- German concertina playing in Ireland has received close attention in the studies of Koning and ó hAllmhuráin.<sup>55</sup> There is no published material relating to the concertina in Scotland.

A vast amount of relevant material is contained in specialist journals concerned with the concertina. The Newsletter of the International Concertina Association,<sup>56</sup> now Concertina World, is an excellent source, as is The Concertina Newsletter (later Free Reed),<sup>57</sup> which paved the way for similar journals serving the revival in other countries: Concertina and Squeezebox<sup>58</sup> in the United States, Concertina Magazine<sup>59</sup> in Australia and Anche Libre<sup>60</sup> in France. These journals are worthy of study as primary sources on account of their evidence relating to the use and status of the concertina.

Important articles have been published in folk music publications such as Folk Music Journal, The Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Association, Musical Traditions and Traditional Music, although little of this is concerned with Scotland.

### **General Works on Musical Instruments**

The lack of academic interest in the concertina family is reflected in more general publications on musical instruments. Their limited information is too often derived from a small number of unreliable sources and writers tend to mention the concertina only in passing or while discussing other free-reed instruments. There is a good introduction to the field in James Howarth's chapter "Free-Reed Instruments" in Anthony Baines' Musical Instruments through the Ages,<sup>61</sup> but Sibyl Marcuse describes the instrument only briefly in Musical Instruments: A Comprehensive Dictionary.<sup>62</sup> Her A Survey of Musical Instruments<sup>63</sup> limits attention to the statement that "it has now joined the ranks of other forgotten free-reed aerophones".<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> (Manchester, 1987), pp. 195, 284.

<sup>53</sup> "Musical Choices and Traditional Suffolk Musicians" Cambridge Anthropology 8 (1983) pp. 17-33; Music and Society in East Suffolk (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Department of Social Anthropology, University of Cambridge) (1985) and "An Ethnomusicological Approach to Traditional Music in East Suffolk" in Ian Russell (ed.) Singer, Song and Scholar (Sheffield, 1986) pp. 55-72.

<sup>54</sup> I Never Played to many Posh Dances... Scan Tester, Sussex Musician 1887-1972 (Essex, 1990).

<sup>55</sup> See Chapter 6.0.

<sup>56</sup> London 1952- . It became Concertina World circa 1990.

<sup>57</sup> Nantwich, Cheshire 1971- c1979. It ran to 24 issues.

<sup>58</sup> (Whitestone, USA, 1982- ). Vol. 1, Nos. 1 and 2 as Concertina and Free Reed, Vol. 1, No. 3 as Concertina, Vol. 1, No. 4- as Concertina and Squeezebox.

<sup>59</sup> (Bell, Australia, 1982- ). There is a useful Concertina Magazine Index 1-10 (Bell, 1985).

<sup>60</sup> (Evry, France, dates unknown).

<sup>61</sup> (London, 1961), pp. 318-326.

<sup>62</sup> (London, 1964) p. 121.

<sup>63</sup> (New York, 1975).

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 742.



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### **Encyclopedias**

The concertina fares better in musical encyclopedias. Successive editions of the Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians gave reliable introductions to the instrument and they have been recently replaced in The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians<sup>65</sup> and The New Grove Dictionary of Musical Instruments<sup>66</sup> with contributions by G. Romani and Ivor Beynon. The Oxford Companion to Music<sup>67</sup> discusses the instrument in the chapter on the reed organ family while The New Oxford Companion to Music<sup>68</sup> is exceptional in its reflection of more recent concertina research and good descriptions of the different members of the concertina family. Encyclopedia Britannica 11,<sup>69</sup> published at a time when the concertina enjoyed great popularity, devotes considerable space to free-reed instruments under a number of headings. The decline in interest in the concertina during the middle of this century is reflected in the reduced attention in subsequent editions.

### **Studies of Other Modern Free- Reed Instruments**

The free-reed instruments have attracted more attention from historians and writers in other countries, although little of this material is published in English and too often organography predominates instrument use. Nevertheless, while most are not directly relevant to the problems of this thesis, many do contain material for comparison, extensive bibliographies and discussion which help outline the wider, international context. The pioneering work of Pierre Monichon<sup>70</sup> deserves particular attention for its comprehensive and reliable information relating to the history of the accordion and the evolution of other modern free-reed instruments. Toni Chahuras' The Accordion<sup>71</sup> was an important early history in English which influenced The Accordion Resource Manual<sup>72</sup> by A. Macarello. A more recent comprehensive introduction to the use of the accordion throughout the world is François Billard and Didier Roussin's Histoires de l'Accordéon.<sup>73</sup>

A history of free-reed instrument manufacture in Germany,<sup>74</sup> published in the mid-sixties, offers much information relating to the expansion of the industry during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Also published in German, Walter Maurer's Das Accordion,<sup>75</sup> describes and illustrates the different families of free-reed instrument, although without discussion of their use.

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<sup>65</sup> Sadie, Stanley (ed.), Vol. 4, (London, 1980) pp. 625-6.

<sup>66</sup> Sadie, Stanley (ed.), Vol 1 (London, 1984), pp. 459- 460.

<sup>67</sup> Scholes, Percy (ed.), (Oxford, 1955).

<sup>68</sup> Pilling, Julian "Concertina" Vol. 1 (Oxford, 1983), pp. 459-462.

<sup>69</sup> 11th Edition Vol. VI (Cambridge, 1910).

<sup>70</sup> Petite histoire de l'accordéon (Paris, 1958); (with E. Leipp, A. Abbott and E. Lorin) "L'Accordéon" Bulletin du Groupe d'Acoustique Musicale 59 (Paris, 1972) and L'Accordéon (Lausanne, 1985).

<sup>71</sup> (New York, 1955).

<sup>72</sup> (Ottawa, 1980).

<sup>73</sup> (Castelnau-le-Lez, France, 1991).

<sup>74</sup> Autorenkollektiv Das Akkordeon (Leipzig, 1964).

<sup>75</sup> (Vienna, 1983).

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Francesco Giannastasio, in L'Organetto. Uno strumento musicale contadino dell'era industriale,<sup>76</sup> considers the button accordion in Italy and is exceptional in its examination of the instrument in relation to native musical traditions and social context. The history and use of the accordion, and to a lesser degree, the concertina, are considered by Birgit Kjellström in her Dragspel. Om ett kärt och misskänt instrument<sup>77</sup> and in Dragspelet.<sup>78</sup> Mainly concerned with Sweden, these studies contain much regarding the status and use of the instruments. Alois Mauerhofer, in "Zur Ergologie der Steirischen Harmonika",<sup>79</sup> gives an in-depth examination of the physical properties of one free-reed instrument, while Ernst Roth's Schwyzörgeli Eine Instrumentenkunde und Wegleitung für Volksmusikliebhaber<sup>80</sup> offers excellent material relating to the organography and manufacture of the button accordion in Switzerland. The French journal Modal<sup>81</sup> has devoted much space to the accordion, including a special number which contains a useful "Bibliographie Sélective sur L'accordéon" by Phillippe Krümm.<sup>82</sup> Fermo Galbiati and Nino Ciravegna have produced an interesting picture book of free-reed instruments from a variety of countries in Le Fisarmoniche<sup>83</sup> but their historical introduction is somewhat sketchy.

The Harmonium<sup>84</sup> by Arthur Ord-Hume is a historical and organographic study which, while often weak, unstructured and offering unreliable material, contains excellent illustrations and a number of references relevant to this thesis. This book gives due attention to the British contribution to free-reed instrument manufacture.

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<sup>76</sup> (Rome, 1974).

<sup>77</sup> (Motala, 1976).

<sup>78</sup> (Stockholm, 1986).

<sup>79</sup> In Studia Instrumentorum Musicae Popularis VII (Stockholm, 1981), pp. 169-179.

<sup>80</sup> (Aarau, 1983).

<sup>81</sup> (Robeq, c1985- ).

<sup>82</sup> No. 3 (June 1986) p. 47.

<sup>83</sup> (Milan, 1987).

<sup>84</sup> (London, 1986).

# 2

## The Modern Free-Reed Instrument in Context

### Introduction

This chapter seeks to place the invention of the concertina into the contexts of contemporary musical activity and developments in musical instrument technology and use. It draws upon a wide range of sources to identify and discuss the major strands in the development of the modern free-reed and chart the first attempts at its inclusion in practical and commercial musical applications.

### Innovation and Invention in Musical Instruments during the Early Nineteenth Century

Innovation and change in certain classes of musical instruments was an important feature of musical life in Europe and North America during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This activity took place in two main areas:

1. The improvement and adaptation of the design of existing instruments, and
2. The invention of new musical devices,

and can be seen as part of the “radical situational change”<sup>85</sup> in music during the period. In terms of musical form and practice, this change was linked to new technical and stylistic demands of composers and performers, changes in orchestral and ensemble structure and new expectations of sound character, expression, dynamics, tone-colour and texture. There was also the emergence of new musical organisations and institutions, new performance opportunities,<sup>86</sup> an increase in the number and variety of concerts<sup>87</sup> and an emerging emphasis on virtuosic solo performance “in halls which presented players and instrument makers with acoustical conditions and problems of an entirely new order”.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Middleton, Studying Popular Music, p.12.

<sup>86</sup> Hyatt King, A “General Musical Conditions” in Gerald Abrahams (ed.) The Age of Beethoven (London, 1982), pp.1-25.

<sup>87</sup> Weber, William Music and the Middle Classes (London, 1975).

<sup>88</sup> Harrison, Frank and Rimmer, Joan European Musical Instruments (London, 1964), p.58.

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Musical instrument manufacture and distribution were highly implicated in “the spread of the market system through almost all musical activities”<sup>89</sup> and increased demand for instruments, from both professionals and amateurs. Furthermore, as Kassler<sup>90</sup> has shown, in the period before 1840, much inventive and commercial activity was directed towards aspects of musical education, and in particular means to popularise the learning of musical theory.

Improvement and invention was made possible by advances in science and technology. The study of acoustical phenomena was a major area of scientific investigation at a time when “many mechanical inventions were made which tended to modify existing sounds or to create new ones”<sup>91</sup> and advances in metallurgy and expanding foreign trade allowed the wider availability of suitable constructional materials. Developments in precision mechanics, the production and application of machine tools and developments in clock-making and scientific instrument manufacture also had an effect on musical instrument making and there was a lively cross-fertilisation of ideas resulting from the mobility of skilled labour, from the activities of emerging learned societies and through specialist scientific and musical publications.

The term improvement must be used with care, for “there is a debit side to all the mechanical improvements and innovations of the nineteenth century” and “to some extent all modern orchestral instruments represent a compromise in terms of sound in order to facilitate greater technical control and dexterity”.<sup>92</sup> Nevertheless, developments in instrument design tended to work towards an improved ease of performance, a full, rich tone, increased power, enhanced expressive facilities, an improved chromatic potential, a greater compass, more stable tuning and greater general reliability. During this period change was most notable within certain musical instrument families. Ehrlich<sup>93</sup> and Chanan,<sup>94</sup> for example, have shown how many small improvements by individual innovators over a long period contributed to the emergence of the modern pianoforte, so that by the mid-nineteenth century it had acquired a greater range, a more reliable, efficient mechanism and could produce a more powerful and mellow timbre controlled through pedal mechanisms. Advances in methods of manufacture, design and the availability of suitable materials, combined with new or reorganised key mechanisms, made woodwind instruments easier to sound, increased their range and improved their potential for solo performance. Similarly, industrialised manufacturing methods “and the standards of precision which went with them, brought about the liberation of brass instruments from the

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<sup>89</sup> Middleton, Studying Popular Music, p.13.

<sup>90</sup> Kassler, Jamie Croy The Science of Music in Britain 1714-1830 (New York, 1979).

<sup>91</sup> Thibault, G., Jenkins, J. and Bran-Ricci, J. Eighteenth Century Musical Instruments (London, 1973), p.XX.

<sup>92</sup> Munro, David Instruments of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, (London, 1976) p.5.

<sup>93</sup> Ehrlich, The Piano...

<sup>94</sup> Chanan, “Piano Studies...”.

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limitations of the natural harmonic series by means of the piston valve patented in 1818".<sup>95</sup> The application of industrial processes also facilitated mass production.

The invention of new musical instruments was, in part, an attempt to redress the deficiencies of existing, or already abandoned instruments, in the light of new musical circumstances. Middleton, taking a lead from Raymond Williams,<sup>96</sup> has stressed that the musical application of new technology was not merely accidental but that "technical invention is always sought in relation to existing or foreseen social practices".<sup>97</sup> It can therefore be located within the "whole nineteenth-century complex of research and innovation within 'communications'... which in turn grew directly out of, and depended upon, needs expressed in the trajectory of industrial capitalism".<sup>98</sup> Monichon suggests that musical instrument designers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century actively sought and worked for an "instrument ideal":

On comprend le secret désir de ces inventeurs à la recherche d'un instrument idéal, qui pourrait tout à la fois être mélodique, polyphonique, portatif, à sons fixes et aurait l'avantage, sur le plan de l'expression de "filer" plusieurs sons en même temps -effet que l'on ne rencontre que dans un ensemble instrumental.<sup>99</sup>

Their inventions took a number of forms, including:

1. The exploitation of new methods of sound production (glass harmonica, aeolian harps, bowed metal plates, nail violin etc.),
2. The rediscovery and employment of instruments from folk or foreign cultures (eg jew's harp, hurdy gurdy,<sup>100</sup> free-reeds, keyed bagpipes,<sup>101</sup> dulcimer),
3. The radical adaptation of existing musical instruments (saxophone, bowed piano), and
4. The creation of hybrid devices combining the characteristics and/or potential of existing instruments (eg harp lute, bowed guitars).

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<sup>95</sup> Harrison and Rimmer, European Musical Instruments, p.53.

<sup>96</sup> Williams, Raymond Television: Technology and Cultural Form (London, 1974).

<sup>97</sup> Middleton, Studying Popular Music, p.84.

<sup>98</sup> Howarth, "Free-reed Instruments...", p.219.

<sup>99</sup> Monichon, L'Accordeon, p.27.

<sup>100</sup> E.g. the vioicembalo of Abbate Gregorio Trentin (1822) and the plectroeuophon of Gama, Nantes in which strings were sounded by a revolving bow.

<sup>101</sup> Keys were added to the Northumbrian bagpipes c.1805: Cocks, W.A. and Bryan, J.F. The Northumbrian Bagpipe (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1975).

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Of the many new musical instruments claimed during the early nineteenth century, only a few survived beyond the prototype stage and, even where they met with some degree of acceptance, there was often a considerable time lag between invention and adoption. Lively competition between innovators was manifest in the large number of patents for both improvements and inventions. Important in the presentation of such devices were their chosen names which variously reflected the operating system (eg aeol-harmonica), the method of performance (eg phys-harmonica), ideal tonal qualities (eg harmonica) or the name of the creator (eg Saxhorn, Bandonion). Commonly there was a use of Greek, Latin or Italian in keeping with contemporary neo-classical taste and to give an air of respectable musical pedigree. Although the aim was to achieve individuality, there was inevitable duplication, which makes classification by name and historical discussion difficult.

Innovation was commonly the action of individuals and, although the results were occasionally radical, they tended to involve the accumulation of a large number of small, isolated events rather than a few major advances, as in the pianoforte or the “Boehm” system, which also evolved through step by step, controlled experiment. Many inventions led down “blind alleys” or were rapidly superseded by others’ work and the adoption of innovation was slow and uneven. As discussed by Buchanan,<sup>102</sup> the conception, development and application of early nineteenth-century invention was dependent on a receptive social environment which identified a need for innovation and could offer the essential resources (economic, material, skills etc..) required for exploitation. Communication of the innovation was also a crucial factor and reception relied upon key groups prepared to consider innovation seriously and sympathetically. In terms of the latter, Harrison and Rimmer<sup>103</sup> have shown how the incorporation of improvements and adoption of musical inventions was most successful if there was professional endorsement by noted public performers and where the innovator had links to high-status or influential institutions. Adoption was also dependent on the prevailing orchestral structure, musical abilities, tastes and skills in any given place.

While the improvement of existing instruments was tied to the demands of established musical institutions and practices, the adoption of new musical devices was more often found in the musical activities of new institutions or where convention and tradition were less important, such as in foreign missionary work, the evolving domestic amateur market and in popular concerts.

The developments described above relate mainly to instruments in use at the professional level or by the urban middle and upper class amateur. During the first half of the nineteenth century, the musical activities of most of the population was unaffected by such innovation and change. This was certainly the case in Scotland.

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<sup>102</sup> Buchanan, R.A. *Industrial Archaeology in Britain* (Harmondsworth, 1972), p.41.

<sup>103</sup> Harrison and Rimmer, in *European Musical Instruments*, note that the adoption of the clarinet was dependent on the presence or absence of permanent opera and its degree of progressiveness (p.43) and the influence of the national conservatories (p.55).

## **The Scottish Context**

David Johnson has described how, by 1830, classical music in Scotland had “silted up”, with its main urban centres sharing little in the innovation and change current in London, Paris or Vienna.<sup>104</sup> On the other hand, the upper- classes had largely abandoned their patronage of traditional music.

Although, by the 1840s, the processes of industrialisation and modernisation were well underway, Scotland was unevenly urbanised, with only 35% of the population living in towns of 5000 or more. Occupying an intermediate position between an undeveloped and a modern economy, much of its industrialisation was in semi-rural areas and many town dwellers had direct experience of rural life. As the century progressed, the middle classes embraced more general British attitudes and taste, although many traditional forms of popular recreation were still vigorously pursued and music remained integrated into many customs and rituals.

The Scottish musical tradition was basically monophonic; harmony (other than drones) was unusual at the folk level and there was a strong and distinct native musical idiom. Dissemination was mainly (but not exclusively) by aural means, repertory was not standardised and there was much personal, local and regional variation in music and song.

For most of the population, rural or urban, disposable income and leisure time were limited. Economic and domestic living conditions, both in terms of an environment suited to the conservation of instruments and in terms of the “cultural space” required for their use, ensured that widespread, individual ownership (in common with that of other goods) was inhibited. The range of instruments in amateur use was little different from that typical of the eighteenth century. Instruments were inexpensive, portable, often made by the musicians themselves or constructed through cottage industry on a one-off basis and paid for in kind or patronage. Materials were often local and the instruments’ scales and tuning more closely related to prevailing traditions or the personal skill and preference of the maker than any accepted standard. Mass production and importation from abroad did exist, as in the case of penny whistles and Jew’s harps, and there was a good supply of second hand instruments including obsolete models abandoned by professionals and the upper classes. Unaccompanied vocal performance had a central role but instrumental music did flourish too, serving the demands of social dance.

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<sup>104</sup> Music and Society..., London, 1982.

## **The Modern Free-Reed**

The emergence of modern free-reed instruments was stimulated by the importation of oriental free-reed mouth organs into Europe and the subsequent scientific study of the free-reed principle by acousticians.

Free-reed mouth-organs originated in East Asia and have been known in China since at least 1766-1122 B.C. They can be broadly classified into four types:

1. The grouped type, in which bamboo tubes bearing reeds are set in a circle and fitted into a cup bearing a mouthpiece.
2. The raft type, in which the bamboo tubes are arranged not in a circle but in two parallel rows with the reeds contained in a small air chest with mouthpiece part way down their length.
3. The dissociated mouth organ, in which a single bamboo tube bearing one reed sounds a number of different pitches controlled by finger holes as in the transverse flute.
4. A miscellaneous group of simple instruments, including those in which free reeds are fitted into animal horns and used to produce drones.

All employ delicate reeds which give the soft, clarinet-like tone and pleasant buzzing resonance which generated considerable interest when they were first brought to the West. The grouped and raft types are also notable on account of the manner in which the notes of the scale are arranged to facilitate the performance of chords as well as melody.<sup>105</sup>

Although there is a need for further research, to “allow for the compilation of accurate data and supporting evidence to properly trace the free-reed from Asia ...to Europe”,<sup>106</sup> it is not my intention to dwell on the matter here.<sup>107</sup> Similarly, a survey of the

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<sup>105</sup> See, for example, Terry Miller on the Khaen in his Traditional Music of the Lao (London, 1985).

<sup>106</sup> Macerollo, Accordion Resource Manual, p.6.

<sup>107</sup> Key primary references include: Praetorius, Michael “De Organographia” in Syntagmatis Musici (tomus secundis) (1618); Marin Mersenne Harmonicon Libri 5 (Paris, 1636) (trans. by Roger E. Chapman) in Harmonie Universelle. The Books on Instruments (London, 1957), p.383; Amiot, Jean Joseph Marie (Abbe Pierre Joseph Rousier ed.) Memoire sur la Musique des Chinoise (Paris, 1779) and Memoire concernant l’histoire, les sciences, les arts, les moeurs, les usages des Chinoise (Paris, 1780); de la Borde, Jean Baptiste Essai sur la Musique Ancienne et Moderne Vol. 1 (Paris, 1780) pp.365, 129, 141 and 142. Secondary sources include Sachs, Kurt The History of Musical Instruments (London, 1940), p.184; “Harmonium” EB 11 Vol. VI, p.78; “Harmonium” NGDMM Vol. 8; Muller, Mette “Around a Mouth-organ: The Khaen in the Danish Kunst Kammer” in F. Hellwig (ed.) Studia Organologia, (trans. Jean Olsen) (Tutzig, 1987), pp.389-404.



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influential work of pioneering scientists must be left to others. The publication of the findings of Kratzenstein of Copenhagen, Kirschnik of St. Petersburg and Robison of Edinburgh, and of other theoretical and descriptive material during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, helped spread an understanding of the free-reed and stimulated its application in experimental instruments.<sup>108</sup>

### **The Modern Free-Reed Applied**

#### **Free-Reed Organs**

Although a number of writers have provided lists of the many new free reed instruments which emerged in the period 1780- 1840, these are not exhaustive and “corroboration of detail becomes increasingly difficult” as historians of different nations “vie with each other as to leadership in the scheme of invention”.<sup>109</sup> As experiment and invention took place in a large number of different centres, a full survey and in- depth investigation would be complex, requiring study in several countries. Furthermore, dates associated with the appearance of a particular instrument cannot be used with precision, for they can refer to the date of first construction, its first mention in the press, the date claimed by its inventor or manufacturer, the date of patent lodged or the date of patent granted. In the absence of extant examples, the true nature of many instruments remains vague and comparison is difficult. Study is further confused by the duplication and similarity of names applied to different instruments. Again, it is not my intention to pursue this in any depth here although the following overview (illustrated by Figure 2.1) is useful in describing the context of the concertina’s invention.

While it has been suggested that free-reed organs were being made in Italy in the early eighteenth century,<sup>110</sup> the first documented examples date from the 1780s and 1790s when the free-reed was used as an additional stop in existing organs and in new portable instruments.<sup>111</sup> The early inventors did much to publicise their products, travelling widely through Northern Europe and stimulating further invention. By the early nineteenth century, free-reed instruments were being made in a number of countries.

The free-reed found a permanent place in church organs in Silesia, Saxony and Prussia and was incorporated into mechanical instruments.<sup>112</sup> During the period 1810-20, free- reed organs were being made in France<sup>113</sup> and in Germany, where invention

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<sup>108</sup> “Free-Reed Vibrator” *EB 11* Vol. XI, p.87.

<sup>109</sup> Macerollo, *Accordion Resource Manual*, p.6.

<sup>110</sup> “Reed Organ” *NGDMI* Vol. 3, p.219.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 3, p.219 and “Harmonium” *EB 11*, p.959.

<sup>112</sup> Ord-Hume, *Harmonium*, p.24.

<sup>113</sup> E.g. Grenié of Paris’ *orgue expressif* of 1812.

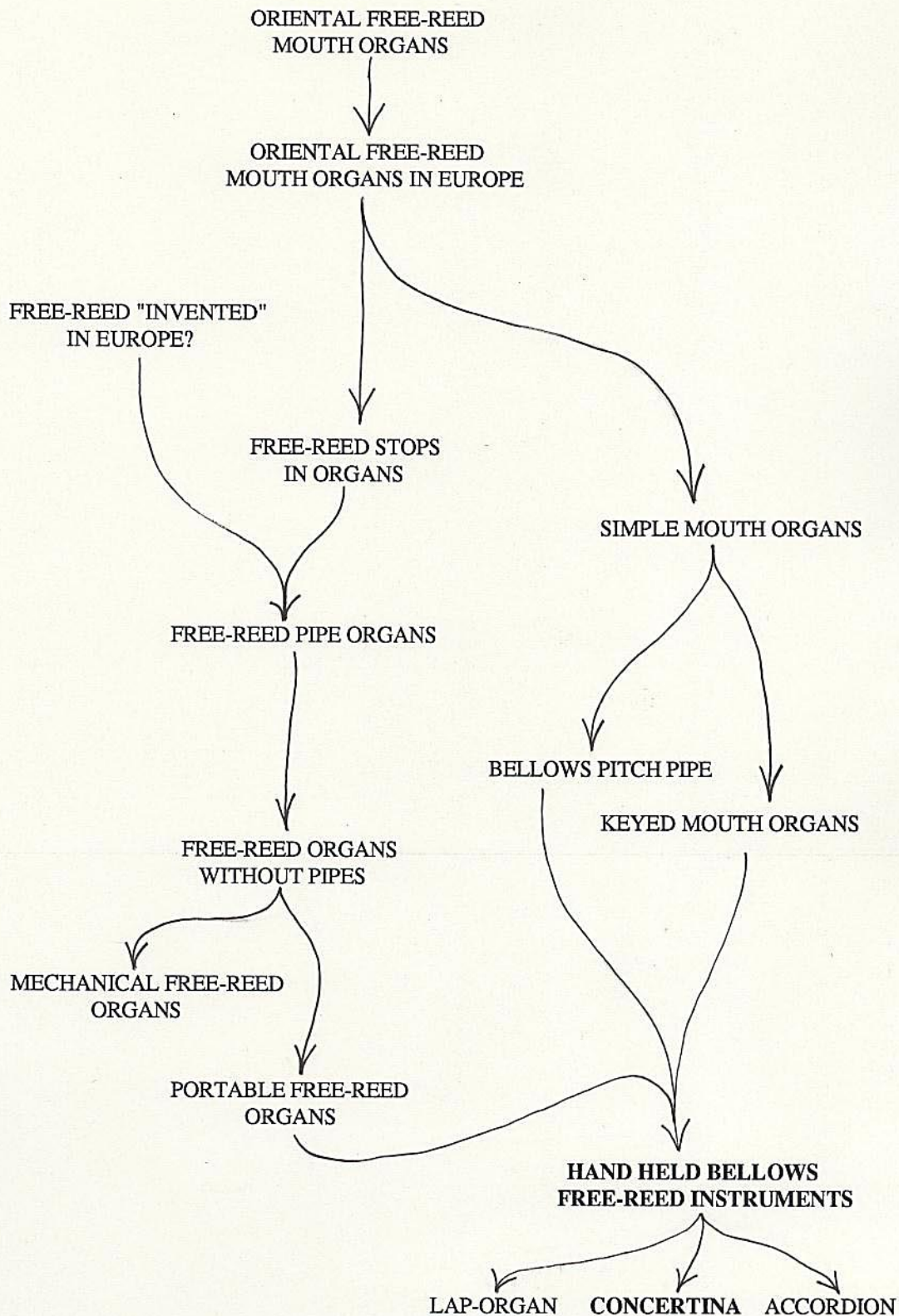


Figure 2.1 The Evolution of the Modern Free-Reed Instrument.

### *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

and innovation were supported by a cross-fertilisation between the musical instrument and the clock-making industries. By the early 1820s, the free-reed had found a place as the sole sound generator in a new wave of “pseudo organs”<sup>114</sup> in which the reeds were independent of pipe resonators. Significant inventions included the bellows-blown aoline and aolodicon of Johann David Buschmann and the phys-harmonika of the Viennese instrument builder Anton Hackel.

The United States of America also contributed to the early development of the free reed organ through a number of inventions and patents. It was there that the American organ, sounded by sucking rather than blowing the reeds, was developed.

It is known that free-reed organs were being heard in London during the mid 1820s. Edouard Schulz, aged 14 years, performed on one at Kirkman’s Rooms, Frith Street, Soho in 1826<sup>115</sup> and in April 1828 a Mr. Schulz and his sons played the free-reed aeol-harmonica in a Concertante for the instrument and two guitars. A review of the concert, which is perhaps the first recorded reaction of the musical establishment in Britain to the new free-reed instruments, is worth repeating at length:

The Concertante on the aeol-harmonica was an unfortunate business, because entirely out of its place here. This instrument, about the size of a large writing-desk, mounted on a stand, and having two octaves of keys, is, as its name implies, a wind instrument -a kind of organ, the air acting not on pipes, but on a number of extremely thin narrow metallic bars, or laminae rather, which it puts into vibration; but the exact way in which they produce sounds, the inventor does not disclose. It yields a remarkably clear, glassy, musical tone, loud enough for a private room, but too weak to penetrate much space. The performer confines himself chiefly to melody but occasionally adds what might be called a bass, and sometimes chords. He is, however, accompanied by two Spanish guitars, which are exceedingly well managed by the father and one son, the other playing the aeol-harmonica.

Much disapprobation was expressed at the introduction of this, which was considered more fit for an exhibition-room than for a concert of high order. At the conclusion some hissing was heard, and many voices exclaimed, “Shame!, Shame!” which we fear, the very ingenious performers took to themselves, though meant to be addressed only to those who invited them there. It was a great mistake,

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<sup>114</sup> Galpin, Francis, W. A Textbook of European Musical Instruments (London, 1937), pp.210-213. These included instruments by Schmidt of Pressburg, Voit of Schweinfurt, Sebastian Müller and F. Sturm of Suhl, Thuringia, Schortmann of Butteltstädt (aeolsklavier), Brunner of Warsaw (aeolmelodicon, choralion or choraleon “for hymn accompaniment”), József Dlugosz (aeolpantalon or aeolimodicon), also of Warsaw. For obvious reasons the period 1820-1840 has been termed the “Greek Period”: “Harmonium” GDMM Vol. IV, (1954), p.75.

<sup>115</sup> “Seraphine” GDMM 1890 Vol. III, p.466.

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unquestionably, to bring them forward in such a place and not the first or second that has been committed this season. By neglecting their duty they placed a clever family in a most painful situation.<sup>116</sup>

It has been suggested that the free-reed was absorbed slowly into Britain because native organ builders were exceptionally skilled in the voicing of beating reeds and perceived need for its inclusion.<sup>117</sup> Nevertheless, the 1820s saw the establishment of free-reed organ manufacture in London. A patent<sup>118</sup> of 1829 by Francis Day and August Münch covered “the adaptation of a new stop or set of substitutes for organ pipes [which] may be applied to other instruments, such, for instance, as the organised pianoforte, when constructed purposefully to receive it, or the barrel organ”.<sup>119</sup> The complexity of the reed design in this, the first patent involving the free-reed lodged in Britain, is an indication of the advanced state of understanding of such instruments in the country at the time.

Ord-Hume has covered this area in some depth,<sup>120</sup> noting the commercial production of a number of new instruments including the seraphine (a name which remained attached to English made free-reed organs throughout the nineteenth century) and Day and Münch’s aeolophon,<sup>121</sup> an instrument with a range of six octaves and fitted with three pedals -one for operating the bellows, the others for regulating the swell. According to its reviewer:

The tone of this instrument, particularly in the middle and lower parts of its compass, is among the most beautiful we have ever heard, and much superior, both in body and quality, to that of any chamber organ of equal size; added to which, the aeolophon has the inestimable advantage of never varying its pitch, or getting out of tune.

From the nature of this instrument, it will be readily conceived that its best effects are displayed in slow movements, and the sustaining and swelling long notes; but to our surprise, as well as pleasure, we found that a running passage, even of semitones, could be executed upon it, if not with all the distinctness of a Drouet or a Nicholson, with as much clearness as on any organ. As an accompaniment to the piano-forte, it will be found an admirable substitute for the flute, clarinet, oboe,

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<sup>116</sup> Harmonicon VI (1828), p.137.

<sup>117</sup> Helmholtz, On the Sensations of Tone, Appendix XIX, H7, p.711.

<sup>118</sup> A.D. 1829 No. 5802 “Specification of Francis Day and August Münch: Musical Instruments” (London, 1857).

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2.

<sup>120</sup> Ord-Hume, Harmonium, p.18.

<sup>121</sup> “The Aeolophon, a Newly Invented Instrument” in Harmonicon (1831), p.7. It was reported: “On Saturday last, the 27th., the manufacturer of the Aeolophon attended, by command, with the newly-invented instrument, at St. James Palace, and the Royal party were amused for upwards of two hours by the performance on it. The Queen seemed particularly pleased by not only its tones, but with its mechanism.” (p.14). This instrument was advertised daily at Chappell’s Bond Street premises.

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bassoon, or even violoncello; but perhaps its widest range of usefulness will be discovered in small orchestras, where a set of wind instruments is incomplete -the effects of any, or even all of which, may be supplied by one or two performers on the Aeolophon reading from the score, or even from separate parts.<sup>122</sup>

There was also the glossophone, constructed by a Dr. Dowler:

In 1829 the Society of Arts presented a medal... for an instrument constructed on this principle with keys. The bellows were placed underneath, and the springs arranged over a continued wind- chest, furnished with a valve to each note. This instrument was tolerable of its kind, but inferior to one which has been made by Mr. Day, an ingenious mathematical instrument maker, who has considerably improved the manufacture of the springs.<sup>123</sup>

By the 1830s, many improved versions were on sale, including John Green's Royal Seraphine. This was advertised as having "power sufficient for small Congregations or Domestic Parties, and yet contained in the size and form of a Lady's Work Table".<sup>124</sup> Another writer noted that its:

Somewhat similar power [to the organ], together with the compactness and portability of the instrument, has caused the seraphine to be much used in chapels and small churches. Not infrequently it occupies a place in the minister's pew and is played upon by some of his family. The practical or manual skill required in playing is probably midway between that required for the pianoforte and that required for the organ.<sup>125</sup>

Although Scotland enjoyed the fruits of this inventive period, it contributed little. In 1837, we read that in Edinburgh:

An instrument in the shape of a small square box, and intended to be a substitute for the oboe, was tried upon the present occasion; and in our judgement it will be found a useful appendage to a small orchestra, when a good oboe is not an alternative. Its quality of tone appears to

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., p.7.

<sup>123</sup> OTPMFMS (December 1839).

<sup>124</sup> Advertisement in Harmonicon (December 1830) quoted in Kassler, The Science of Music, Vol. 1, p.98.

<sup>125</sup> OTPOMFMS (October 1839). It is interesting to note the contribution of Samuel Wesley in promoting early free- reed organs in England through his role as a demonstrator. In a lecture to the Royal Institution by Charles Wheatstone in 1830, Wesley played upon Dowler's glossophone, Dietz's aerophone and Day's aeolian organ. According to Ord-Hume, Harmonium, p.144, John Green engaged him to provide weekly performances on the Royal Seraphine in his shop.

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be as perfect as the instrument it represents. Mr D. Hamilton, an organ-builder of our city, is the constructor.<sup>126</sup>

The euphonicon of Duncan Campbell was almost certainly of the free-reed type also:

About the size of a piccolo pianoforte... a wind instrument played by bellows which were worked by the right foot. It was first exhibited in the Monteith Rooms, Buchanan Street, Glasgow in March 1830, when it was played by Henry G. Nixon (1796- 1849) the organist of St. Andrew's Roman Catholic Chapel (1833-39). It was also used at the consecration of St. Mary's Roman Catholic Chapel in 1842.<sup>127</sup>

During the 1830s and 40s, France and the United States became the main centres for free-reed organ manufacture, with the harmonium and American organ as principal instruments.

Of particular interest to the historian of the concertina is the large number of small, portable organs commercially produced after 1840. These found favour with missionaries, travellers and domestic amateurs. The Great Exhibition of 1851 featured two versions of the portable harmonium, one by Muller of Paris<sup>128</sup> and another by Wheatstone and Co. which was awarded a prize medal. Smaller table or lap organs were used in the colonies and India in particular where they were absorbed into the indigenous culture.

### **Free-Reed Mouth Organs**

The early 1820s also saw the manufacture of simple free-reed mouth organs in Germany. The first instruments "were more or less toys, with reeds played only by blowing, set in resonators rather like panpipes".<sup>129</sup> Later, instruments were developed in which a number of reeds were fitted into plates to be held vertically against the player's mouth. These were made by Wheatstone and Co. of London as the aeolina and by Pinsonnat of Paris as the typotone.<sup>130</sup>

Instruments familiar today as the harmonica soon followed and a major industry developed in Germany as manufacturers diversified during a depression in the clock-making industry.

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<sup>126</sup> Report on Edinburgh St. Cecilia Society in The Musical World Vol.IV No.XLIV (13 January 1837), p.62.

<sup>127</sup> Farmer, Henry George A History of Music in Scotland (London, 1947) pp.402-3.

<sup>128</sup> Both are illustrated in handbill advertisements, possibly from the Great Exhibition, London 1851, which are held in Reid Music Library, University of Edinburgh.

<sup>129</sup> "Harmonica" NOCM Vol.1, p.812.

<sup>130</sup> Monichon, Petite Histoire..., p.42. An early method was Willis, I. The German Aeolian Tutor (London, 1830).

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Attempts to develop keyed mouth organs included the neu tschang,<sup>131</sup> the psalmelodicon,<sup>132</sup> the lyre shaped apollo-lyra or lyre enchantée and the harmoniflute by Paris of Dijon. Charles Wheatstone's patent for a keyed aeolina was the direct predecessor of his concertina, as discussed later.<sup>133</sup>

### **Hand Held Bellows Blown Free Reed Instruments**

The creation of small free-reed organs and the application of bellows to mouth organs, came together in the invention of hand held, bellows blown free-reed instruments.

In Germany, the aura or mundaoline of Christian Buschmann was adapted into the handaeoline.<sup>134</sup> With his sons, Cyril Demian of Vienna patented the accordion in 1829.<sup>135</sup> The first accordions were produced commercially in Austria and France (where they took the name accordéon) from around 1830 and comprised single manual instruments sounding a small selection of set chords.<sup>136</sup> By the mid-1830s, versions were on sale which allowed the performance on a melody keyboard and accompaniment by fixed chords on a separate manual.

The accordion underwent considerable development during the century including the evolution of different keyboard systems and a large number of technical refinements. It was not until well into the present century, however, that it would become concert instrument. The concertina, a peculiarly British cousin, appeared during the 1830s and owed its existence to Charles Wheatstone of London. In Germany, the bandoneon and konzertina were manufactured from the mid-1830s onwards.

Mention should also be made of the mélophone, invented c.1837 by Leclerc of Paris. This instrument, which was in the shape of a guitar, was “greeted in France with some enthusiasm”<sup>137</sup> and used in formal concerts and opera. Galpin also refers to the mélophone-harpe, which combined reeds with strings, and the cécilium, which was made in a violoncello shape.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Marcuse, A Survey..., p.735.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., p.736 and Galpin, A Textbook..., p.202.

<sup>133</sup> The melodica was the only modern keyed mouth organ to have met with sustained commercial success.

<sup>134</sup> Autorenkollektiv, Das Akkordeon (Leipzig, 1964) trans. Stuart Frankel as “The Free Reed: A History, Part 1” Concertina and Squeezebox 12 (1986), pp.17-18.

<sup>135</sup> Patent 1757 (Vienna, 6 May 1829). Text and illustrations in Monichon, L'Accordeon, pp.32-36. For the earliest published description in English see I.P. (John Parry) “On the Accordion and Symphonium” Harmonicon (1831), pp.56-7.

<sup>136</sup> Wayne, The Wheatstone English Concertina, p.126, suggests that Wheatstone and Co. of London were making accordions during the 1830s. There is a very early accordion tutor published by the company, Instructions for Performing on the Accordion, in the Mitchell Library, Glasgow.

<sup>137</sup> There is an example of this instrument in the private collection of Stephen Chambers, Dublin. Dunkel, Bandonion, pp.76-78, discusses the instrument with illustrations. According to “Harmonium” GDMM Vol.1 (1890), p.667, the mélophone “came out at the Paris exhibition of 1834”.

<sup>138</sup> Galpin, A Textbook..., pp.211, 212.

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### **Automatic Free-reed Instruments**

During the second half of the nineteenth century, mechanical instruments were produced on a large scale and many employed the free-reed.<sup>139</sup> These instruments can be located in a larger network of mechanical sound reproduction and communications, joining those strands of phonograph and gramophone technology being developed for commercial, educational and archival purposes, including the foundation of the modern record industry.

### **Discussion**

The concertina was just one product to emerge from the wave of research and development in musical instrument design which was part of both a fundamental musical change and advances in contemporary communications technology. Furthermore, the instrument was a relatively late arrival, the potential of the free-reed having been long recognised and extensively investigated in the search for an “instrument ideal” on account of a number of its characteristics:

1. The free-reed’s novelty made it attractive (in the short term at least) and allowed its use in instruments free from convention, particularly those used in new performance settings.
2. The reliability of its tuning allowed use by players lacking a high degree of tuning skill.
3. Its low maintenance requirements offered considerable advantages over existing instruments. It was particularly suited for instruments used in remote areas or by those unable to employ technicians.
4. The reed’s carrying power allowed use in the concert hall for both solo and ensemble work and in the open air.
5. The potential for expression in performance allowed it to meet the demands of contemporary musical taste and to compete with the limited facilities in existing keyboard instruments.
6. The free-reed’s potential for sustained sound in polyphonic instruments meant that it could compete with existing keyboard instruments while offering advantages over melodic instruments.
7. The relative ease of construction and suitability for industrial manufacture allowed for economies of scale and division of labour in manufacture which ensured low cost.

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<sup>139</sup> See Marcuse, A Survey..., p.741, Ord-Hume, Arthur W.J.G. Clockwork Music (London, 1973).



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8. The light weight ensured suitability in portable instruments for use in a wide range of settings and transportation abroad.

9. The free-reed offered an infinite variety of instrument designs and configurations to suit the musical needs of different individuals, groups and cultures.

The modern free-reed family is one of great diversity. As the nineteenth century progressed, new forms continued to develop and found favour in cultures throughout the world. Although commercial production was undertaken in a number of centres, Scotland played little part in this activity with the result that it has always been a consumer of foreign made free-reed instruments.

I now examine the circumstances surrounding the development and first production of the concertina before charting the course of its use.

# 3

## The Invention of the Concertina

### Introduction

Having outlined the concertina's place within the broad history of modern free-reed instruments, I now discuss in detail the circumstances surrounding its appearance and first commercial production. I seek to identify the intentions of its creator, the influences upon its form and the degree of innovation involved. In doing so I hope to address two popular, yet contrasting, views on the invention of the concertina.

Firstly, I wish to challenge the view commonly held by enthusiasts of the instrument, including many of my informants, that its invention was the one-off, brilliant creation of an eccentric scientific genius. The concertina was first produced some time during the 1830s by Wheatstone and Co. of London and it is clear that its conception and design were the responsibility of Charles Wheatstone. It is, however, too easy to apply a "heroic" view of invention which clouds proper understanding of innovation in the nineteenth century and over-elevates individual achievements. As the previous chapter described, the concertina was just one of a number of new free-reed products to emerge from an extended period of research and innovation in musical instrument design and manufacture. I wish to emphasise here that it was also just one part of a line of innovations by its creator, who was also an outstanding teacher, experimenter and pioneering inventor in acoustics, optics, electricity, telegraphy and other fields.

Secondly, while popular tradition privileges this single aspect of Wheatstone's work, writers on scientific matters have tended to regard his activities in the musical field as an interesting sideline, engaged in while bearing early responsibility for the family music business but abandoned on maturity for pressing work in other, more important fields. However, if one accepts the view that the scientific investigation of acoustical phenomena and their practical application in musical instruments was part of the "nexus of communication technology research"<sup>140</sup> being sought and worked for, then Wheatstone's practical interest in vibration, transmission of sound etc... are inextricably linked to his work in electricity, telegraphy and other areas.

It is not my intention to describe in detail the physical development of the instrument, this being covered in depth by Wayne.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Middleton, Studying Popular Music, p.84.

<sup>141</sup> Wayne, The Wheatstone...

## **Sir Charles Wheatstone 1802-1875**

Charles Wheatstone was born in Gloucester into a family involved in the music trade and was apprenticed in 1816 to his uncle William Wheatstone who operated a music business in London. From the information available it would appear that the company was involved in a wide cross-section of commercial musical activities. William Wheatstone is recorded as a maker and improver of the flute<sup>142</sup> whose innovative work included two new mouthpieces, one of which attracted the attention of Boehm who was “much taken with the idea”.<sup>143</sup> Langwill<sup>144</sup> notes several of his products. Although a number of surviving early nineteenth-century instruments carry the name of the company, these may have been made by others and “stencilled” or “labelled” by the shop before retail. These include examples of the classically inspired hybrid harp-lute, an instrument popular among middle and upper-class amateurs of the time, and can be taken as an indication of the company’s involvement in the expanding amateur market.<sup>145</sup> William Wheatstone’s patent for improvements to the pianoforte<sup>146</sup> is further evidence of the firm’s concern for development and innovation in musical instruments. They were also involved in music publishing.<sup>147</sup>

Working with his uncle, Charles Wheatstone gained an early knowledge of the trade and developed a wide range of musical contacts. On his uncle’s death in 1823, he took charge of the firm with his younger brother William.<sup>148</sup> He maintained and developed an interest in the acoustics of musical instruments, investigating and exhibiting practical applications based on his findings. A desire to understand the properties of sound led to the study of its mechanical transmission, visible demonstrations of vibrations, and investigation of the properties of the vibrating air column. Other work included studies of hearing and the production of vowel sounds.

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<sup>142</sup> DSB Vol. XIV, pp.289-290. See also Rycroft, David “The Wheatstones” The Galpin Society Journal XLV (1992) pp.123-130.

<sup>143</sup> Fairley, Andrew Flutes, Flautists and Makers (London, 1982), p.134. Fairley suggests that the mouthpiece was patented but I can find no record of this. This device is described and illustrated in Rockstro, R.S. A Treatise on the Construction, the History and the Practice of the Flute. (1928 edition, London, 1890), Item 534, Plate 49, pp.286-7. See also Spohr, Peter Kunsthawerke im Dienste der Musik: Transverse flutes down the centuries from all over the world (Nürnberg, 1991), p.23.

<sup>144</sup> Langwill, Lyndesay G. An Index of Musical Wind- Instrument Makers (5th. edition, Edinburgh, 1972), p.186.

<sup>145</sup> Victoria and Albert Museum, London Catalogue, No. 252-1882 (Non Keyboard Collection No. 13/9). Invented by Edward Light c1811. Wheatstone published a tutor for the instrument c1815 and added a 2nd. keyboard to form the Regency harp-lute. Sotheby Highly Important Clocks, Watches etc... Sale Catalogue (London, 4 and 5 October 1990), Item 357.

<sup>146</sup> Patent 4994, “New method for improving and augmenting the tones of piano-fortes, organs and euphons”, 29 July 1824.

<sup>147</sup> Humphries, C. and W. Smith Music Publishing in the British Isles (Oxford, 1970) pp. 329, 388, and Krummel, D.W. and Stanley Sadie Music Printing and Publishing (London, 1990) p.476.

<sup>148</sup> Kassler, The Science of Music..., p.1066.

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Despite the lack of a formal scientific training, his work became known both in England and abroad,<sup>149</sup> and, through correspondence and the emerging scientific press, he kept abreast of international developments in the field. He acknowledged a debt to Chladni<sup>150</sup> and adopted his sand pattern technique for displaying the vibrational nodes of plates.<sup>151</sup>

Around 1825 he began a fruitful association with the Royal Institution, London, which, as shown by Kassler,<sup>152</sup> held regular meetings to encourage a cross fertilisation between the scientific and musical communities of the city. In 1834, he became the first Professor of Experimental Physics at King's College, London and in 1836 he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society. He received honorary degrees from the University of Oxford in 1862 and Cambridge in 1863 and was knighted in 1868. The family firm<sup>153</sup> continued throughout the nineteenth century and after 1840 would appear to have been concerned almost solely with free-reed instruments. After the mid 1840s, Charles became less concerned with acoustics, musical applications and the running of the business, as his research in other fields was by then firmly established. Following his brother's death in 1862, he once more became directly involved in the company affairs. He died in Paris in 1875.

### **Experimental Musical Inventions**

Although it has been suggested by Bowers<sup>154</sup> and repeated by Wayne<sup>155</sup> that Wheatstone's first recorded experimental musical device was the keyed flute harmonique of 1818, there is no confirmation of Wheatstone's involvement in its invention and nothing is known of its nature or purpose.<sup>156</sup> More is known of his enchanted lyre or acoucryphon of 1821 in which an instrument in the form of an antique lyre was activated by vibrations from a remote piano transmitted to it along a wire. This project, which he exhibited at premises in Pall-Mall, London, looked

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<sup>149</sup> His first papers on sound were "New Experiments on Sound", published in (Thomson's Annals of Philosophy 6 (1823), pp.81-90, Annales de Chimie et de Physique 23 (1823), pp.313-22 and Journal für Chemie und Physic...vom Dr. J.S.C. Schweigger 42 (1824), pp.185-201.

<sup>150</sup> Kassler, The Science of Music..., p.1071.

<sup>151</sup> "On the Figures obtained by strewing Sand on Vibrating Surfaces, commonly called Acoustic Figures" Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London (1833), pp.593-634.

<sup>152</sup> Kassler, Jamie Croy "Royal Institution Lectures 1800-1831: A Preliminary Study" in Research Chronicle 19 (London, 1985), pp.1-30.

<sup>153</sup> According to Bowers, Brian Sir Charles Wheatstone F.R.S. 1802-1875 (London, 1975) it went under the following titles:1829-1837 Wheatstone & Co. music sellers and publishers.1837-1842 Wheatstone, Charles and William musical instrument makers and music sellers.1842-1847 Wheatstone, Charles and William.1847-1862 Wheatstone, William & Co.1862- Wheatstone & Co.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> "The Wheatstone English Concertina", p.119.

<sup>156</sup> There is a French instrument of this name in the Concertina Museum collection. Stephen Chambers (personal communication) has suggested that the confusion arises from a report of one of the Wheatstone/Faraday lectures at the Royal Institution which includes this instrument along with other free-reed devices created by Wheatstone in a list of devices demonstrated.

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forward to his later interest in the transmission of sound and preoccupation with the development of the telegraph. The diaphonicon of 1822 was another obscure sound transmitting device. In the kaleidophone or phonic kaleidoscope, a “new Philosophical toy for illustrating several interesting and amusing acoustical and optical phenomena”,<sup>157</sup> dating from around 1827, “the free end of a vibrating rod was illuminated to provide a visual display of vibration. Because of persistence of vision, one saw intricate curves characteristic of the vibrating nodes”.<sup>158</sup> In the terpsiphone<sup>159</sup> of circa 1828, he demonstrated the reciprocation of columns of air when acted upon by a “sonorous body” such as a tuning fork of appropriate resonant frequency. This practical understanding of acoustic phenomena found fruit in his more commercial musical inventions.

### **Practical Musical Inventions**

In keeping with the activities of the firm, Charles Wheatstone was also concerned with the production of practical musical inventions. As noted by Bowers:

It was a characteristic of Wheatstone that he was always alert to both the scientific lessons which might be learnt from everyday things and to the practical applications of scientific discoveries... He studied the transmission of sound because he was interested in the working of the instruments he made, and in particular the processes by which sound created by the vibration of the strings of a piano or violin is transmitted to the sound board. His work on the transmission of sound, and also that on the development of an artificial voice, may be regarded either as pure research or as a potentially viable commercial venture...<sup>160</sup>

His business background, combined with his scientific interests and personal qualities, brought him close to the profile of the typical inventor of the Industrial Revolution as described by Asa Briggs:

One necessary level of change... was invention. It owed little directly to science and much to empirical efforts, including rule of thumb, although interest in science inspired many of the inventors and led them to believe that nothing was impossible. Moreover, bodies like the Royal Society for the encouragement of the Arts, Manufacture and

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<sup>157</sup> According to Kassler in The Science of Music..., p.1071. See “Description of the Kaleidophone, or Phonic Kaleidoscope; etc...” in Quarterly Journal of Science, Literature and Art 2 (1827), pp.344-51 and [Poggendorf’s] Annalen der Physik 10 (1827), pp.470-80.

<sup>158</sup> “Charles Wheatstone” DSB Vol. XIV, p.289.

<sup>159</sup> “New Musical Instrument” The Mechanic’s Magazine (8 March 1828).

<sup>160</sup> Bowers, “Sir Charles Wheatstone...”, p.32.

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Commerce of Great Britain, founded in 1754, directed the spirit of inventiveness into (useful) channels. Ingenuity itself was not enough.

The success of the inventors themselves, who came from varying social backgrounds and ranged from millwrights to clergymen, required qualities other than inventiveness. Business acumen was one of those.<sup>161</sup>

An early commercial musical invention of Wheatstone's was the harmonic diagram<sup>162</sup> of around 1824, a kind of mechanical computer for explaining harmonic theory produced as a response to the rising demand for popular musical education.

By the mid 1820s, the first phase of research and experiment in the use of the free-reed had largely given way to one of commercial application to exploit identified demands. The activities of Charles Wheatstone bridged the gap between both phases but can be located most securely in the second.

The aeolina (circa 1828) was Charles Wheatstone's version of the small, resonatorless, free-reed mouth organs which were produced commercially in a number of European centres during the 1820s. Wheatstone used such instruments, and their oriental predecessors, in public lectures in February and May 1828,<sup>163</sup> part of a series delivered on his behalf by Michael Faraday. The Harmonicon of February 1829 carried a valuable description of the device noting that it:

Consists of three chords of ten notes each [i.e. triads with several doubled notes, see figure 3.1], tuned, so as to form the perfect major chords on the tonic, dominant, and subdominant keys of A. By this arrangement a complete diatonic scale, extending through three octaves, is obtained; any unmodulating melody may, therefore be performed upon it, and be accompanied by the three simple harmonies of the key. Some, more limited in compass, are constructed only of two chords and others again consist but of a single one. The latter are confined to the imitation of the modulations of the Aeolian Harp, and to the performance of bugle-horn airs. The instruments under the improved form we have described are manufactured only by Mr C. Wheatstone, by whom they were first introduced to the public at the Royal Institution in May last [1828]; but in less popular forms, similar instruments are universally popular on the Continent. Those made by Mr W., with two or three chords, are set in ivory frames, and all of

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<sup>161</sup> Briggs, Asa A Social History of England (London, 1983), pp.186-8.

<sup>162</sup> Examples of the diagram are held in the Science Museum, London. Wheatstone published An Explanation of the Harmonic Diagram Invented by C. Wheatstone the text of which is contained in Wheatstones's Scientific Papers published by the Physical Society, 1879.

<sup>163</sup> Kassler, The Science of Music pp.325-326 and The Royal Institution Lectures...

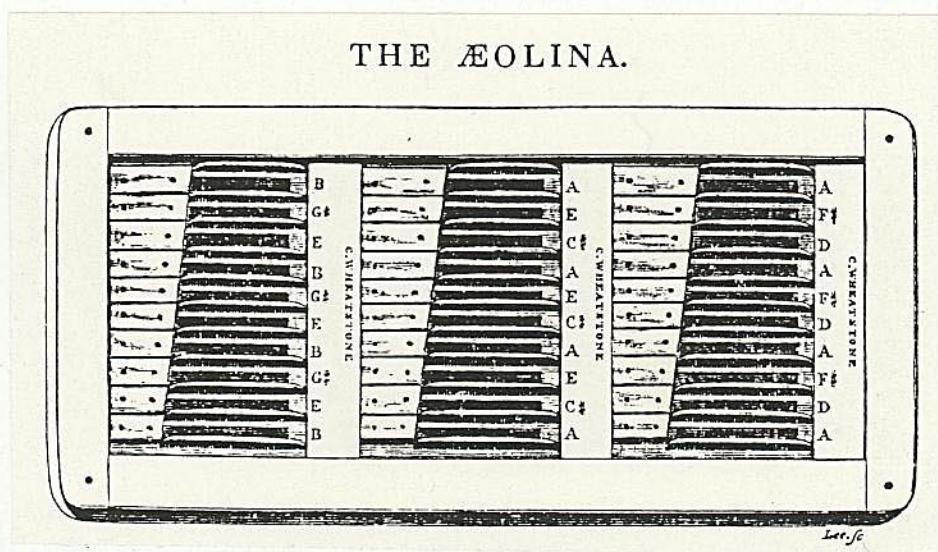


Figure 3.1 The Aeolina.

Source: Harmonicon (February 1829) p.27.

### *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

them are made of argentum, or German silver, a new metallic alloy, possessing many valuable properties.<sup>164</sup>

The same source gives details of performance technique:

To perform on the instrument, the side on which the separating ridges are placed should be pressed against the mouth, and it should be held so that the springs may be horizontal, and that the one corresponding with the gravest sound may be the lowest in position. To produce the tones a gentle breath alone is necessary; but to give then every degree of intensity, so as to render the crescendos and diminuendos perfectly effective, some management is requisite. The clearest sound is obtained when the internal cavity of the mouth is enlarged to its greatest extent by the depression of the tongue; or, which is the same thing, when the mouth is in the position proper for producing the vowel o. The lips must be sufficiently open to allow the breath to pass through one, two, or three, or more apertures, as may be required, and the free ends of the springs must be placed opposite the middle of the aperture of the lips, so that the breath may be directed against those more readily vibrating parts.<sup>165</sup>

The Harmonicon article carried an engraving of an instrument (Figure 3.1) which is similar to one of several held in the private collection of Stephen Chambers of Dublin. Other versions of the aeolina were illustrated by King Hall<sup>166</sup> (Figure 3.2) who shows five very small instruments and their ranges (including two with the reeds on two plates as in the modern harmonica), and Libin<sup>167</sup> reproduces an illustration of two performers of the instrument taken from a tutor published in 1829.<sup>168</sup> In 1839, this mouth organ was described as “a little instrument now very common in London”.<sup>169</sup> Such evidence counters the claim that “its value for artistic purposes was nil; its only interest is a historical one”.<sup>170</sup> It was, however, Charles Wheatstone’s first free-reed instrument from which his other inventions developed, including the symphonium.

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<sup>164</sup> Pp.37-38.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., p.38.

<sup>166</sup> Hall, King The Harmonium (London, n.d.), p.8.

<sup>167</sup> Libin, Lawrence The Art of Music: American Paintings and Musical Instruments 1770-1910 (New York, 1984), p.29.

<sup>168</sup> Instructions for the Aeolina or mund-harmonica, with a selection of popular melodies, expressly arranged for the instrument. (New York?, 1829). Copy in New York PublicLibrary.

<sup>169</sup> OTPOMSFMS (19 October 1839).

<sup>170</sup> “Aeolina” GDMM Vol. VI (1890), p.40.



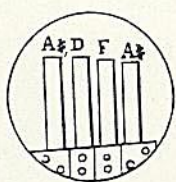
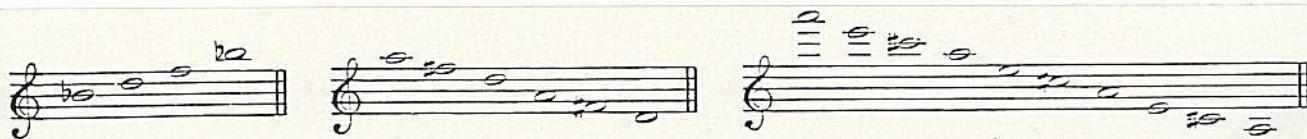


FIG. 1.

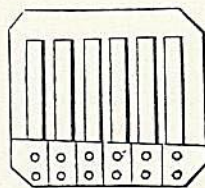


FIG. 2.

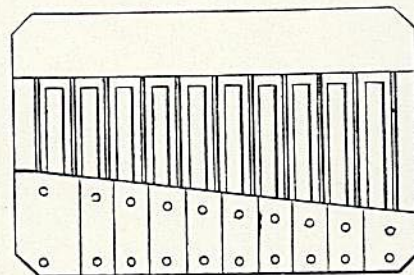


FIG. 3.

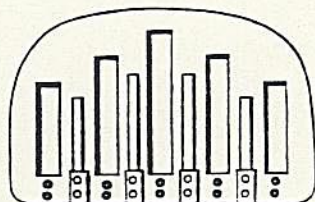
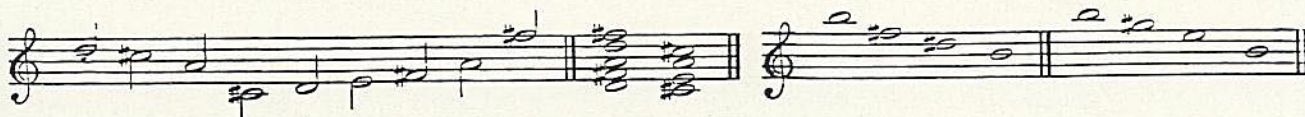


FIG. 4.

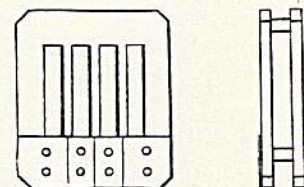


FIG. 5.

Figure 3.2 The Aeolina.

Source: Hall, King The Harmonium (London, n.d.) p.8.

## **The Symphonium and the Patent of 1829**

In 1829, a patent<sup>171</sup> was granted to Charles Wheatstone covering “A certain improvement or certain improvements in the construction of wind instruments”. The specification was restricted to instruments of the free-reed type and made reference to the existing mund-harmonica, his own aeolina and to attempts which had already been made to add finger keys to such mouth organs in the manner of existing woodwind instruments. Wheatstone’s patent proposed radically different keyboard layouts and mechanisms to improve the portability, versatility and ease of learning and performance of the free-reed mouth organ. Fundamental to his designs was the employment of two separate manuals, one on either side of a small case, each bearing parallel rows of buttons arranged in such a manner that they could be:

...progressively and alternately touched or pressed down by the first and second fingers of each hand, without the fingers interfering with the adjacent studs, and yet be placed so near together that any two adjacent studs may be simultaneously pressed down, when required, by the same finger.<sup>172</sup>

This unique fingering system involved an “ascending and descending” action rather than the “sideways” motion of existing wind instruments and was almost certainly suggested by the manuals of oriental free-reed mouth organs with which Wheatstone was fully familiar. Terry Miller has described how with the kaen of Laos:

One must bear in mind that it is difficult to play more than three neighbouring pipes in succession in a given mode since the fingers are wider than the pipes. Kaen makers and players over time created a system in which the pitches of the five modes came to be arranged in such a way that the playing of four consecutive pipes is avoidable. The kaen’s pitch arrangement might be compared to a typewriter keyboard whose order of letters makes as much sense as the kaen’s pitch arrangement but fits the fingers for a given language. Similarly, the pitch arrangement of the Kaen fits the Lao musical language.<sup>173</sup>

As shown in Figure 3.4, the left hand manual carried the notes of the lines of the treble stave while the right carried the notes found in the spaces.<sup>174</sup> This allowed convenient performance of fifths and thirds, permitted playing of scales without the need for the use of adjacent fingers and facilitated sight reading. Figure 3.3 is a view

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<sup>171</sup> Patent 5803 (19 December 1829).

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, p.8.

<sup>173</sup> Miller, Traditional Music..., pp.192-3.

<sup>174</sup> This interest in efficient keyboard layouts stayed with Wheatstone and was put to good effect in his later designs for telegraph, typewriter and other “communications” hardware. Drawing a. of Figure 3.3 shows the instrument with its fascia and mouthpiece (b.) removed. Drawing c. is a side view of the instrument.

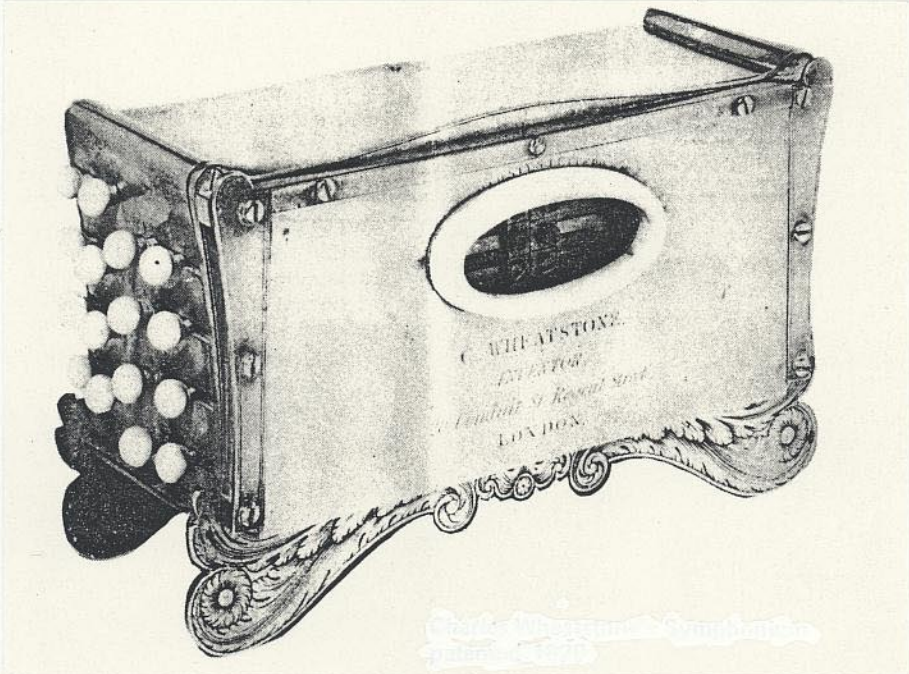


Figure 3.3 The Symphonium.



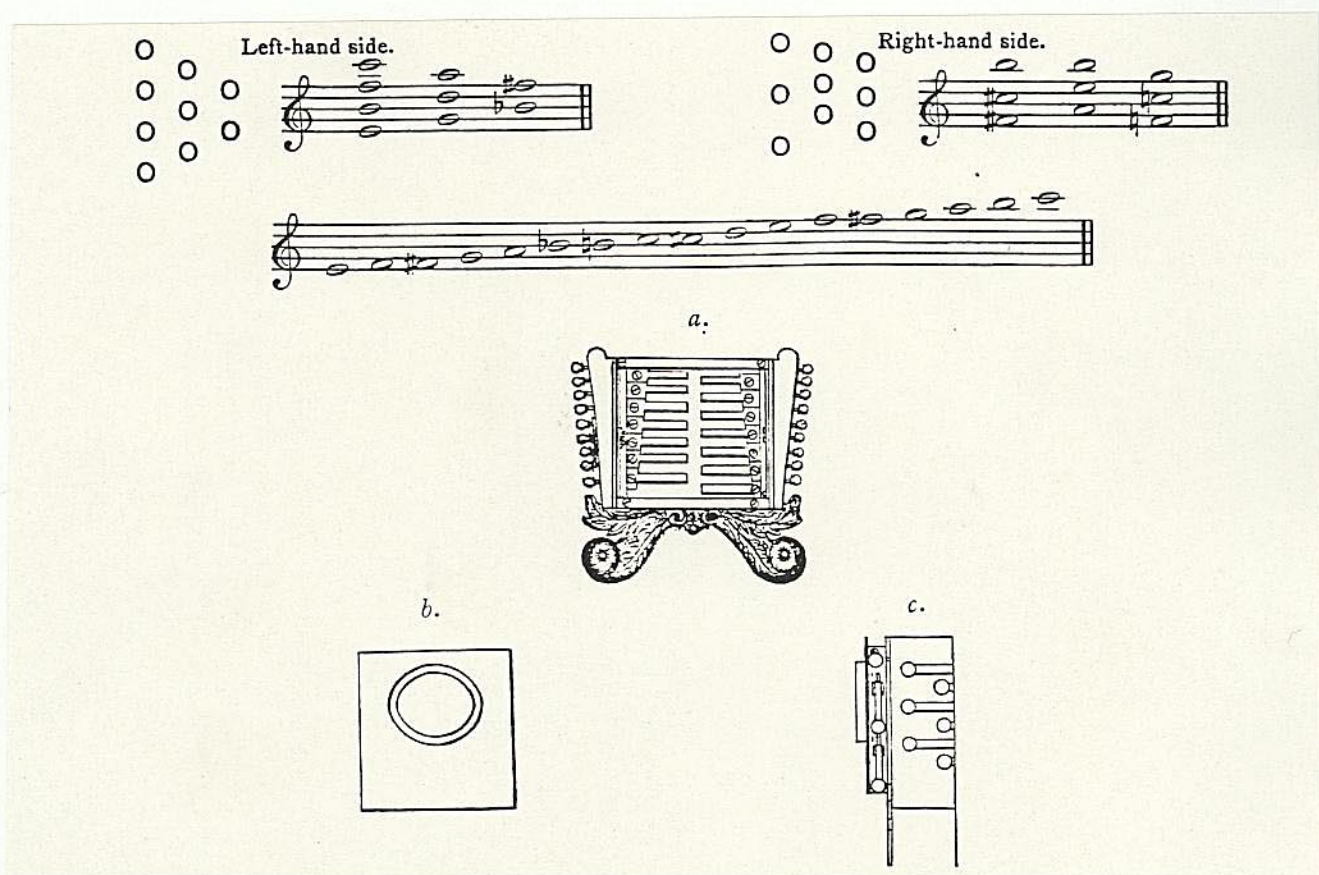


Figure 3.4 The Symphonium.  
Source: Hall, King The Harmonium (London, n.d.) p.10.

## *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

of a typical instrument. Wheatstone also claimed the introduction of additional rows of buttons on each manual to allow semitones to be added and proposed key mechanisms to alter the tone of the reeds. He offered several designs for this keyed aeola and a number were commercially produced in the late 1820s and early 1830s as the symphonium or symphonion. The patent also suggested adaptations of the Chinese sheng through the application of his novel keyboard layout and proposed the inclusion of bellows as a substitute for the mouthpiece in both the sheng and symphonium. In the latter we find the embryo of the concertina (Figure 3.5).

Wheatstone presented the symphonium at The Royal Institution<sup>175</sup> where it was used in his demonstration of the transmission of sound and, along with other free-reed instruments, in the explanation of the principle of sound production of their “intermitter” reeds. Howarth<sup>176</sup> has noted that Wheatstone attempted to employ the best alloys for his reeds and I would suggest that his working relationship with Michael Faraday, “Director of the Laboratory” of the Royal Institution and “the first to engage in systematic research concerning the preparation of alloys of steel”,<sup>177</sup> was particularly fruitful in this respect.

It is thought<sup>178</sup> that no more than 200 examples of the symphonium were made and of these around 12 survive. Instrument No. 18<sup>179</sup> has a slightly trapezoid body of nickel with scrolling feet engraved with foliage and an oval ivory mouthpiece. The reeds are of silver and there are 13 ivory-tipped buttons and 2 further externally mounted ivory-tipped accidental keys on each side. Another,<sup>180</sup> has 36 ivory-tipped buttons and contains gold reeds.<sup>181</sup> Their appearances bear out the description published in the Harmonicon in 1831:

The Symphonion is a remarkably pretty instrument, in size and shape resembling a silver snuff-box, such as may be carried in the waistcoat pocket and possessing capabilities of a very extraordinary nature.<sup>182</sup>

The writer of the article, one I.P. -probably John Parry -noted that:

A vast deal may be made of this small instrument in skillful hands; and, what adds materially to the effect is, the great command the

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<sup>175</sup> (5 March, 21 May 1830).

<sup>176</sup> Free-reed Instruments, p.321.

<sup>177</sup> Hadfield, Robert A. Faraday and his Metallurgical Researches (London, 1931), p.v.

<sup>178</sup> Wayne, The Wheatstone English Concertina, p.123.

<sup>179</sup> Stephen Chambers Collection, Dublin. Illustrated in Galpin Society, Made for Music (London, 1987) item 164. A similar instrument is illustrated in Howarth, Free-reed Instruments, p.322. there is an excellent photograph of a symphonium in Sotheby's catalogue, Early Musical Instruments, (London, 18 November 1993).

<sup>180</sup> Stephen Chambers Collection, Dublin. Illustrated in Galpin Society, Made for Music, item 165.

<sup>181</sup> Galpin, A Textbook..., p.202, described the gold reed version as the symphonium regal. There is a symphonium in the British Museum, ref. L. 1884.10.

<sup>182</sup> P.56.

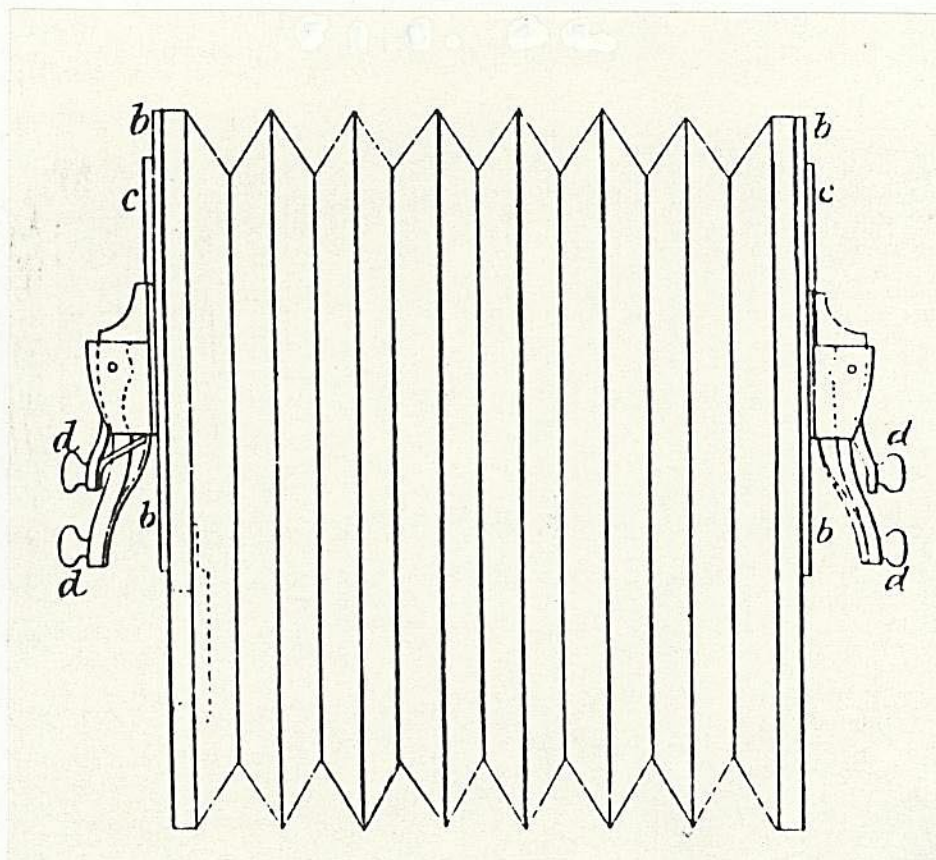


Figure 3.5 The Symphonium with Bellows Applied.  
Source: Patent 5803 (London, 19 December 1829).

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performer has over the tone by management of the breathing. When blown strong, the tone is very powerful, and of course, the reverse when blowing gently; the crescendo and diminuendo are beautiful, and such airs as “The Last Rose of Summer” and “Had I a Heart for Falsehood Framed” or, indeed, any expressive melodies, are exceedingly effective on the Symphonion while the facilities it affords to execution are very great.<sup>183</sup>

The writer confirms the suitability of the instrument for bourgeois amateur use in his own “The Symphonion Waltz”<sup>184</sup> (Example 3.1), written with harp or pianoforte accompaniment. The piece takes full advantage of the instrument’s potential for playing 3rds and 5ths. A passage from another piece<sup>185</sup> (Example 3.2) also demonstrates the instrument’s potential for chordal use. The instrument was still being manufactured and played in the 1850s, as evidenced by published music for the instrument (by Parry) and Wheatstone’s inclusion of a sophisticated model in the Great Exhibition of 1851.<sup>186</sup>

The symphonium was intricate and obviously expensive to construct. It is an example of the same high standards of craftsmanship and materials found in all Charles Wheatstone’s musical and scientific creations. This concern for precision has led to the suggestion that Wheatstone was “essentially a designer of delicate apparatus”<sup>187</sup> and Kassler’s view that:

While both the Aeolina and Symphonium were playable musical instruments, they were invented by Wheatstone for acoustical purposes. Indeed, like Sir William Hescel, Wheatstone used music as a means for studying and experimenting with non musical phenomena.<sup>188</sup>

Such writers, concerned mainly with the inventor’s scientific background, have tended to ignore his commercial interests gained through the family firm and expressed in his patents. Evidence of Wheatstone’s commercial motivation is his production of the bellows blown concertina as the novelty of the symphonium wore off and it was abandoned through being “extremely fatiguing to the performer”.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid., p.57.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., pp.56-7.

<sup>185</sup> Hall, The Harmonium, p.10.

<sup>186</sup> MacTaggart and MacTaggart, Musical Instruments in the 1851 Exhibition (Welwyn, 1986) p.60.

<sup>187</sup> W.H. Pearce quoted in Bowers, Sir Charles Wheatstone..., p.216.

<sup>188</sup> The Science of Music..., p.1066.

<sup>189</sup> Hall, The Harmonium, p.11.



# THE SYMPHONION WALTZ,

(VIDE PAGE 56)

Composed by I. P.

THE HIGHEST NOTES OF THE UPPER LINE MAY ALSO BE PLAYED ON THE FLUTE OR VIOLIN; OR, (A FEW NOTES BEING PLAYED AN OCTAVE ABOVE;) BY A THIRD HAND ON THE PIANO-FORTE.

SYMPHONION.

HARP OR PIANO.

The musical score is arranged in three systems. The first system features a single staff for the SYMPHONION in 3/8 time, starting with a piano (*p*) dynamic and marked with triplets. The HARP OR PIANO part consists of two staves (treble and bass clef) with a pianissimo (*pp*) dynamic. The second system continues the SYMPHONION part with a crescendo (*Cres.*) leading to a forte (*f*) dynamic. The HARP OR PIANO part also features a crescendo and a forte dynamic. The third system shows the SYMPHONION part with accents and a forte dynamic, while the HARP OR PIANO part continues with a piano (*p*) dynamic.

Example 3.1 Symphonion Waltz (extract).  
Source: Composed I.P.. Published in Harmonicon (1831) pp.56-7.





Example 3.2     Music for Symphonium.  
Source: King Hall, The Harmonium, p.8.

## **The First Concertinas**

Little is known of how and precisely when the principles contained in the patent of 1829 and manifest in the symphonium were first transformed into instruments of the bellows blown concertina type, although it is highly likely that Wheatstone would have created a prototype at the time of his patent. There is an early concertina by Wheatstone in the Stephen Chambers Collection, Dublin, which is thought to be an experimental version and clearly shows, in its constructional details and materials, the influence of Demian's early accordion. This would suggest that Wheatstone, who was certainly aware of the accordion very early in the 1830s,<sup>190</sup> was attempting to apply his unique keyboard layout and mechanism to form an "improved" version in response to a favourable public reaction to his symphonium and the high level of interest in the continental instrument. As a music dealer, Wheatstone understood the potential market for such instruments and probably imported and sold accordéons for it is known that his company published one of the first tutors for the instrument in English.<sup>191</sup>

It has also been suggested that Wheatstone's instrument was a direct response to the German konzertina, a small square instrument with buttons on two separate manuals, first produced by Uhlig of Chemnitz, in 1834<sup>192</sup> or 1835,<sup>193</sup> although Dunkel<sup>194</sup>, the leading authority on the history of the German instruments, is silent on this.

The early instruments in the Stephen Chambers Collection and Concertina Museum display the polygonal shape (hexagonal in the case of the earliest instruments but octagonal and twelve sided later) which came to typify all concertinas of English design and manufacture, as opposed to the square and rectangular cased instruments of Germany. Howarth<sup>195</sup> suggests that the basically circular shape was adopted as it lent itself to cutting out the reed chambers on the lathe before the advent of suitable milling machines and it allowed an economic layout of reeds to suit the unique keyboard layout. Hexagonal and octagonal shapes were also commonly employed in furniture, clocks and architecture of the 1820s and 1830s when "the Grecian Style was supreme throughout the Western world"<sup>196</sup> and was "not only fashionable, it was the very criterion of architectural distinction".<sup>197</sup> Polygonal shapes from Hellenistic

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<sup>190</sup> It is recorded in A Catalogue of the Library of the London Institution (London, 1835), p.xxxviii, that the accordéon and seraphine were presented in 1829 at a lecture on "some newly-invented musical instruments" delivered at the London Institution by George Birkbeck. The accordéon was also used by Wheatstone and Faraday in their lectures of 1830. According to Wayne in The Wheatstone English Concertina..., p.132, the concertina was also demonstrated but I can find no evidence of this.

<sup>191</sup> Mitchell Library, Glasgow. In, The Wheatstone English Concertina..., p.126, Wayne suggests that Wheatstone and Co. made simple accordions during the 1830s.

<sup>192</sup> Pilling, "Concertina", p.459.

<sup>193</sup> Robson, 'Pat' "Mainly about Concertinas" Folk Dance and Song 45, No.2 (1983), p.4.

<sup>194</sup> Bandonion und Konzertina...

<sup>195</sup> Free-Reed Instruments, p.322.

<sup>196</sup> Crook, Mordaunt The Greek Style (London, 1968), p.13.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., p.17.

## *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

culture were held as ideal forms. Buildings such as the “The Tower of the Winds” or “Horlogium of Andronikos Cyrrestes” at Athens (an appropriate model for the creation of a new wind instrument) were widely known in the early nineteenth century through engravings and were copied in buildings throughout England. Mention has already been made of the fashion for Greek names for new free-reed instruments and it should be noted that Wheatstone had already employed the name of Æolus, legendary keeper of the winds,<sup>198</sup> for his aeolina. Wheatstone and Co. also used the name later in their aeola, a high quality concertina model. Polygonal shapes were also revered by design theorists of the Italian Renaissance<sup>199</sup> who, in recognising the relation of such shapes to the circle, saw them as reflecting harmony and perfection and as an effective means of bringing together many separate parts (as in a town or building plan) into a whole. As demonstrated by Wittkower,<sup>200</sup> such writers and designers were also greatly concerned with the employment of musical proportion in the “harmonic” arrangement of physical forms and it is unlikely that these associations would have escaped the designer of goods for the upper class market operating under the neo-classical fashion of the first decades of the nineteenth century. Wheatstone, as acoustician, would no doubt be aware of “form follows function” philosophy which holds that efficient musical devices generally have a rational, functional form. It would follow that in the concertina, where the musical mechanism is hidden, he would have sought to dress the instrument in a manner which would still suggest this aesthetic. Another possible precedent for the instrument’s shape is the soundbox of the Chinese bowed erhu, which is typically constructed of dark rosewood in a hexagonal form remarkably similar to that of the early concertina. The decorative fretwork patterns on the reverse of the instrument suggest further influence. Wheatstone was, of course, familiar with a full range of oriental musical instruments and had employed them in his lectures on acoustics.<sup>201</sup>

The precise date of first manufacture of the concertina has not been established. Many writers regard the date of the 1829 patent as that of the first appearance of the concertina. George Case, concertina virtuoso and maker, who knew Wheatstone, stated that it appeared “about 1830; but it required both time and experience before the Instrument attained its present perfection”<sup>202</sup> while G.T. Pietra gave “around 1833”.<sup>203</sup> Chahuras records that “it was submitted to public notice in June 1833 and on December 27 of that year was renamed the ‘concertina’”.<sup>204</sup> There is evidence in

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<sup>198</sup> Son of Poseidon and ruler of the seven Æolian isles. Zeus gave him control of the winds. In The Odyssey, Odysseus is entertained by Æolus who gave him a bag of winds. The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary (3rd edition, London, 1968) gives: “Æolo- combining form of Æolus, the impersonator of the wind”

<sup>199</sup> See, for example, Alberti’s De re Aedificatoria (1550), Serlio’s Quinto libro d’architettura (1660), Leonardo’s church plans etc..

<sup>200</sup> Wittkower, Rudolf Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism (1973 edition, London, 1949).

<sup>201</sup> Kassler, The Science of Music, p.326.

<sup>202</sup> Case, George Instructions for Performing on the Concertina (London, c.1848), p.3.

<sup>203</sup> Pietra, Guiseppe T. The National Tutor for the English Concertina (London, n.d.), p.1.

<sup>204</sup> Chahuras, The Accordion, p.10.

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the Wheatstone company records<sup>205</sup> to confirm that the instrument was in commercial production around 1836. According to the Oxford English Dictionary<sup>206</sup> the first recorded use of the name was in 1837 when performances by the infant prodigy Regondi were described in the May and June editions of The Musical World.<sup>207</sup> Although there is no evidence as to how the name “concertina” became attached to the instrument, it has been suggested<sup>208</sup> that this happened accidentally as the German konzertina became known in Britain during the 1830s and it has also been noted that Debian of Paris had constructed a reed organ termed concertina around 1838.<sup>209</sup> Whether invented consciously by Wheatstone or adopted through the acceptance of popular usage, the name offers further evidence of the intentions of the creator of the instrument. The use of the root “concert” suggests that it could be used in public performance at a time when, as Weber has shown,<sup>210</sup> public concerts were coming into their own. It could also suggest that the instrument was suitable for “concerted” music. The pseudo-Italian of the suffix “ina” gives it an air of fashionable respectability. The use of the feminine, diminutive form suggests accessibility to would-be learners, those unfamiliar with the instrument or women and children.

The first commercially produced concertinas were sober in appearance, again suggesting their anticipated role as “serious” and “respectable” instruments which would not appear out of place alongside other instruments in the upper class amateur’s home or in the orchestra or concert hall. The similarity of their finish to Wheatstone’s scientific devices suggests that the same craftsmen were involved and reflects the high quality output of a number of trades whose skills would have been readily available at the time. The “ebonising”, polishing and fretwork of the wooden ends, for example, is also commonly found in clock and furniture making of the period, similar fretwork is found on the fascias of contemporary square pianos<sup>211</sup> and the leather work and tooling of the bellows reflects the contemporary bookbinder’s craft.

It is likely that Wheatstone enjoyed the cooperation and encouragement of active musicians in developing his first concertinas. As already discussed, musicians and composers had already endorsed his symphonium. The influence of the Royal Institution brought musicians and scientists together and Wheatstone must have had a wide circle of musical acquaintances through the activities of the family musical instrument and publishing company and as a result of his other musical inventions.

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<sup>205</sup> Wayne, The Wheatstone English Concertina, p.123, Butler, Frank “The First Ten Years of Wheatstone Concertinas” NICA 321 (November 1984).

<sup>206</sup> Shorter Oxford English Dictionary (3rd. edition, 1968).

<sup>207</sup> The Musical World V, No.LXI (12 May 1837), pp.135- 6, V, No.LXVI (2 June 1837), p.190.

<sup>208</sup> Pilling, “Concertina”, p.459. He also suggests (p.461) that it was originally termed melophone, as in the early French free-reed instrument, but I have no evidence of this. Early continental reports of the concertina virtuoso Regondi, however, describe him as a player of the guitar and melophone.

<sup>209</sup> Dunkel, Bandonion und Konzertina, p.17.

<sup>210</sup> Weber, Music and the Middle Class.

<sup>211</sup> For example, Item W33-1964, The Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

## **The Patent of 1844**

In a short period, any connections with the design of the early continental accordions were lost, Wayne having identified over 30 refinements carried out by Wheatstone by the mid 1840s.<sup>212</sup> In a patent of 8 February 1844,<sup>213</sup> Charles Wheatstone sought to protect “Improvements on the Concertina and other Musical Instruments, in which the sounds are produced by the action of wind on Vibrating Springs”. This covered eight main areas, viz:

1. Various forms of arrangement of the fingerboard buttons.
2. The separation of the bellows into two chambers by a partition as a means of obtaining a different degree of loudness for each side of the instrument.
3. Means of arranging and constructing the reed cavities to enhance the “portable dimensions” of bass concertinas.
4. A mode of valve construction whereby the same reed could be made to sound in both directions of bellows movement.
5. The mode of varying the pitch of a concertina through apparatus capable of altering the effective length of the reed spring.
6. Designs for the key lever mechanism of the concertina.
7. An additional means of setting the tongue into vibration in addition to wind.
8. The modification of the tone of the free-reed through the use of tuned resonating chambers.

Of these, the first was to prove forward looking, for in only a short time a variety of alternatives to the “English” concertina system were being promoted. These included duet forms which divide the range of the instrument into bass (left hand) and treble (right hand) manuals. The 1844 patent can be seen as the consolidation of ideas generated through almost a decade of concertina production and an awareness of the potential demand for the instrument in the face of competition from other products and manufacturers. Wayne has summed up the patent’s importance thus:

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<sup>212</sup> “The Wheatstone English Concertina”, pp.145-7.

<sup>213</sup> Patent 10,041.

## *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

In it, the standard 48-key, 6 sided instrument, with its double action reed pan, lever and pallet action, fret pattern and of course the so-called “English” fingering system is described and claimed as patented and this elegant design henceforth becomes the one copied by almost all of the 20 or so other makers who were later to make “English” system concertinas of varying quality throughout the rest of the nineteenth century. Though these copyist manufacturers invariably labelled their instruments “improved” or “newly improved”, their claims have little substance since the original Wheatstone design was nearly always followed exactly.<sup>214</sup>

The patent also marked a reduction in the involvement of Charles Wheatstone in the family music business until his brother’s death in 1862.

During the 1830s and 1840s the level of production was small and was largely dependent on “outwork” by which individual craftsmen, working at home, would each undertake a separate part of the production process before central assembly and checking at the factory. As Butler has described,<sup>215</sup> this led to a number of workers gaining considerable skills and knowledge of the manufacture of the instrument and soon separating from Wheatstone to form their own manufacturing concerns in direct competition.

### **Discussion**

In conclusion, it can be said that Wheatstone drew upon his scientific and business interests and backgrounds in developing instruments of both an experimental and commercial nature. In the case of the latter, his inventiveness found expression in the application of ingenious improvements and adaptations to existing devices. Although his major contribution to the design and manufacture of musical devices was in the area of free-reed instruments, he was only one of a large number working in the field. As a relative late-comer, he took advantage of almost 50 years of research, development, evolution and market testing by others.

The foregoing has also shown how an instrument thought to be “invented” was, in fact, the result of evolutionary development. Having established the research and development behind the conception, design and first production of the concertina, I now consider the principal areas of first adoption and use of the instrument.

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<sup>214</sup> “The Wheatstone English Concertina”, p.124.

<sup>215</sup> Butler, The Concertina.

# Concertinists, Concerts and Composers

## Introduction

One early manifestation of the emerging modern music industry was a massive expansion in the number and variety of public concerts within the major urban centres of Europe during the first decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>216</sup> Drawing upon the patronage of a rapidly expanding middle-class, they offered new opportunities for professional musicians, composers and arrangers. Satisfying the demand for concerts involved the creation of a new infrastructure of performance settings, institutions and methods of promotion.

In early nineteenth-century Britain, as opportunities for stable employment increased due to the expansion of concert activity, the small elite of professional musicians expanded, with a large number coming from abroad. The growing market allowed musicians to develop specialisms although increasing competition demanded that a certain degree of diversification was required to ensure survival. Virtuosi came into their own and stimulated demand for showy, technical proficiency in performance. The family remained a major source of musical education for professionals but became less important as new conservatories were established and aspiring musicians took advantage of European academies which acted “as a proving ground and licensing agent for the new ‘profession’ of music”.<sup>217</sup> There were also the beginnings of a modern musical press and improved communications led to the expansion of touring opportunities.

This atmosphere of expansion and change accommodated a general receptiveness to new musical inventions and I have already suggested that the concertina was developed in recognition of such new opportunities, this being manifest in the instrument’s name. The first commercial production of the concertina in the late 1830s attracted the interest of a number of professional musicians and composers who explored its musical potential, developed its repertory, established teaching methods and generally publicised the instrument.

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<sup>216</sup> Weber, Music and the Middle Class.

<sup>217</sup> Ehrlich, Cyril The Music Profession..., p.84. For example, the Leipzig Conservatory established in 1843.

## **The First Professionals**

Among the first to adopt the concertina for use in public performance was a small number of London based professional musicians. With the exception of one, a foreign virtuoso, these were from family backgrounds well integrated into the musical establishment of the time. They were all young men and their adoption of the instrument can be seen as something progressive or avant-garde, as well as an attempt to exploit the potential of a new opening in an increasingly competitive market. It might also be regarded as a conscious adoption of a British contribution to the international wave of musical instrument invention.

I now consider several of the principal early concertinists active during the 1840s, followed by a discussion of the first professionals in Scotland.

### **Giulio Regondi**

It is impossible to overlook the claims of Signor Giulio Regondi, who is incomparably the finest performer on this instrument, and who, indeed, first made it known to the public as thoroughly effective for the expression of both melody and harmony. To me the playing of Regondi realises the perfect mastery of an accomplished performer where the idea of mechanism is lost sight of, and the instrument, like a well trained voice, becomes entirely subservient to the present feelings and inspirations of the musician.<sup>218</sup>

The early sales records of Wheatstone and Co.<sup>219</sup> show that Giulio Regondi (1822-1872) bought a concertina in May 1837 and another in January 1840. Regondi was born in Genoa of Italian and German parents. Brought up in Lyon and already a child prodigy with a considerable European reputation as a performer on the guitar,<sup>220</sup> he settled with his family in London in 1831. Regondi would appear to have had an interest in new instruments, as he already played upon an eight-string Italian guitar and may have played the French free-reed instrument, the melophone.<sup>221</sup> Wheatstone and Co. would have welcomed the endorsement of their product by such a public figure and may even have worked with the musician in its development, for Edward Chidley, cousin of Charles Wheatstone and later head of the firm, recalled how

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<sup>218</sup> The Orchestra (29 April 1865).

<sup>219</sup> Butler, Frank "The First Ten Years of Wheatstone Concertinas" NICA 321 (November 1984).

<sup>220</sup> There is a considerable literature relating to Regondi as a guitarist yet his life as a concertina player is still awaiting definitive study.

<sup>221</sup> The reference to the French instrument comes from continental reviews and may be the reviewer's mistaken description of the concertina, for Regondi gave the same recital in England on concertina only a few months later: Note by Douglas Rogers in NICA (May 1988), pp.2-3.



## *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

Regondi received his first lessons on the concertina from Miss Wheatstone using a then “incomplete” instrument.<sup>222</sup>

It is known that Regondi was giving public performances on the concertina in the same year that he purchased his first instrument.<sup>223</sup> He was clearly part of that area of music making in the early nineteenth century in which the cult of the child prodigy went hand in hand with adulation of showy virtuosity. To one already regarded as an outstanding player of the guitar, the concertina offered a degree of exclusiveness in a competitive and dynamic market. Even though evidence from surviving instruments would suggest that the early concertina was limited technically, it did offer possibilities for novel effects and brilliant performance. What expressive qualities it lacked, in comparison to other virtuoso instruments of the time, it made up for in modernity. A Manchester newspaper recorded a performance around 1850:

Giulio Regondi quite took the audience by surprise. That an instrument hitherto regarded as a mere toy (the invention, however, of a philosophical mind) should be capable of giving full expression to a brilliant violin concerto of De Beriot’s was more than even musicians who had heard this talented youth would admit. The close of every movement was greeted with a round of applause in which many members of the orchestra joined.

The performer has much of the “fanatico per la musica” in his appearance and manifestly enthusiastic love for his art; he hangs over and hugs his little box of harmony as if it were a casket of jewels or an only and dearly loved child.

His trills and shakes seem to vibrate through his frame and occasionally he rises on tiptoe or flings up his instrument as he coaxes out its highest notes, looking the while like one rapt and unconscious of all outward objects, in the absorbing enjoyment of the sweet sounds that flow from his musical instrument.<sup>224</sup>

Regondi did much to publicise the instrument abroad, touring with the ‘cello virtuoso Joseph Lidel to Vienna, Prague and Leipzig in the early 1840s and with Madame Dulcken in 1846. On both occasions “the effect which he got out of so compromising

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<sup>222</sup> Ward, John C. “The English Concertina and Bowing Valves”, letter to the editor, *Musical Opinion and Music Trade Review* (1 December 1894), pp.152-3.

<sup>223</sup> The *Musical World* (12 May and 2 June 1837) records early London concerts. In these it is highly likely that he played on a single-action instrument with enharmonic tuning using different keys for C sharp and D flat and for G sharp and A flat. *Free Reed* 24 makes reference to the impression made on Thomas Atwood and John Hullah at a performance at Old Haymarket Opera House, London.

<sup>224</sup> Unspecified newspaper, quoted in Bone, Philip J. *The Guitar and Mandoline* (London, 1954), p.294.

### *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

an instrument astonished the German critics”.<sup>225</sup> He became a friend of Bernhard Molique (1802-1869) who wrote for him a “Concerto for Concertina and Orchestra” (op 46) in 1853<sup>226</sup> which was “played with great success at the concert of the Music Society of London on 20 April 1864”.<sup>227</sup>

Regondi himself composed much for the English concertina including two concertos (D and Eb), around 12 chamber works such as the “Introduction and Variations on an Austrian Air” (Op 1 1855) and several solo pieces for concertina of which “Les Oiseaux” (Op 12) was particularly popular. Regondi published two tutors for the concertina, his “New Method for the Concertina” and “Rudimenti del Concertinista or, a complete series of elementary or progressive exercises”. These were particularly rigorous and reflect both his own skill and an attempt to establish the concertina as a serious concert instrument.

The tutors advise students to play in a simple, unadorned style, to avoid heavy block chords and with a crisp action. Taxing for even the most skilled of concertinists, his exercises, like his compositions and arrangements, were never as popular as those of his contemporaries discussed below.

#### **Richard Manning Blagrove (1826-1895)**

Probably the most accomplished native concertina player this country has ever had.<sup>228</sup>

Blagrove studied viola at the Royal Academy of Music (he later became Professor of the instrument there) and became a principal in city orchestras and music festivals. Wheatstone’s records<sup>229</sup> show that he had a concertina on hire in January 1839. He made his first appearance as a concertinist at the age of sixteen at the Hanover Square Rooms, London and two years later formed his Concertina Quartette with Sedgwick, Case and Regondi.<sup>230</sup> As a performer, he was often partnered with his brother Henry (1811-1872), one of the leading violinists in London and the major force in establishing regular chamber concerts in London during the 1830s.<sup>231</sup> The

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<sup>225</sup> “Regondi” *GDMM* Vol. IV (1890) p.97.

<sup>226</sup> Molique also wrote chamber pieces for concertina including “Flying Leaves”, six pieces for concertina with piano-forte accompaniment.

<sup>227</sup> Others who wrote for Regondi included John Barnett, who composed “Spare Moments, 3 Sketches for Concertina” in 1859 (Brown, James D. and Stratton, Stephen *British Musical Biography* (Birmingham, 1897), p.28) and Julius Benedict, who gave him “Andantino for Concertina and Pianoforte” in 1858. Bone, *The Guitar...*, p.296, states that Regondi also inspired concertina compositions from Sterndale Bennet and William Wallace.

<sup>228</sup> Scholes, *The Mirror of Music*, Vol.2, p.813.

<sup>229</sup> Butler, “The First Ten Years...”.

<sup>230</sup> The quartet gave its first performance at the Hanover Square Rooms, London on 12 June 1844.

<sup>231</sup> “Blagrove, Richard” *NGDMM* Vol. 2, p.772. Henry composed a duo for concertina and violin with orchestra for performance at the Queen’s Concert Rooms, Hanover Square, London conducted by

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development of concertina ensembles was encouraged by Wheatstone and Co. who produced instruments to match the range of other instruments. The company exhibited a number of sizes of concertina at the 1851 Exhibition, London:

Treble Concertina for the performance of violin, flute, hautboy, or concertina music singly or in concert.

Concert Tenor Concertina for vocal tenor, tenor violin or wooden wind instrument music singly or in concert.

Concert Bass Concertina for violoncello or bassoon music, singly or in concert.<sup>232</sup>

Blagrove composed fantasias<sup>233</sup> and other pieces for concertina and piano-forte (his wife was an established pianist) and it was for him that G.A. MacFarren wrote his “Quintet for Concertina and Strings”<sup>234</sup> and two “Romances for Concertina and Piano-forte”. He published a Concertina Journal for amateurs from 1851.

### **George Case**<sup>235</sup>

A noted violinist, Case acquired an English concertina in 1841<sup>236</sup> and became associated with Regondi and Blagrove. He was a regular performer in theatre and opera orchestras including the Royal Italian Opera, Covent Garden<sup>237</sup> and the Theatre Royal. We read of his involvement in 1851 in a concert “principally remarkable for Rossini’s Overture to William Tell, arranged for 12 Concertinas specially for the occasion -the violoncello solo on the Bass Concertina”.<sup>238</sup>

Case became well known as a teacher and his methods<sup>239</sup> for the instrument remained in print well into this century. He also produced a large number of pieces and arrangements for the concertina. His commitment to the concertina was reinforced by

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Molique.

<sup>232</sup> MacTaggart and MacTaggart, Musical Instruments..., p.60.

<sup>233</sup> E.g. “Fantasia on National Airs”, “Fantasia on Scotch Airs”, “Recollections of Scotland”, etc...

<sup>234</sup> MacFarren, G.A. Memories: An Autobiography (London, 1905), p.108.

<sup>235</sup> Dates unknown.

<sup>236</sup> Butler, “The First Ten Years...”.

<sup>237</sup> It was probably Case who was referred to in the note that the concertina “has now achieved high dignity as an orchestral instrument, having been introduced into the renowned band of M. Costa, at the Royal Italian Opera, Covent Garden”: Davidson’s Tutor For the Concertina (London, c1860), p.3.

<sup>238</sup> Musical Times (May 1851), quoted in Scholes, The Mirror..., p.813.

<sup>239</sup> Instructions for Performing on the Concertina (1848), Exercises for Wheatstone’s Patent Concertina (1855), Baritone Concertina: A New Method (1857), The Concertina Miscellany (1855), etc..

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his acquisition of the concertina manufacture and retail business of Joseph Scates some time before 1851.<sup>240</sup>

Example 4.1, the “Grand Exercise” from his Instructions,<sup>241</sup> was designed to cover most of the techniques introduced in the tutor including:

Chords,  
Playing in octaves, thirds, sixths etc.,  
Playing low and extremely high notes,  
Triplets,  
Arpeggios,  
The shake, turn etc...,  
The reiteration of notes,  
Slurring,  
Staccato playing,  
Dynamics and  
Dramatic cadenza.

The piece can be taken as an indication of the aspirations of those musicians promoting the concertina and as an illustration of the level of virtuosity already achieved by leading players. On expression he suggested:

The pupil is strongly recommended to listen attentively to the different styles of performers and singers; especially those of the Italian School; much may be learned in this way, by improving the taste on correct models.<sup>242</sup>

#### **Alfred B. Sedgwick**<sup>243</sup>

The record of a concert given by Sedgwick and Mr Scates (either the above mentioned concertina manufacturer or one Edwin Scates) notes how it was “composed principally of music executed by professors of the concertina, as many as seventeen taking part in it! The audience were much pleased with their entertainment”.<sup>244</sup>

Sedgwick published a large number of arrangements of popular concert and operatic pieces.<sup>245</sup> He issued a tutor for the concertina<sup>246</sup> and published for other free-reed and

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<sup>240</sup> MacTaggart and MacTaggart, Musical Instruments..., p.47.

<sup>241</sup> Pp.55-57.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., p.46.

<sup>243</sup> Dates unknown.

<sup>244</sup> Musical Times (April 1849).

<sup>245</sup> E.g. “Airs from the Oratorios, arranged for Two Concertinas” (1854) and “Divertissement on airs from Rossini’s Opera Semiramide, arranged for Two Treble Concertinas” (1854).

INTRODUCING MOST OF THE EFFECTS AND PASSAGES BEFORE EXPLAINED.

*Allegro.*

EXERCISE .91.

*ff*

*Cantabile Sostenuto.*

*Dim.*

*Rall.*

(Case's Instructions.)

Example 4.1 Grand Exercise.  
 Source: Composed by George Case. Published in  
Instructions... (London, c.1848) pp.55-57.



56 *Adagio.*

pp

*Dol.*

*Dim.*

*Cres.*

*Tempo Primo.*

No turns to these Shakes.

{ Case 3 Instructions. }



57

Maestoso.

*ff*

17 22 23

The musical score is written for piano and consists of ten staves. The top staff shows a melodic line with a fermata over measures 22 and 23. The subsequent staves feature a dense, multi-voiced texture with many notes beamed together, creating a complex harmonic structure. The tempo marking 'Maestoso.' is placed above the second staff, and the dynamic marking 'ff' is placed below it. The score concludes with a final cadence on the tenth staff.

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brass instruments both in England and America.<sup>247</sup> It has been suggested that the player was responsible for the introduction of the English concertina into North America.<sup>248</sup>

### **John Charles Ward (b.1835)**

Ward was a well known London organist and composer who studied concertina under George Case. At the age of eleven he “played a concertina solo at Crosby Hall, 2 December 1846 and for a long time was known as a virtuoso on the instrument”.<sup>249</sup> He composed much for the English concertina including:

Trio for Aeola, Cello and Bass Concertinas.  
Minuet for Three Concertinas.  
Polonaise in Eb for Piano and Concertina.  
Nocturne.  
Medley Overture.  
Menuet and Trio for Two Treble Concertinas, with an Accompaniment  
-ad libitum -for Bass Concertina, Violoncello or Pianoforte (Op. 19).

### **Frederick William Bridgman (1829-1892), an early Concertinist in Scotland**

David Johnson has described<sup>250</sup> how, by the 1830s, classical music in Scotland had “silted up”, with the main urban centres slow to share in the innovation and change current in London. Within this restricted market, opportunities for professional musicians were limited and there was a dependence on incoming performers and teachers from England and the continent. Although distant from the initial wave of interest in the concertina, Edinburgh did gain an early champion of the instrument.

Bridgman was born in London but moved to Edinburgh at an early age to live with his grandfather, John Eager. Eager was originally from Norwich but settled in Edinburgh around 1836 and was for a time music teacher to the Royal children in Scotland. He is recorded as:

Violinist, pianist, composer and teacher. Almost entirely self taught in music, one of the first to introduce Logier’s system [“of the Science of

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<sup>246</sup> Complete Instructions for the Concertina (London, 1854).

<sup>247</sup> E.g. Complete Method for the German Concertina (Boston, 1865).

<sup>248</sup> Carlin, Richard in Free Reed 19 (August 1974), p.20.

<sup>249</sup> Brown, James D., and Stratton, Stephen British Musical Biography (Birmingham, 1897), p.432.

<sup>250</sup> Johnson, Music and Society...



### *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

Music, Harmony and Composition”] into Scotland, where he established himself... having probably held the appointment of corporation organist at Great Yarmouth. He was famed as a good teacher of the pianoforte, but excelled as a player upon the violin, although able to perform on nearly every instrument. As a violinist his services were much in request in the Edinburgh and Glasgow orchestras of his day. He published a concerto for pianoforte also a collection of songs.<sup>251</sup>

Of his two daughters, one married Joseph Lowe, a noted composer of Scots fiddle music and son of leading fiddler and dancing master John Lowe,<sup>252</sup> while the other married a pianist, Mr Bridgman, father of the concertinist under consideration here. Bridgman made his debut as a child prodigy concertinist and pianist at the age of 11 in 1840. By the end of the decade, he was a regular performer in the city<sup>253</sup> and attracting the attention of the local press. Concerning a concert for the benefit of the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary in June 1849 a critic wrote:

We liked Mr Bridgman very much; his performances on the concertina and also on the pianoforte, were really very good, and he also made himself very useful in accompanying some of the others; he improves every time we see him.<sup>254</sup> In July 1850, a new entertainment venture, The Lyceum Concert Rooms, opened in Edinburgh with a company of musicians, singers, a comic and an acrobat in a show which can be seen more as early music-hall than formal concert. The programme came in for considerable criticism: The stock pieces seem to be some half-dozen Scotch ballads, as many Italian airs (for the most part Donizetti's), three or four comic songs, about as many botched glees, which are cobbled up anyhow to suit the resources of the company, and a few concertina airs.<sup>255</sup>

However, the concertinist's contribution was given kinder attention:

Mr Bridgman's merits have been so often chronicled in more influential quarters that we may be excused dwelling on them at present.<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> Brown, *British Musical Biography*, p.133.

<sup>252</sup> Like Eager, John Lowe was a “teacher to the Royal Family”: Alburger *Scottish Fiddlers...*, p.227.

<sup>253</sup> Shortly after the opening of the Adelphi Theatre in Edinburgh, in 1848, it was announced that “by consent of his grandfather and teacher, Mr Eager, Mr Bridgman will perform a fantasia on the pianoforte and concertina”: Dibdin, Charles *The Annals of the Edinburgh Stage* (Edinburgh, 1888), p.403. In April 1849, it was noted that “Master Bridgman played a solo on the concertina.”: *ibid.*, p.408.

<sup>254</sup> *The Dramatic Omnibus* (9 June 1849).

<sup>255</sup> *The Playgoer* (3 August 1850).

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*

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Another concert in the same month drew the praise:

As for Mr Bridgman's performance, it is a fruitless task to "paint the lily" or "add another hue to the rainbow" and further commendation from me to his already deserved celebrity would be equally superfluous.<sup>257</sup>

and some weeks later:

Mr Bridgman's name should feature in equally large letters for no one will deny that the latter is unequalled, if not unsurpassed, in his line.<sup>258</sup>

Later that year it was announced that:

Our talented townsman Mr Bridgman makes his appeal on Tuesday evening next, when we hope he will be rewarded by an overflowing house. We know of no artist more worthy of a bumper.<sup>259</sup>

After a few days he was described as "a really deserving and clever musician".<sup>260</sup> These references obviously relate to a "benefit concert", a typical device of the period designed to procure substantial extra income for individual musicians. The reason for this is clear when we note that the following year he entered the Conservatory at Leipzig where he "distinguished himself there also by his talent and aptitude. In particular, he won the favourable notice of his master Moscheles, the great pianist and intimate friend of Mendelssohn".<sup>261</sup>

On his return to Britain in 1854, he worked as a soloist and conductor in London and the provinces. He managed the Metropolitan English Opera Company for some years and is recorded as a "professor" in Jersey<sup>262</sup> before his return to Edinburgh in 1862. In Scotland, he was a successful teacher and held a post at the Edinburgh Ladies College. As a pianist and accompanist:

He had few equals, and his services in that capacity were always in request. Indeed it is authoritatively stated that as pianist with concert companies he had visited nearly every town of any importance in Scotland, and had accompanied nearly every artist of repute... For more than a dozen years he acted as accompanist at the Glasgow City

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<sup>257</sup> Ibid. (20 July 1850).

<sup>258</sup> Ibid. (10 August 1850).

<sup>259</sup> Ibid. (17 August 1850).

<sup>260</sup> Ibid. (24 August 1850).

<sup>261</sup> *The Scotsman* (29 December 1892).

<sup>262</sup> *Musical Directory, Register and Almanac* (London, 1862).

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Hall Saturday evening Concerts and until this year he was the accompanist at Messrs Paterson's Orchestral Concerts.<sup>263</sup>

Bridgman was organist at the United Presbyterian Church, College Street, Edinburgh and performed at innumerable functions. These included the 1885 Annual Concert and Assembly of the Ancient Order of Foresters held in Edinburgh at which "beside acting as pianist and conductor, [he] played a selection of Scottish airs on the concertina".<sup>264</sup> This latter piece was mentioned in his obituary which noted that he "made a speciality of a Scottish selection on that instrument [concertina] which was always popular".<sup>265</sup> Bridgman published little and then only for piano.<sup>266</sup>

### **The Concertina in Concert after 1860**

Collectively, these musicians placed the concertina on the British musical map. In addition to their public performances, they helped popularise the instrument and establish an infrastructure for publication, teaching, manufacture and retail. These pioneering concertinists continued to employ the instrument through the remainder of their playing careers but as the century progressed, they became isolated advocates of the instrument within an increasingly rationalised yet "not exactly homogeneous musical field but one clearly dominated by a bourgeois synthesis".<sup>267</sup>

By the third quarter of the nineteenth-century, the circumstances which made middle and upper-class concert audiences receptive to the concertina had waned. The musical avant-garde of the previous decades had been either marginalised or assimilated and many concert goers had "showed fatigue at hearing so much of the flashy virtuosic style".<sup>268</sup> Weber has suggested that, during the 1830s and 1840s, there developed an increasing distinction between the content and audiences associated with "popular" and "classical" or "historic" concerts.<sup>269</sup> The latter, he claims, attracted a new "high status" audience comprising the aristocracy and the upper middle-class (anxious for social and cultural respectability) which had a preference for the Viennese classics and continental chamber music. The construction of the "classical" repertory involved a substantial historical component which was linked to work in the emerging field of historical musicology. The concertina and its repertory were obviously excluded from this process. By the middle of the nineteenth century,

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<sup>263</sup> *The Scotsman* (29 December 1892). *Reeves Musical Directory* (London, 1880) lists him as a teacher and performer of piano, organ, harmonium and concertina at 13 Findhorn Place, Edinburgh.

<sup>264</sup> *The Scotsman* (4 April 1885).

<sup>265</sup> *The Scotsman* (29 December 1892).

<sup>266</sup> I have only been able to trace a setting of the song "Clap Clap Handies" published in London in 1876 (British Library Catalogue of Printed Music) and "Old Edinburgh Quadrilles on Scots Airs for Piano" referred to in *Kohler's Musical Star* (May 1903), p.48.

<sup>267</sup> Middleton, *Studying Popular Music*, p.11.

<sup>268</sup> Weber, *Music of the Middle Class*, p.51.

<sup>269</sup> Temperley, Nicholas (ed.) *The Romantic Age 1800- 1914* (London, 1981), p.16, criticises this view as simplistic.

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the modern orchestra had been established according to an international consensus. This would accommodate novel or exotic instruments for occasional colour and texture only, and most commonly in the music of theatre and opera. The concertina was therefore banished to that “shifting fringe of the orchestra which never is, and never has been quite stable, and is always open to extension at the whim of any composer, however insignificant”.<sup>270</sup> Hector Berlioz had discussed the possibilities of the concertina in the orchestra<sup>271</sup> but only a few nineteenth century composers responded to his recognition of its potential.<sup>272</sup>

Furthermore, the “deficiencies” in existing orchestral instruments, which the emergence of the concertina had exploited, had been addressed through the development of new key mechanisms and technological advance. Modifications were made to the concertina and new keyboard forms<sup>273</sup> were invented in an attempt to regain lost ground. James Alsepti of Exeter, for example, patented<sup>274</sup> the introduction of “relief” or “bowing valves” (Figure 4.1) in an attempt to improve “accent, expression and phrasing”.<sup>275</sup> This led to considerable discussion in the musical press which debated the merits of the concertina as a substitute for other instruments, as opposed to an instrument in its own right.<sup>276</sup> Concertinas were made with raised and/or metal ends to influence their tone and both Wheatstone and Co. and their rivals Lachenal introduced high quality “professional” models.<sup>277</sup> As the acceptance of the free-reed as the basis of “serious” musical instruments receded, manufacturers and scientists experimented with radically different reed shapes and forms.<sup>278</sup> The most

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<sup>270</sup> Carse, Adam *The History of Orchestration* (London, 1925).

<sup>271</sup> (Mary Cowden Clark, trans.) *Modern Instrumentation and Orchestration* (1864) (1882 ed., London) pp.235-238. In his discussion he also protested against the concertina being manufactured in meantone temperament rather than equal temperament. Only the first concertinas were tuned enharmonically this being a reflection of the scientific rather than musical bias in Wheatstone’s background.

<sup>272</sup> Tchaikovsky, for example, included four concertinas in the score of his “Orchestral Suite No. 2” (Op. 53) of 1883: *TOCTM* (10th. edition, London, 1970), p.865. This may have been a reflection of the popularity of the English concertina in Russia in the late nineteenth century (referred to by Carlin, *The English Concertina*, p.53) which generated a number of virtuosi including Piroshnikov and Matusewitch who played “primarily arrangements of Bach, Vivaldi, Mozart and other classical composers”. The modern editions of the Tchaikovsky score I have examined specify accordions rather than concertinas and may have originally required German rather than English concertinas. On a recent performing visit to China my English concertina was referred to as “Russian” by Chinese musicians.

<sup>273</sup> A survey of all new concertina keyboard layouts during this period has been published serially in *Concertina Magazine*.

<sup>274</sup> 8290 *Improvements in Concertinas Provisional Specification* (8 July 1885).

<sup>275</sup> Alsepti, Signor *The Modern English Concertina Method* (London, c.1885), p.2.

<sup>276</sup> Letters to the editor, *Musical Opinion and Music Trade Review* (1 October 1894), p.18; (1 November 1894), pp.85-86; (1 December 1894), pp.152-153; (1 January 1895), pp.221-222; (1 February 1895), pp.228, 291; (1 March 1895), pp.359-360. The catalogue of the British Library records a short publication by “an Amateur” entitled *The Concertina as a Substitute for the Violin* (London, 1886), item 7808.a.25(c), but unfortunately the copy is missing.

<sup>277</sup> The “Aeola” and “Edeophone”. See Wayne, “The Wheatstone...”, pp.140-141.

<sup>278</sup> E.g. the “bifurcation reeds” of the Scottish inventor John Baillie-Hamilton (b.1837) illustrated by Ord-Hume, *Harmonium*, p.71.







### *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

adventurous was perhaps that developed by Charles Wheatstone and John Stroh<sup>279</sup> in their mechanism for achieving a glissando effect from free reeds. More lasting were the various new forms of “duet” concertina with their separate treble and bass manuals. These instruments found favour in emerging forms of popular music and are discussed in later chapters.

The composers and arrangers of the 1840s and 50s had exhausted many of the musical possibilities of the concertina and its growing association with the amateur musician, particularly by way of the “down-market” Anglo- German concertina discussed in Chapter 6.0, had drastic consequences for the status of the instrument. Although abandoned by the upper middle class, the English concertina secured a place in the new popular and miscellaneous concerts (whether of an “improving” or proto-music hall type) aimed at a new ticket buying audience which reached well into the ranks of the working class.

Concertina enthusiasts continued to arrange special concerts devoted to the instrument. Richard Blagrove was, on occasion, called to play for the Royal Family,<sup>280</sup> he appeared at the Saturday Concerts at the Crystal Palace with the orchestra of August Manns and continued to give performances, with his wife acting as pianist, during the 1860s and 70s.<sup>281</sup> He was particularly active as the organiser of recitals and large scale performances featuring the English concertina and did much to maintain interest in the instrument as it fell from favour during the 1870s. It was noted that:

Mr Richard Blagrove’s ten Concertina Concerts, the last of which took place at Langham Hall on the 6th alt., have proved in the highest degree interesting, not only as demonstrating much of what these instruments are capable in the hands of experienced performers, but as really good specimens of artistic and well-considered entertainments of chamber music. Concertos, Septetts, Quartettes, Trios and Duets by the best composers have been constantly included in the programmes, and these, executed by thoroughly competent players upon treble, tenor, bass, and double bass concertinas, have been received by most appreciative audiences with a satisfaction which may be accepted by the concert-giver as the best reward for his unwearied exertions in the cause. We understand that the concerts will be recommenced in January next; and that if at the conclusion of the series there should be any surplus, a Concertina fund will be formed for the purpose of getting works written expressly for these instruments.<sup>282</sup>

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<sup>279</sup> Patent No. 39 (1872). Discussed in Pilling, Julian “Wheatstone and Stroh’s Patent” *Free Reed* 14 (August 1973). This built upon Wheatstone’s earlier work in the area, exhibited at the 1851 Exhibition, London.

<sup>280</sup> *Musical Times* (January 1869).

<sup>281</sup> *The Musical Times* (January 1869, June 1873).

<sup>282</sup> *Musical Times* (1876) quoted in Scholes, *The Mirror...*, p.813.

## *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

George Bernard Shaw noted this proposal when he wrote in January 1877:

Mr Richard Blagrove, who has espoused the neglected cause of the concertina, gave the first concert of his second season on Thursday evening, the 25th inst. He announces his intention of devoting the profits of these concerts to a fund for providing original compositions written for several concertinas. Although we cannot help a passing reflection that it may be possible to have too much of a good thing, we wish Mr Blagrove every success.<sup>283</sup>

A few months later he described one of the concerts of the series:

For an enjoyable musical evening we are indebted to Mr Richard Blagrove, whose first concert took place last Thursday at the Royal Academy of Music. The concert room in Tenderden Street is so comfortable, and the surroundings so quiet, that it forms an agreeable refuge for those who are curious to hear some thing novel in music, and are tired of the blaze and crush of the opera. The idea of a quintet by Mozart played on concertinas varying in size from a small oyster keg to a large hatbox may seem alarming; but the result is thoroughly agreeable, and proves that Mr Blagrove is an enthusiast and not a speculator. A pretty and rather brisk movement, specially composed for these concerts by M. Silas, and unaccountably termed an adagio, was performed last week for the first time. Mrs Blagrove lent valuable assistance in an arrangement of a portion of Hummel's "Septuor in D minor" and subsequently accompanied Mr Blagrove in some Welsh airs and a selection from "La Sonnambula".<sup>284</sup>

The above mentioned Eduoard Silas (1827-1909), composer and one time professor of harmony at the Guildhall School of Music, London, wrote extensively for Blagrove, including his:

Trio in G major Opus 58 for Concertina , Viola and Piano.  
Adagio in E for Eight Concertinas.  
Quintet in D for Concertina, Violin, Viola, Cello and Piano.  
Quartette in B.  
Andante Religioso for Baritone Concertina.  
Trio in C.

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<sup>283</sup> Shaw, George Bernard *Shaw's Music* Vol. 1 (London, 1981), p.86.

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*, p.118.

### *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

The period after 1860 also saw the appearance of professional women concertinists, including several from the Lachenal family, Wheatstone and Co.'s rival manufacturers:

The Mlles. Lachenal's Concert is we believe the first entertainment available for the million in which the Concertina has been in a position fairly to challenge a verdict on its merits as an orchestral instrument of surpassing beauty and extensive capabilities. The Concert commenced with an operatic selection for five Concertinas (two trebles, tenor, baritone and bass), of which the united effect was magnificent, now resembling the tones of an organ, now more like to a string band, preserving the spirit of the airs, yet gracing them with a novel charm... Mlle. Marie Lachenal was deservedly encored after performing a splendid fantasia on the airs from "Faust", on the concertina with great taste and artistic effect; this one piece was sufficient to entitle the concert a success but the enthusiasm of the audience rose higher still on hearing a trio of Scotch airs for treble, baritone and bass concertinas by the Mlles. Lachenal... the performance gave evidence of much talent and finished style and the concert successfully demonstrated to the general public which was known only to a few enthusiastic amateurs -viz., the adaptability of the Concertina to first-class orchestral Music, here this elegant instrument shines with peculiar effect both in melody and harmony, and sustains the full score unaided by instruments of any other descriptions.<sup>285</sup>

Were they the first to bring concerted concertina music to Scotland?:

The great novelty in the programme was the concerted pieces, arranged for three, and four Concertinas -the first occasion, we believe, in which such a combination has been heard in Edinburgh. The effect was exceedingly good, more especially in the operatic selections and the national airs. The first quartet, on themes from "Semiramide", "Sonnambula" and "Lucrezia Borgia", played by the sisters Lachenal and Mr Bridgman, was most satisfactory both as to its arrangement and performance. Mlle. Marie Lachenal's solo on airs from "Faust", was also worthy of all praise for the tasteful and artistic manner in which it was rendered. Not less effective was the duet on subjects taken from "Les Huguenots", played by Mlles. Marie and Eugenie on treble and tenor concertinas. The trio on national melodies, as might have been expected met with an enthusiastic reception, and was re-demanded.

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<sup>285</sup> The Islington Times (June 1865) quoted in Amateur, (Cawdell, William) A Short Account of the Concertina: its uses and capabilities, facility of acquirement, and other advantages. (London, 1865), p.15.



### *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

Mlles. Lachenal are unquestionably proficient on their respective instruments, and the musical public of Edinburgh are indebted to Mr McLaren for his enterprise in affording them an opportunity of hearing a performance both novel and interesting.<sup>286</sup>

The Lachenals were also examples of the large body of female performer/teachers emerging to meet the demands of the amateur musician in the late nineteenth century.

### **Into the Twentieth Century**

By the late nineteenth century, the concertina had lost its place in the popular classical concert but could be heard in the low status settings of the music-hall (Chapter 7.0), the concertina band (Chapter 8.0), and in sacred music (Chapter 9.0). These areas still contained a major “art” music element which remained a strong feature of amateur concertina playing throughout the nineteenth century (Chapter 5.0) and well into the present century when it resurfaced in a number of minor revivals (Chapters 10.0 and 11.0).

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<sup>286</sup> The Scotsman (23 October 1865).

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## 5

# The English Concertina: Instrument of the Victorian Middle Classes

### Introduction

The Concertina, the most elegant and perfect instrument of its kind... Since its first introduction the concertina has steadily progressed in public favour and perhaps the best proof of the sterling merits of the instrument is the readiness with which it has been taken up by the professors of ability, and whoever has heard such artists as Regondi, Case, Blagrove etc... perform on it must agree that its invention has been a valuable addition to those instruments that are more especially adapted for the drawing-room.<sup>287</sup>

As a piece of exquisite workmanship there is sufficient to interest one in the simple yet elaborate details, strength combined with elegance in all its parts, and symmetry with completeness in the finish. Whether we consider the number of its component pieces, the various kinds of material used, or its compact and handsome appearance as a whole, to say nothing of the intricacies connected with securing correct tone, and perfect action, we cannot help admiring the combination of industry and ingenuity required for its production as well as the science and skill displayed in its original invention.<sup>288</sup>

The first non-professional musicians to adopt the English concertina were from the aristocracy and gentry. However, by the 1850s, the instrument was popular in the domestic music of the middle classes also, a position it was to enjoy for the next two decades or so. This chapter examines the processes behind this first flourish of high status amateur use of the instrument and considers relevant aspects of repertory and style. The appeal of the concertina to both male and female musicians, its suitability for use in the middle-class home and its endorsement as an instrument of “rational recreation” are each discussed. I draw on a wide variety of sources to look at the foundations and subsequent expansion of concertina manufacture in Britain. I again examine the situation in Scotland in detail, although the musical activities and

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<sup>287</sup> “Musical Instruments” *Illustrated London News* (Supplement, XIX No.512) (23 August 1851), quoted in MacTaggart and MacTaggart, *Musical Instruments...*, p.46.

<sup>288</sup> Amateur, *A Short Account...*, p.7.

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interests of the upper and middle- classes of the country were largely a reflection of those of mid-nineteenth century Britain as a whole.

### **The First Amateurs**

The Concertina, having been brought to the greatest perfection, it has been patronised by the elite of aristocracy for many years.<sup>289</sup>

The early records of Wheatstone and Co.<sup>290</sup> indicate that the interest in the newly invented English concertina expressed by professional musicians was also shared by a number of aristocratic and upper-class amateurs, no doubt attracted to its modernity, exclusiveness, curiosity value and “Britishness”.

Aristocratic adoption is well illustrated by Frederic Chopin’s letter sent from Hamilton Palace in October 1848:

These queer folk play for the sake of beauty, but to teach them decent things is a joke. Lady \_\_\_\_\_, one of the first ladies here, in whose castle I spent a few days, is regarded here as a great musician. One day, after my piano, and after various songs by other Scottish ladies, they brought a kind of accordion, and she began to play on it the most atrocious tunes. What would you have? Every creature seems to me to have a screw loose.<sup>291</sup>

A later example of upper-class patronage in Scotland was the playing of the Prime Minister A.J. Balfour (1848-1930) who “was during the early and middle part of his lifetime an ardent performer on the concertina”.<sup>292</sup> Balfour kept a quartet of instruments at his East Lothian mansion:

Certain is, that he did perform on the concertina at home at this period of his life, using it to supply the tenor part in glees and choruses sung in the privacy of the family circle. Four elaborate concertinas known as “the Infernals” were in existence at Whittinghame a generation later, and were distributed by him eventually to his younger nephews and nieces. When he presented them he swung the instrument and pressed

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<sup>289</sup> Cocks and Co., R. Handbook of Instructions for the English Concertina with Forty-four Favourite Airs... (London, 1855), p.2.

<sup>290</sup> Butler, “The First Ten Years...”.

<sup>291</sup> Opiński, Henryk Chopin’s Letters (New York, 1932) p.394. The reference to “accordion” is translated by Bone, Audrey Evelyn Jane Wilhemina Stirling 1804-1859 (Edinburgh?, 1960), p.84 as “concertina” and by Hedley, Arthur Selected Correspondence of Frederyk Chopin (London, 1962), p.347 as “a sort of accordion (a concertina!)”.

<sup>292</sup> TOCM (10th edition, London, 1970), p.865.

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the keys with an old familiarity, remarking that his fingers had got stiff.<sup>293</sup>

There is also the collection of music for English concertina from the library of Sir George Henry Scott-Douglas (1825- 1885) of Kelso and now in the National Library of Scotland. This material is discussed later. Although the number of amateur concertina players must have been small in comparison to those playing the piano, violin, flute<sup>294</sup> or other “established” instruments, endorsement by the upper-classes as a “serious” musical instrument had important consequences for its wider adoption. The wealthier sections of the middle-class emulated aspects of the aristocratic life-style<sup>295</sup> and were ever eager to embrace upper-class musical taste and practice:

The middle-class generally wished to associate itself with the aristocracy, and in music as in many other things they adopted the values of those who had been traditional arbiters of taste... It is clear that drawing-room music was an adjunct to the rapid rise in status of the newly rich.<sup>296</sup>

As the Chopin letter shows, the concertina had found favour with both male and female amateurs at a time when instrumental usage was still clearly demarcated according to sex:

Drawing room music... was clearly functional, and was appropriately dominated by the female sex. Gentlemen, if they played at all, played a subordinate role; in the early nineteenth century they might “accompany” the young ladies on a violin or flute, instruments which were traditionally excluded from women.<sup>297</sup>

Johnson makes specific reference to this division in his study of music making in Scotland in the eighteenth century:

Recorder, flute. violin and cello were played only by gentlemen; gamba and keyboard instruments were played by both sexes, the latter becoming more female as the century progressed; and cittern was played only by ladies. This distribution reflects a society where men go out to work and meet each other while the women stay put in their own homes- for the “male” instruments are the sociable ones which fit

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<sup>293</sup> Dugdale, Blanche E.C. *Arthur James Balfour* (London, 1936), Vol. 1, p.38.

<sup>294</sup> Henry George Farmer, in *A History of Music in Scotland* (Glasgow, 1947), p.350, suggests that in Scotland in the first half of the nineteenth century the flute was “a special favourite among the middle class [males], even more so than the pianoforte”.

<sup>295</sup> Cunningham, H. *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution* (London, 1980).

<sup>296</sup> Temperley, N “Ballroom and Drawing-room Music” in Temperley (ed.), *The Romantic Age...*, pp.118-9.

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.*, p.120.

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together into orchestras and chamber ensembles, whereas the “female” instruments are lone and harmonically self-supporting... For women, music-making was an individual activity; for men, it was a group activity.<sup>298</sup>

The English concertina, of course, offered the possibility of performing both melodically and harmonically.

There was also the question of the inelegance in female performance of those instruments which demanded energetic movement, an unbecoming posture or physical exertion. In the earliest written reference to the concertina, the writer was at pains to note that the application of bellows to the mouth-blown symphonium “renders it far more agreeable for ladies to play upon”.<sup>299</sup> In the introduction to his tutor for the English concertina, George Case claimed that “from its being the only portable instrument having a sustained or continued sound, which conventionalism allows to Ladies, its value is materially increased”,<sup>300</sup> while another noted:

It is comparatively easy of acquirement; is portable, toylike and very neat in appearance; its use extracts no disfigurement of the person; on the contrary, it particularly favours, without compelling, a display of personal attractions.<sup>301</sup>

In fact, the early free-reed instruments were deliberately targeted at both the male and female markets. Demian’s patent for the first accordion made specific reference to its suitability for both sexes and the first printed collections of music and methods for the instrument featured portraits of elegantly dressed women performing on it.<sup>302</sup>

Endorsement of the concertina as an instrument suitable for both sexes was also advanced through the illustrations in early tutors which showed both male (standing) and female (seated) players.<sup>303</sup> Promotion of the first instruments as free from demarcation must be seen as a deliberate tactic to capture the widest possible share of an expanding market.

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<sup>298</sup> Johnson, *Music and Society...*, p.24.

<sup>299</sup> *The Musical World* Vol.1, No.LXI (12 May 1837) p.136.

<sup>300</sup> Case, *Instructions...*, p.3.

<sup>301</sup> *Davidson’s Tutor for the Concertina* (London, n.d.), p.3.

<sup>302</sup> For examples, see Kjellström, *Dragspel*, pp.16,18. There are early portraits by pioneering photographers Hill and Adamson of Edinburgh of Mrs John Adamson posing with accordion in the collection of the National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh. See Stevenson, Sara *David Octavious Hill and Robert Adamson* (Edinburgh, 1981), p.131.

<sup>303</sup> *Davidson’s Tutor...* (reproduced as Figure 5.1). See also, Chidley, Edwin *Instructions for the Concertina* (London, 1854) illustrated in Pilling, “Concertina”, p.460 and Birch, W.H. *A New Tutor for the Concertina* (London, 1851).



DIAGRAM, REPRESENTING THE POSITION OF THE STUDS ON THE CONCERTINA.

LEFT HAND.

RIGHT HAND.

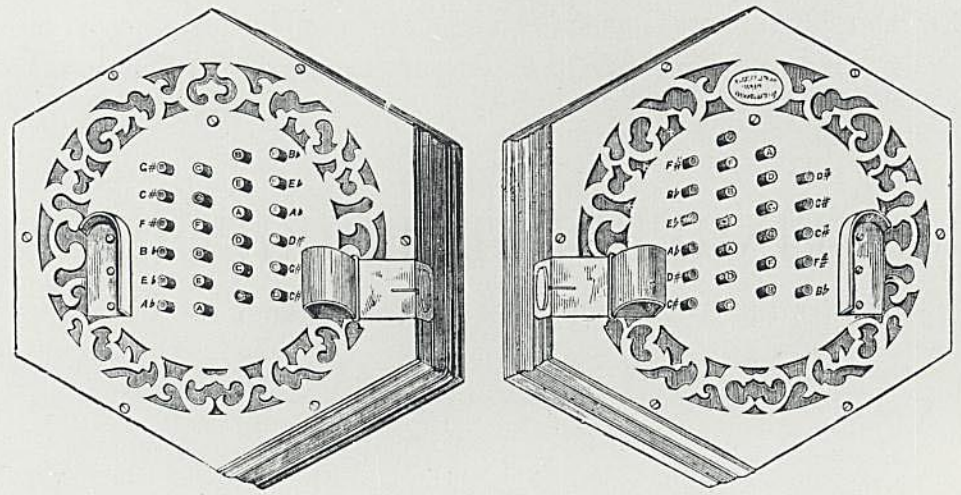


Figure 5.1 Concertina Players.  
 Source: Davidson's Tutor for the Concertina (London n.d.)  
 p.3.

## **The Middle Class Market Captured**

During the 1840s, the English concertina remained expensive and exclusive. Output was low, but rising steeply, as confirmed by Figure 5.2. However, by the 1850s, the instrument was well on the way to becoming firmly established in the musical activities of the middle-class home.

As discussed in Chapter 3.0, Wheatstone and Co. had long catered for this market and had targeted it in developing the concertina. A hand-bill from January 1851 proclaimed:

THE CONCERTINA possesses qualities which have never hitherto been combined in a single Musical Instrument. It is equally adapted to the most expressive performance, and the most rapid execution; whether confined to the succession of single notes, as most other wind instruments are, or in harmony of two, three or four parts. From the remarkable simplicity of its fingering, and the great facility with which its tones are produced and sustained, it is very easily learnt; and as it cannot be sounded out of tune, the most perfect crescendos and diminuendos may be obtained, without the practice which is so requisite on other instruments. To these advantages may be added the peculiar beauty of its tones, and its extreme portability.<sup>304</sup>

Wheatstone's price list of 1851 comprised:

### **Treble Concertinas**

#### Single Action

g to c <sup>'''</sup>	48 keys	6 guineas
b to a <sup>'''</sup>	40 keys	5 guineas
b to d <sup>''</sup>	32 keys	4 guineas

#### Double Action Best

g to c <sup>'''</sup>	48 keys	8 guineas
b to a <sup>'''</sup>	40 keys	£6 16s 6d
b to d <sup>''</sup>	32 keys	5 guineas

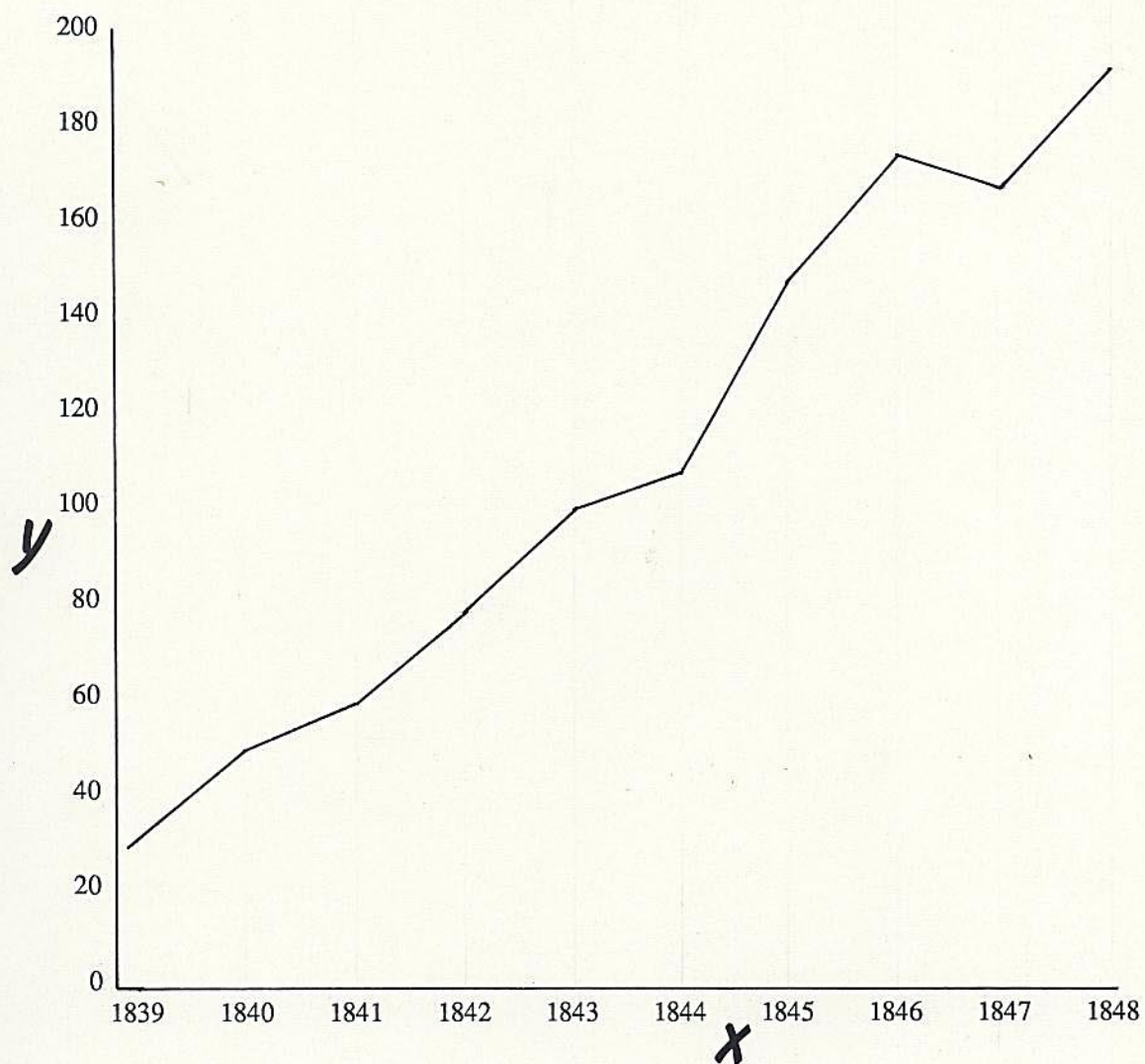
#### Double Action Extra Best

g to c <sup>'''</sup>	48 keys	10 guineas
b to a <sup>'''</sup>	40 keys	8 guineas
b to d <sup>''</sup>	32 keys	6 guineas

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<sup>304</sup> THE CONCERTINA Handbill in Reid Music Library, Edinburgh University. Bound with other material from the London Exhibition 1851.





y axis: output of individual concertinas  
x axis: year

The 1848 figure is based on the sale of 48 concertinas in the first quarter.

Figure 5.2 C. Wheatstone and Co., Concertina Production 1839-1848.

Source: Diagrammatic Representation of data in Wayne, Neil "The Wheatstone English Concertina" GSJ XLIV (March 1991).

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### **Tenor or Baritone Concertinas**

#### Double Action

c to c'''	10 guineas
g to c'''	12 guineas

#### Single Action Concert Tenor

c to c'''	12 guineas
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### **Concert Bass Concertinas**

#### Single Action

C to c''	12 guineas
C to g''	14 guineas
C to c'''	16 guineas

Small and elegant Bass Concertina suitable for lady performers 12 and 14 guineas.<sup>305</sup>

These instruments, it was claimed, were being offered at advantageous prices due to “increased demand, and use of extensive and valuable machinery”.<sup>306</sup> The wide range of prices and sizes, including single action (i.e. relatively less expensive) instruments, is evidence of this demand.

The fall in prices was also due to the fact that Wheatstone now had a number of competitors. At the same time as Wheatstone’s list above, George Case (discussed in the previous chapter as a concertina player) offered a similar range and at almost identical prices,<sup>307</sup> while Rock Chidley, a former inspector for Wheatstone and Co., offered instruments at prices around 25% lower, including reduced specification

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<sup>305</sup> Ibid. By way of contrast, MacTaggart and MacTaggart, *Musical Instruments...*, pp.66-7 record James Jordan of Liverpool offering 6 keyed clarinets at 1-2 guineas each and 13 keyed instruments at 2-5 guineas. Cornopeans ranged from £3 to 20 guineas and valve trumpets 3-6 guineas (pp.107-8). According to Ehrlich, *The Music Profession...*, p.101, in 1854 the cheapest flutes from Rudall, Rose and Carte cost £3 and clarinets £4-£12. In *The Piano*, pp.9-10, he notes that in 1851 square pianos of quality cost between 60 and 70 guineas and grand pianos and uprights between 50 and 100 guineas, roughly equivalent to the annual income of a clerk or school teacher. Wheatstone’s instruments were therefore more expensive than many average to good woodwind and brass instruments but could bear comparison with the cost of the highest quality clarinets. They were, however, considerably cheaper than domestic pianos.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid.

<sup>307</sup> According MacTaggart and MacTaggart, *Musical Instruments...*, p.47, Case had acquired the business of Joseph Scates who had manufactured concertinas from 1844 but had since relocated in Dublin.

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models as cheap as £1 11s 6d.<sup>308</sup> Chidley was just one of a number of Wheatstone craftsmen who formed their own manufacturing concerns during the 1840s. Concertinas of French manufacture were also being offered by the reed organ maker Julien Jaulain of Paris at prices between £3 12s and £7 4s.<sup>309</sup> As in piano manufacture and retail, there was also a flourishing trade in “labelled” concertinas whereby one manufacturer might supply a large number of retailers who placed their own names on the instruments. In 1855, for example, we find Rudall, Rose and Carte and Co. offering “bought in” 48 key concertinas at between 6 and 12 guineas and Keith Prowse and Co. similar instruments at 5 to 12 guineas.<sup>310</sup> By 1862, Joseph Scates of Dublin was advertising not only “ordinary” instruments at 8 to 12 guineas and instruments “with Gold Notes, which never require tuning, and cannot be broken”<sup>311</sup> at £20 but also concertinas “of full compass” by other makers at 35s., 40s., 60s., 80s. and 100s.<sup>312</sup> The firm of Lachenal, which was rapidly becoming Wheatstone’s principal rival, offered a range of 15 types of English Concertina, ranging from 22 button (2 octaves and 1 note) instruments at £1 13s. to their “best” 48 button treble concertina at 10 guineas and a baritone at 11 guineas.<sup>313</sup> By the 1860s, Wheatstone and Co. was also making cheaper, lower specification concertinas. Their least expensive model (22 buttons, 2 octaves and 1 note, to allow performance in 5 keys only) was offered at £1 16s while their basic full compass instrument (48 buttons) was £3 3s,<sup>314</sup> less than half the 1851 price.

By the mid-nineteenth century, the harp and guitar had largely died out as domestic instruments. Many woodwind instruments were still “unimproved” and off-putting for the occasional amateur player and pianos remained expensive luxury goods produced by craftsmen along traditional lines without machinery. However, although it was an attractive musical investment, the English concertina could not compete with the instruments of the keyboard family as an expression of conspicuous consumption and success. No other instrument, save perhaps the harmonium, could address the fact that “the piano served as an instrument to be looked at beyond being played upon” and which served an “extramusical function within the home as the visual-sonic simulacrum of family, wife and mother”.<sup>315</sup>

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<sup>308</sup> Ibid., p.47.

<sup>309</sup> MacTaggart and MacTaggart, Musical Instruments..., p.55. The earliest detailed records I have found of concertina sales in Scotland are the transactions noted in the records of the Edinburgh musical instrument maker and dealer Glen reproduced in Myers, Arnold (ed.) The Glen Account Book 1838-53 (Edinburgh, 1985). The records specify “2 concertinas (No.15 and No.14) bought in on 14 March 1853 from Rock Chidley, London. Discounted from 8 guineas and £6 16s 6d at £5 10s and £4 15s” (p.159) and “1 rosewood concertina bought for 15s from J.G. Taylor and Co., Glasgow 26 April 1853” (p.191).

<sup>310</sup> Advertisements in Musical Directory and Retail Advertiser (1855). Prowse also lent concertinas on hire at 10s 6d per month and 24s for 3 months. Their cheapest, a 32 key concertina, was £3 12s 6d.

<sup>311</sup> Advertisement in The Musical Directory and Advertiser (London, 1862).

<sup>312</sup> According to Butler, Frank E. “Concertinas in the Commercial Road: The Story of George Jones” Concertina and Squeezebox 20 (1989), p.8, Scates was supplied by Jones of London.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid.

<sup>314</sup> Advertisement in The Musical Directory and Advertiser 1862.

<sup>315</sup> Leppert, Richard “Sexual Identity, Death and the Family Piano” in 19th Century Music XVI no.2, (1992), pp.105-128.

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Although unable to compete with the piano on ideological terms, Wheatstone and Co. responded to its overwhelming musical potential when they offered the Double Concertina sometime around 1850. This instrument advanced the “duet” keyboard principle by which:

The treble notes are placed on one end, and the accompanying notes, or bass, on the other - each having a perfect scale in itself - so that a melody can be performed on either without any assistance from the other. To facilitate this object, and to make the two ends more independent instruments, some notes of the middle part of the scale are common to both; in fact, they may be taken either with the right or left hand, as may be convenient, which enables the performer to produce effects peculiar only to the Double Concertina.<sup>316</sup>

This instrument allowed direct performance from piano scores and the playing of “melody with dispersed harmony and properly distributed accompaniment”<sup>317</sup> but met with little success. Such instruments were only made to special order and sales were occasional.<sup>318</sup> It was only in the 1880s, under the stimulus of the music hall, that the duet principle found widespread favour.

Ehrlich has discussed how the fixed tones and mechanical action of the piano encouraged beginners:

Whereas most instruments responded to a novice with a discouraging noise, or no sound at all, the piano sang at first touch, encouraging persistence, by elementary instruction or even by untutored experiment: many people learned to play acceptably “by ear”. It was an ideal beginner’s instrument, not only for those who continued to be pianists but for many who turned later to other instruments.<sup>319</sup>

A similar claim was made by the English concertina’s leading advocate, Cawdell, in a booklet aimed at promoting the instrument among all classes:

The Concertina is the very easiest of all instruments for the learner, a fact worth remembering in the present age of progress and refinement when a love of Music and a general knowledge of its principles daily

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<sup>316</sup> The Double Concertina: A New Musical Instrument Handbill in Reid Music Library, Edinburgh University. The double concertina, like other forms of “duet”, should be seen as an early version of the modern free-bass accordion in which the left-hand manual allows players to construct rather select pre-fixed chords.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid.

<sup>318</sup> Wayne, “The Wheatstone English Concertina”, pp. 135-7, 149.

<sup>319</sup> Ehrlich, The Music Profession..., p.102.

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celebrate fresh triumphs, enlisting a crowd of recruits devoted to the cause.<sup>320</sup>

and

The simplicity of fingering enables the learner after very slight practice to perform a regular scale ascending or descending throughout three octaves etc... and this with far greater rapidity than could be acquired on any other instrument with twice the amount of application.<sup>321</sup>

Cawdell praised the concertina for “materially lessening the labours of the teacher and making up for any deficiencies on the part of the learner with respect to the faculties exercised in the study of music”<sup>322</sup> and saw its potential as a complement to the then fashionable Tonic Solfa.

As discussed in Chapter 2.0, those inventors who sought the “instrument ideal”, included portability and durability among their aims, important dimensions if world markets were to be captured. Again Cawdell drew attention to the advantages of the English concertina:

Its portability is another advantage strongly recommending it to persons going a long voyage, or young man not settled down in life, perhaps using only a small room, their movables contained in a single box. A piano would be out of the question for them.<sup>323</sup>

A.J. Balfour, already mentioned as an upper-class concertinist, may have put the concertina to just this kind of use:

At the end of November 1875, they spent six dull days at Invercargill, waiting for a steamer to take them to Melbourne. Balfour lay on his bunk on board this vessel from monday to saturday. Lyttleton relates that he sang at intervals on such occasions, but unfortunately the diary does not endorse a family legend that he was wont to play melodies by Handel on a concertina in his recumbent position.<sup>324</sup>

Having recognised the potential market for the concertina in the colonies, manufacturers produced models in materials suited to different climates. Keith Prowse and Co., for example, advertised “Concertinas made expressly for India kept always ready for sale”.<sup>325</sup>

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<sup>320</sup> An Amateur, *A Short Account of the Concertina...*, p.10.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid., p.12.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid., p.6.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid., p.13.

<sup>324</sup> Dugdale, *Arthur James Balfour*, pp.38-9.

<sup>325</sup> Advertisement in *Musical Directory and Retail Advertiser* (London, 1855). Concertinas were also

## *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

The advantage of being able to play the concertina in unusual situations was also held up by Cawdell:

The concertina may be played in any position, standing, sitting, walking, kneeling, or even lying down if confined to the house by a sprained ankle, you may play whilst reclining on the sofa, it will soothe you to a forgetfulness of the pain and when you are convalescent, you may take your instrument into the fields where the piano can never be.<sup>326</sup>

Again, an example bears this out:

He mounted [the stairs], but study and living-room stood empty. Guided by the muffled music he tried another door. The bedroom to which it led was apparently empty; but on the bed was a strangely shaped heap of rugs and blankets, and from the interior of this heap proceeded sounds as of a concertina being played very softly. He poked it and a head was protruded: "Come in under here, Jack", whispered MacKenna, "the way we won't disturb my old lady, and I'll play you a grand tune".<sup>327</sup>

These references support a view of the concertina as the instrument of the young, perhaps Bohemian, middle-class amateur, in much the same way that the guitar found favour in the mid-twentieth century, or alternately, as the choice of the nouveau riches aping the aristocracy.

The production of concertinas in sets to match the string family further encouraged the acceptance of the instrument into communal amateur domestic music making. Writing later in the century, George Bernard Shaw saw this as a major advantage of the instrument:

I must not leave my inquiring amateurs without a word or two for those who most deserve my sympathy. They are people who desire to enjoy music socially: to play together, to explore the riches of concerted chamber music for mere love of it, and without any desire to expand their lungs and display their individual virtuosity. Yet they are too old to learn to fiddle, or, having learnt, cannot do it well enough to produce tolerable concord. Their difficulty is fortunately, quite easy to solve. The instrument for them is the concertina... You can play any

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sold in India by "importers and agents" S. Rose and Co. of Bombay.

<sup>326</sup> Amateur, *A Short Account...*, p.13.

<sup>327</sup> From Dodds, E.R. (ed.) *Journals and Letters of Stephen MacKenna* (London, 1936), p.71. Stephen MacKenna was a personal friend of the Irish painter Jack Yeats also referred to. The house was in Merrion Square, Dublin.

### *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

instrument's part on a concertina of suitable compass, the Bb clarinet being most exactly matched by it in point of tone. The intonation does not depend on you any more than that of a pianoforte. A good concertina is everlasting: it can be repaired as often as a violin.<sup>328</sup>

The contribution to the democratisation of instrumental music praised by Shaw was, however, less welcomed by others:

The harmonium and concertina force themselves upon our attention. There are certain perfect forms and perfect players of both these instruments; but we deal not with the master workmen, the Regondis, the Blagroves, the Tamplins, and the Engels. The same instrument which in the hands of these men is a thing of beauty and delight, is capable of tempting the musical amateur into wild and tuneless excesses! We will put it to any impartial person, was there ever found in the house of an amateur, a concertina or harmonium in tune with the piano? Was there ever an amateur who could be deterred from playing these instruments together, however discordant the result? When there is a chance to have a duet, people seem to lose all sense of tune. If the concertina is only about a half-semitone flat, the lady thinks she can manage. A little nerve is required to face the first few bars, but before "Il Balen" is over, not a scruple remains, and the increasing consternation of the audience is only equalled by the growing complacency of the performers.<sup>329</sup>

Scott has discussed how the physical conditions and furnishing of the typical middle-class drawing room favoured the sound and preservation of certain musical instruments.<sup>330</sup> He refers specifically to the modern piano which could withstand the changing temperatures and the "dead" acoustics of the heavily draped room, which worked against the physics and sound of the guitar or harp. I would argue that the English concertina was also suited to the environment of the contemporary middle-class home and that this contributed to its ready adoption.

Its suitability for domestic music making and the ease of reading music with the English concertina (including that already arranged for existing instruments) through its logical keyboard layout, linked the instrument into an ideology of education, elevation and improvement and led to its exploitation as an instrument of rational recreation.

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<sup>328</sup> *The Star* (8 March 1889) quoted in Laurence, Dan H. (ed.) *Shaw's Music* Vol.1, (London, 1981), p.575.

<sup>329</sup> Harris, H.R. *Good Words Supplement* (1 March 1869).

<sup>330</sup> Scott, Derek *The Singing Bourgeois* (Milton Keynes, 1989), p.58.



## **The English Concertina as an Instrument of Rational Recreation**

Unlike most other instruments it lent itself readily to self-improvement, a cardinal Victorian virtue, widely espoused and practiced.<sup>331</sup>

Ehrlich's words on the piano in the mid-nineteenth century could also have been said of the concertina. In 1856, one writer was to rejoice that there were now 125 pianos and 30 concertinas in the Oxford colleges, "a marvellous change" since 1820 when hardly a college had a piano.<sup>332</sup> Cawdell again:

Music has but one mission, our improvement, although it attains this end by various means. The Music of the Church fosters devotional feeling in the soul, and intensifies the influence of solemnity of worship. The Music of the Concert-Room improves the mind, feeding the intellect by offering to our contemplation the chef-d'oeuvres of genius and labours of giant minds. The music of the Home more directly appeals to the heart, fostering the affections and encouraging noble sentiments. It is in this particular that the Concertina will be found a most useful co-operator in the cultivation of an elevating recreation that will enlarge the mind, purify the affections and strengthen the intellect. It is more directly as a domestic instrument that it is and ever will be appreciated and admired.<sup>333</sup>

A Scottish writer of the 1880s made reference to the concertina when expressing similar sentiments:

We know nothing better than music for bracing the exhausted energies, and fitting the mind or body for renewed labour. It would be well if all parents would kindly encourage and desire of their children to be possessed of a musical instrument. The flute, the accordion or concertina, the piano, the violin -all these are valuable aids to the cultivation of the musical faculty; and the use of them can never be too much encouraged by parents.<sup>334</sup>

The theme of "rational recreation" which permeates these statements was an important element of middle-class ideology in the second half of the nineteenth century. This promoted the value of self education, respectable, "improving" activities and endorsed the home as a centre of domesticity and family life. Gwen Raverat has painted a picture of a relative as a concertina-playing rational recreationalist:

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<sup>331</sup> Ehrlich, The Music Profession..., p.102.

<sup>332</sup> Maurice, P "What shall we do with Music?: A Letter to the Rt. Hon. Earl of Derby, Chancellor of the University of Oxford" (1856). Quoted in Ehrlich, The Music Profession..., p.43.

<sup>333</sup> Amateur, A Short Account..., p.11.

<sup>334</sup> Tennant, James "Tannahill: His Life and Works" in Miscellaneous Papers (Glasgow, 1881), p.26.

## *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

He was really fond of music and tried with remarkably poor results, to make us sing... the concertina was his instrument, and of course, he only played classical music on it. He also kept numbers of large dull photographs of all the things you go to look at in Italy, especially of the ones that Ruskin praised. They were all kept in green baize bags, carefully made with buttons and buttonholes and highly suitable for moths... In fact, Uncle Richard had done everything that an enlightened person, flourishing in the middle of the nineteenth century, ought to do; taught at the Working Men's College, organized great country walks, admired Nature, and all the rest of it.<sup>335</sup>

From its middle-class locus, rational recreation was also applied by reformers, philanthropists and progressive employers as a means of improving, educating and elevating the working-classes. It involved the suppression of seemingly barbarous activities and their replacement by more "rational" ones, whether morally uplifting or simply more respectable. Music was a particularly popular component in the various schemes of social and moral regeneration, with respectable institutions and the home as the principal sites for its promotion. The middle classes sought to lead by example, and organised musical activities (classes, bands and choirs) were seen as having the potential to bring together people from different class backgrounds while offering the uplifting influence of education and artistic endeavour. The direct links to Sunday observance and developments in contemporary religion are obvious. It is not surprising, therefore, to find the concertina promoted among the working class in areas of music making which, as later chapters show, had enduring influence well into the present century. Inherent in the ideology of the improvers was the privileging of the printed score and of accuracy in performance, termed "precision and snap" by Gammon and Gammon.<sup>336</sup> This was reinforced by formal teaching methods and competitions.<sup>337</sup>

## **Repertory**

As has been ably demonstrated elsewhere,<sup>338</sup> the repertory of the middle-class amateur musician in the nineteenth century included a remarkable variety of musical forms,

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<sup>335</sup> Raverat, Gwen *Period Piece: A Cambridge Childhood* (London, 1952) (1987 edition), p.126.

<sup>336</sup> Gammon, Vic and Gammon, Sheila "'Repeat and Twiddle' to 'Precision and Snap': The Musical Revolution of the Mid-Nineteenth Century" in Herbert, Trevor (ed.) *Bands: The Brass Band Movement in the 19th. and 20th. Centuries* (Milton Keynes, 1991), pp.120-144.

<sup>337</sup> Scholes, *The Mirror...*, p.813, notes a competition for concertina playing held in Birmingham Town Hall in late 1859 which was open to youths under eighteen.

<sup>338</sup> Scott, *The Singing Bourgeois*.

## *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

styles and origins and embraced “improved” traditional airs, Italian and English operatic selections, sentimental songs, fashionable dance music and new national songs. There was regional variation reflecting local music and song, which in Scotland included some survivals from the eighteenth-century, traditional dance-based “drawing room style”,<sup>339</sup> although this was on the decline in the face of the “modernisation” and “nationalisation” of popular music.

As the century progressed, the repertory expanded to include sacred songs, minstrelsy, respectable theatre and music hall material and an emerging Victorian “drawing room genre”<sup>340</sup> with its own stylistic characteristics and formulae. Songs of the “volkstümlich” type came into their own and drew upon Scottish, Irish and other “exotic” cultures for themes and subject matter. As we might expect, the content of domestic music often reflected, or helped to construct or reinforce, the bourgeois ideologies of the family and self improvement.

Middle-class taste was influenced, if not controlled, by a music publishing sector which was rapidly assuming a role as a major building block of the modern music industry. The large output of music for English concertina which appeared during the 1840s, 50s and 60s reflected the exclusive adoption of the instrument by the middle and upper-classes. Wheatstone and Co.’s catalogue of 1848<sup>341</sup> was considerable, containing almost 300 items suited to the wide range of middle-class taste. These varied in price from 1s. for a selection of six songs, to a tutor book at 10s. 6d.. Arrangements drew upon the skills of a number of the established professional concertinists discussed in Chapter 4.0, including Guilio Regondi, Carlo Minasi, George Case and the early enthusiast of free-reed instruments, John Parry. Charles Eulenstein, the brilliant jew’s harp player who attracted the attention of Wheatstone in the late 1820s and the patronage of the Duke of Gordon in Scotland, was one of a number of emerging teachers who wrote and arranged for the concertina. The principal contributor, however, was Joseph Warren (1804-1881), noted as an influential organist and arranger of church music but not recorded as a concertinist.<sup>342</sup> Although several publishers sought to take advantage of the expanding market, Wheatstone and Co. remained dominant. Other London publishers issued music in serial form, including W.H. Birch’s Concertina Journal, offered in parts between 1852-58, Richard Blagrove’s Concertina Journal of 1853-62, Boosey’s The Concertina Miscellany and Simpson’s Journal for the Concertina, which is discussed more fully below. These editions cover much the same ground: operatic selections, national songs, popular salon music and fashionable dance.

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<sup>339</sup> Johnson, David Scottish Fiddle Music in the 18th Century (Edinburgh, 1984).

<sup>340</sup> Scott, The Singing Bourgeois, p.1-45.

<sup>341</sup> Music for the Concertina. List on rear cover of Warren, Joseph Favourite Airs Selected from Bellini’s celebrated Opera Norma adapted for the Concertina (London, September 1848).

<sup>342</sup> Brown and Stratton, British Musical Biography, p.434. Warren had a very early association with the concertina as composer and arranger of the music for Regondi’s first recorded public concerts on the instrument in 1837. Warren may have been a musical advisor to Charles Wheatstone.

## *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

The rise in popularity of the concertina with middle-class amateurs during the period 1840-70 saw the publication of a large number of tutors for the instrument. I have already mentioned those by Case and Regondi. Such tutors are valuable sources of information relating to mid nineteenth-century attitudes to concertina playing and music making in general. Typically, they contained a wide selection of music and exercises. Case's tutor is "interspersed with selections from the works of Beethoven, Mozart, Haydn, Spohr, Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti, etc..." and Warren's Instructions for the Concertina<sup>343</sup> concludes with preludes and cadences in all the major keys and a range of national and popular songs, including the Scottish airs "Auld Robin Gray" and "Roslin Castle" (Example 5.1).

"Auld Robin Gray" is a "new" Scots song by Lady Lindsay, originally set to the traditional modal air "The bridegroom greets when the sun goes down"<sup>344</sup> in 1771 but later given its "improved" tune by Rev. William Leeves. The new setting "relies on classical procedures for expressive effect, such as the control of major and minor key and the use of chromaticism; [Leeves'] Scottish flavouring is limited to one or two snap rhythms".<sup>345</sup>

The small collection of bound volumes of concertina music from the library of Sir George Henry Scott-Douglas of Springwood Park, Kelso (1825-1885), makes a convenient sample for study. Purchased by him from Edinburgh music dealers Fryer and Thomson and Wood and Co.<sup>346</sup> around 1850, they were obviously played from, as many pieces contain pencilled fingerings and other comments. An analysis of their content confirms the adoption of the English concertina as a vehicle for the eclectic repertory of mid-nineteenth century middle-class music. Of the 22 volumes there is one tutor for the instrument (Case's), six collections of selections from Italian opera arranged by Joseph Warren, two collections of Select Melodies adapted for the Concertina from a list of 32 by Warren<sup>347</sup> and thirteen issues of the serial Simpson's Journal for the Concertina. In an analysis of the last mentioned, we find (Figure 5.3) that over half the material is operatic in origin and includes incidental music and song airs such as "Ah cedi o piu sciagure" from Donizetti's "Lucia Di Lammermoor"<sup>348</sup>

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<sup>343</sup> Warren, Joseph Complete Instructions for the Concertina (London, c.1845).

<sup>344</sup> Collinson, National and Traditional Music..., p.14.

<sup>345</sup> Scott, The Singing Bourgeois, p.96.

<sup>346</sup> According to an advert in The Scotsman (29 May 1859), p.3, Fryer and Thomson dealt in concertinas, harmoniums and accordions. Wood and Co. operated at Waterloo Place, Edinburgh from around 1821. The company had branches in Glasgow and Aberdeen and organised concerts in the cities. According to Butler, "The First Ten Years...", p.321, Wheatstone and Co.'s first trade customers for concertinas in the 1840s were Wood and Co., Chappell, and Cramer. George Wood of Wood and Co. moved to London in 1860 after acquiring an interest in Cramer and Co.. According to Farmer, H.G. A History of Music in Scotland (London, 1947), p.403, they introduced Alexandre of Paris' "Improved Patent Harmonium" into Scotland. Wheatstone and Co. imported and distributed Alexandre's instruments.

<sup>347</sup> These were published by Wheatstone and Co. with piano accompaniment. They included dance tunes, national and popular song, minstrel songs and operatic material.

<sup>348</sup> Vol. 20, p.230.







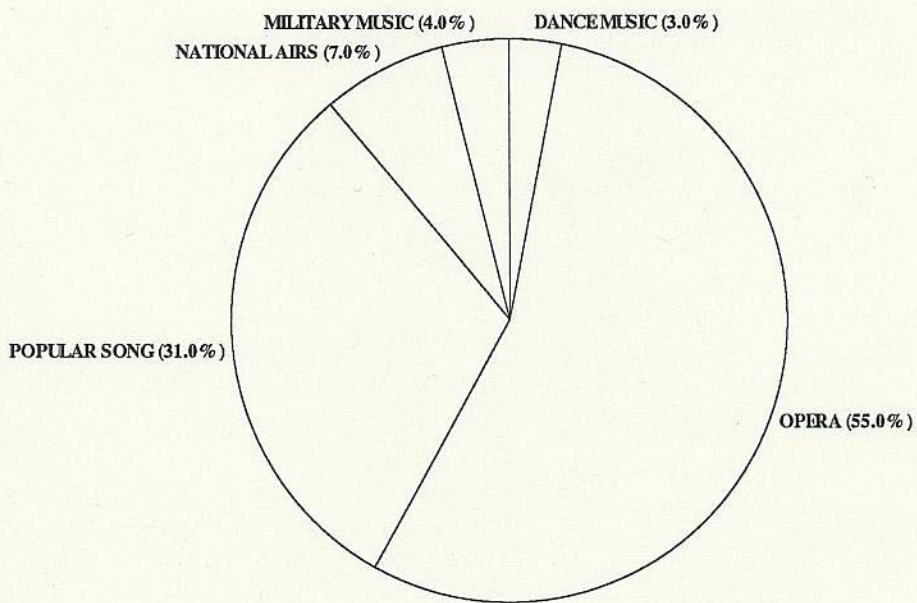


Figure 5.3 Analysis of Contents of the Concertina Library of Sir George Douglas.

## *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

(Example 5.2) which, like most of these arrangements, is relatively undemanding but contains the occasional brilliant passage. In this piece, there are alternative versions of certain sections to suit different abilities while, in another, the editor is at pains to point out to his amateur audience that he has “endeavoured to divest this much admired waltz of its difficulties, without injuring the original melody”.<sup>349</sup>

Mention should be made of the common use of harmony based on closely positioned thirds and fifths and passages containing parallel thirds and sixths. Although it may be suggested that this was a stylistic feature of the time, the great ease of performance of such intervals on the English concertina (as demonstrated in Figure 5.4) must also account for their frequent occurrence.

Just under one third of the Simpson's Journal material was drawing room ballads and included work by the composers Henry Russell, Henry Bishop, William Wallace, William Shield and Michael Balfe. There is an “imitation of the convent bells” in an arrangement of “Ave Maria”<sup>350</sup> which points the way to many music hall imitations later in the century.

National airs comprise a significant proportion and include John Parry's “Norah the Pride of Kildare”,<sup>351</sup> “The Celebrated Chant National des Croates”<sup>352</sup> and the rousing “Hurrah, for the Red, White and Blue”.<sup>353</sup> Scottish music includes the traditional “Weel may the Boatie Row” and “Scots Wha hae wi' Wallace Bled”<sup>354</sup> (Example 5.3), a “Divertisemento introducing Scottish Melodies”(“Here awa', there awa'“, “Kinloch of Kinloch”, “There's nae luck about the house”),<sup>355</sup> “Bonnie Dundee”<sup>356</sup> and the new “characteristic melody” “Mary of Argyle”<sup>357</sup> (Example 5.4) by the English composer Sydney Nelson (1800-62) who specialised in pseudo-Scottish and Irish songs. This last mentioned sentimental song was absorbed into the popular repertory in Scotland and remains a favourite with older concertinists to this day.

Many of the traditional tunes contain “symphonies”; simple variations which act as instrumental sections to introduce and link the verses of the vocal work<sup>358</sup> or to turn the melodies into more “substantial” pieces. Variation did exist in traditional song but was left to the individual performer working within the tradition rather than being prescribed as in these settings. The variations bear no relation to those found in the “Scottish drawing room style” with its firm roots in the fiddle and bagpipe idioms. They tend to work against the rugged simplicity of the old air and should, perhaps, be

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<sup>349</sup> Vol. 25, p.295.

<sup>350</sup> Vol. 26, p.302.

<sup>351</sup> Vol. 22, p.253.

<sup>352</sup> Vol. 16, pp.186-187.

<sup>353</sup> Vol. 27, p.324.

<sup>354</sup> Vol. 25, pp.298, 299.

<sup>355</sup> Vol. 24, p.280.

<sup>356</sup> Vol. 22, p.259.

<sup>357</sup> Vol. 27, p.313.

<sup>358</sup> Jacobs, Arthur A New Dictionary of Music (Harmondsworth, 1967), p.374.



"AH CEDI O PIU SCIAGURE" Air in "LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR."

DONIZETTI.

Cantabile. *Air.*

*p* *f* *Sym.*

*Allegretto, Moderato.*

*p* *Air.*

*Cres.* *f* *Cres.* *Cres.*

*Piu moto.* *f*

or thus

The Airs in this and the eight following pages have a very superior Piano-Forte accompaniment in the "Gems of Melody" by John Barré N° 20. Simpson's Concertina Journal.

Example 5.2 Ah cedi o piu sciagure. Source: From "Lucia Di Lammermoor" by Donizetti. Published in Simpson's Journal for the Concertina Vol. 20 (London, c1848) p.230.







"SCOTS WHA HAE WI' WALLACE BLED."

*Playfully.*

Introduction.

*Air with energy & rather slower.*

*with spirit.*

*Sym: dolce.*

*playfully.*

*Air. with energy.*

*with spirit.*

*Sym: dolce.*

*playfully.*

The musical score is written for a single melodic line on a treble clef staff in 2/4 time. It consists of ten staves of music. The first staff is an introduction marked 'Playfully'. The second staff begins the main piece, marked 'Air with energy & rather slower'. The third staff continues with 'with spirit'. The fourth staff is marked 'Sym: dolce'. The fifth staff returns to 'playfully'. The sixth staff is marked 'Air. with energy'. The seventh staff is marked 'with spirit'. The eighth staff is marked 'Sym: dolce'. The ninth staff returns to 'playfully'. The piece concludes with a double bar line at the end of the tenth staff.

No 25. Simpson's Journal for the Concertina.

Example 5.3 Scots wha hae wi' Wallace Bled.

Source: Traditional. Published in Simpson's Journal for the Concertina Vol. 25 (London, c1848) p.298.



## MARY OF ARGYLE.

NELSON.

This characteristic Melody is inserted by the kind permission of Harry May Esq<sup>r</sup>.

*Sym<sup>y</sup> in the Scottish style.*

CHEERFUL  
but not  
quick.

*Air.*

*Sym<sup>y</sup>*

*with spirit.*

*Air, varied.*

*playfully.*

*Sym<sup>y</sup>*

*brillante.*

N<sup>o</sup> 27. Simpson's Journal for the Concertina.

LONDON. — Simpson, 266 Regent St<sup>r</sup>

Example 5.4 Mary of Argyle.

Source: Published in Simpson's Journal for the Concertina  
Vol. 27 (London, c1848) p.313.

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viewed as instrumental equivalents of the “improvements” made to traditional songs for the middle-class market in the mid-nineteenth century. Although the pieces appear technically undemanding when compared with the rigorous exercises in the early publications of Case, Regondi and Blagrove, they are certainly more trying than those published for other hand-held free-reed instruments of the time, as the accordion music in Example 5.5 and the Anglo-German concertina music discussed in the following chapter illustrate. The simple arrangements associated with these other instruments are a reflection not only of their comparative limitations but also their different musical functions.

The remaining portions of the journal sample consist of fashionable dance music (waltzes, polkas etc..., for listening rather than dancing), and items from the army and military band repertory such as “Trumpet and Bugle calls used in the British Army”,<sup>359</sup> “The Sturm Marsch Galop”<sup>360</sup> and a band version of the song “Annie Laurie”.<sup>361</sup>

Caution must be exercised in accepting the foregoing as a representation of the boundaries of the repertory, for music scored for other instruments, such as the violin and flute, could be employed by concertinists without special transcription and there has always been a “hidden repertory” which includes personal, local and regional variations in taste. Nevertheless, it does seem likely that it exemplifies the core repertory.

At the middle of the century, music for the English concertina was exclusively published in London, with the exception of that of Scates who was based in Dublin. By 1880, sheet music prices had fallen considerably due to high demand, standardisation of printing format, new technology and lower paper costs. An efficient postal service encouraged the distribution of both instruments and music. As the century progressed, most of the smaller houses died away while several of the major London publishers (e.g. Chappell, Boosey and Metzler) built up catalogues of music for the English concertina. However, Wheatstone and Co. consolidated their hold as the principal producers of sheet music for the English concertina, revising and expanding their lists. In particular, there was now less emphasis on opera and more on popular song from the domestic, theatre and respectable music hall repertoires.

This included the arrangements of Maurice Cobham,<sup>362</sup> a music teacher in Edinburgh, who compiled a number of editions of Scottish music for Wheatstone and Co. (Figure 5.5) comprising selections from the body of traditional and new Scots songs already endorsed by Scottish middle-class taste and published in such parlour collections as

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<sup>359</sup> Vol. 18, p.208-9 and Vol. 22, p.263.

<sup>360</sup> Vol. 16, p.184.

<sup>361</sup> Vol. 17, p.193.

<sup>362</sup> *Post Office Directory* (Edinburgh, 1840-1) lists Cobham as a professor of music at 40 India Street, Edinburgh. The 1860-1 edition describes him as professor of pianoforte and singing at 38 India Street, Edinburgh. India Street is located in the heart of the city’s fashionable “New Town” area.



8

Rousseau's Dream.

Andante

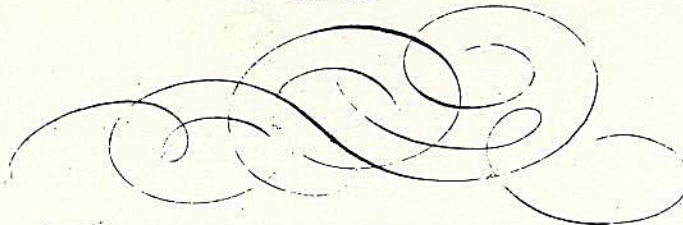
A Swiss Air.

Vivace


Example 5.5 Rousseau's Dream and A Swiss Air.  
Source: Wheatstone's Instructions for the Accordion (London, c1835) p.8.



NO 2171.



SONGS OF SCOTLAND,



Arranged

FOR THE

CONCERTINA,



by

MAURICE COBHAM,

OF EDINBURGH.)

Price 1/3 net

No. 1.

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LONDON:

C. WHEATSTONE & CO,

Inventors, Patentees and Manufacturers  
of the Concertina and the Æola,  
(LATE OF 20, CONDUIT ST. W.)

15, WEST STREET, CHARING CROSS ROAD, W.C.

Figure 5.5 Cover, Songs of Scotland No.1.  
Source: Edinburgh Public Libraries.



### *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

Robert A. Smith's Scottish Minstrel,<sup>363</sup> Finlay Dun and John Thomson's The Vocal Melodies of Scotland,<sup>364</sup> or George Farquar Graham's The Songs of Scotland.<sup>365</sup> His Songs of Scotland No. 1,<sup>366</sup> for example, includes the air of the song "Row Weel, My Boatie, Row Weel" (Example 5.6), first published early in the century under the title "Ellen Boideachd" (Beautiful Ellen) by John McFadyen, music seller in Glasgow. The music was composed by R.A. Smith and the words by Walter Weir, a house painter and Gaelic scholar, who based the theme on a Highland legend learned from his mother.<sup>367</sup> Both the lyrics and music are typical of the pseudo-Scottish songs of the second quarter of the nineteenth century. The text mixes both Lowland and Highland language and images:

Row weel, my boatie, row weel,  
Row weel, my merry men a',  
For there's dool and there's wae in Glenfiorich's bowers,  
An there's grief in my father's ha'.  
And the skiff it danced light on the merry wee waves,  
And it flew o'er the water sae blue,  
And the wind it blew light, and the moon it shone bright,  
But the boatie ne'er reach'd Alandhu.  
Ohon! for fair Ellen, ohon!  
Ohon! for the pride of Strathcoe!  
In the deep, deep sea,  
In the salt, salt bree,  
Lord Reoch, thy Ellen lies low.<sup>368</sup>

The arrangement includes the obligatory Scotch snap motif and exploits the English concertina's facility for providing a drone in imitation of the bagpipes. It exhibits the wide dynamic and expressive range typical of Victorian parlour music but none of the stylistic characteristics of traditional singing.

By the last quarter of the nineteenth century there was a large body of new music of a serious nature, of which Gounod's "Nazareth", Sullivan's "The Lost Chord" and Adams' "The Holy City" are notable examples. These "hits" were arranged not only for piano but for other instruments too. The concertina, with its organ-like tone, could

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<sup>363</sup> (Edinburgh, 1821-4).

<sup>364</sup> (Edinburgh, 1836).

<sup>365</sup> (Edinburgh, n.d.). Published by Wood and Co. who are already mentioned as early trade customers of Wheatstone and Co.. Collinson, The Traditional and National Music of Scotland, p.131, describes Graham as "the best editor and commentator on Scots song of the nineteenth century, as Burns was of the eighteenth... his notes may be classed as essential reading". According to Farmer, The History..., pp.356-7, these collections were reasonably priced and widely available. They reflected and fostered interest in Scottish song through the 1840s and 50s.

<sup>366</sup> (London, 1859).

<sup>367</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 3., p.169.

<sup>368</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 3, pp.72-3, 169.

"ROW WEEL, MY BOATIE, ROW WEEL."

*Andante*  
*Espressivo.*

N<sup>o</sup> 6.

*Mosso.*

*p* *cres:* *f*

*p* *cres:* *f*

*p* *rit:*

*f*

Songs of Scotland, N<sup>o</sup> 1.

NOTE \* By sustaining the low G the drone of the Bagpipe is effectively produced, the whole phrase must be played as *piano* as possible.

Example 5.6 Row Weel, My Boatie, Row Weel.

Source: Arranged by Maurice Cobham. Published in Songs of Scotland No.1 (London, 1859).

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successfully accommodate the semi-sacred sound inherent in these pieces to the extent that much of this music remained linked to the instrument for the next half century, as later chapters show.

The growing infrastructure associated with the English concertina also involved the emergence of teachers dedicated to the instrument. The professionals discussed in Chapter 4.0 were influential in setting standards and establishing the concertina as a serious instrument. Both Eulenstein, mentioned above, and Madame R.S. Pratten,<sup>369</sup> were early teachers of concertina and noted arrangers. The Musical Directory, Register and Almanac of 1855 lists 30 concertina “professors”. One third were based in London and all the others located south of Birmingham, with the exception of J. Scates in Dublin, J. Lee in Armagh and Misses R. and A. Blake and John St. Clair in Edinburgh.<sup>370</sup> The edition of 1862 lists 42 professors with the same geographical bias but now with teachers in Liverpool, Carlisle and Aberdeen.<sup>371</sup> (The American Musical Directory of 1861 noted one concertina teacher in New York.) Lists in directories of 1880 and 1895<sup>372</sup> indicate the emergence of teachers in the north of England, including Manchester, Macclesfield, Staffordshire, Durham, Derby and Blackburn as the popularity of the instrument spread.

### **A Fall From Grace**

The increase in popularity enjoyed by the English concertina during the later decades of the nineteenth century reduced its exclusivity while the adoption of the instrument into working-class musical activity (sacred, bands and music hall, as discussed in later chapters) and the rise of the Anglo-German concertina among the working classes (discussed in the following chapter) reduced its status. The “improvement” of instruments of the woodwind and brass families, the availability of reasonably priced pianos and the exclusion of the concertina from “respectable” circles, reduced its relative attractiveness to middle-class amateur and the instrument fell from their favour.

This is well illustrated by a turn of the century guide to respectable domestic living<sup>373</sup> which fails to mention the concertina in its list of recommended instruments: the pianoforte, violin, viola, violoncello, harp, guitar, mandolin, harmonium, American organ, flute, clarinet, brass instruments, banjo, zither, and pianola.

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<sup>369</sup> Catherine Josepha Pratten, wife of the flute player Robert Sidney Pratten. She arranged Repertoire for the Concertina which included, for example, Romances Nos. 1 and 2 (London, 1861).

<sup>370</sup> St. Clair, of 13 Frederick Street, is listed as teacher of the concertina and violin and performer on violin and cello “at one time with hands and feet”!

<sup>371</sup> The Aberdeen entries are J. Cruikshank and J. Munro. The latter may be Joseph Munro, musical instrument dealer of 32 Woolmanhill, who advertised concertinas in the Post Office Directory (Aberdeen, 1874-5).

<sup>372</sup> Reeves Musical Directory (London, 1880 and 1895).

<sup>373</sup> Davidson H. C. (ed.) The Book of the Home Vol.8 (London, 1901), pp.211-223.

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Subsequent chapters reveal that as the instrument was taken up by the working classes towards the end of the century. Their adoption of the instrument was also accompanied by the transfer of middle-class ideology, so that rational recreation, self-improvement and modest “serious” musical endeavour remained important aspects of adoption well into the present century.

## 6

# The Anglo-German Concertina: Product Diversification in an Expanding Market

### Introduction

The reader of this is kindly requested not to confuse the “English Concertina” with the article called the “German Concertina”, the correct name of which is “Harmonica”, this is only a toy, and does not bear any resemblance to the English Concertina in either tone, fingering, or class of music.<sup>374</sup>

As mentioned in Chapter 2.0, a family of concertina type instruments was made in Germany during the 1830s or 1840s, seemingly independently of Wheatstone’s instrument. Shortly after these became known in Britain, a hybrid, Anglo-German concertina was developed. This was a cheaper alternative to the English model and met with considerable commercial success in the amateur market. Here I discuss the introduction of this instrument type, its particular musical qualities and its principal areas of use.

The instrument was originally targeted at a wide cross- section of the population, with manufacturers and publishers exploiting the respectable image of its cousin, the English concertina, and its use was encouraged among the working classes in “rational recreation”. However, the Anglo-German concertina was not just a poor man’s English concertina but it had its own niche in a rapidly developing market for musical instruments, a niche which incorporated and appealed to tastes associated with various social classes.

From the earliest, the instrument was criticised, particularly by advocates of the English model, as being unsuitable for “serious” music. However, its mass availability and relatively low cost ensured that, by the late nineteenth century, it became a working-class instrument. Adoption by street players reinforced the image of the Anglo-German concertina’s low-status. In Scotland, this model was largely

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<sup>374</sup> Pietra, The National Tutor..., p.1.

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abandoned by 1914, although a number of relatively self-contained pockets of use did survive well into the twentieth century elsewhere.

Given the individual character of the instrument and its restricted patronage, this chapter covers a wide time scale and is relatively self-contained.

### **History and Development**

The first German concertinas were of a rectangular shape and, unlike the English type, were “diatonic”, that is, limited to the notes of one or two major keys. As in the simple mouth organ and early accordion from which they developed, their manuals were arranged so that each button would sound a different note on pressing and drawing the bellows.<sup>375</sup> In the simplest form, each manual comprised a single row of five buttons running horizontally (i.e. at right angles to the line of the players fingers, the opposite direction from the rows on the English model) to give the notes of a scale in a single key (Figure 6.1a). More commonly, each manual comprised two rows of five buttons; with the row farthest away from the player’s body giving the basic key and with the inner row pitched a fifth higher to allow performance in a second related key. On each row, the scale ascends from left to right and the left hand manual gives the lower part while the right hand gives the treble of the scale.

Their simple shape, “single action” and limited range (requiring fewer reeds) meant they could be produced much more cheaply than the English concertinas and cost savings were also made through mass production and the use of lower quality materials. Given their musical “limitations” and inferior quality, it is reasonable to assume that they were not produced in direct competition with the “superior” English models but were aimed at a separate sector of the developing market for musical instruments. The new form of concertina was promoted as an advance on the primitive French and Viennese accordions which had enjoyed great popularity among amateurs throughout Europe<sup>376</sup> during the 1830s and 40s:

The CONCERTINA is an instrument of a similar nature to the Accordion and Flutina, but of an improved construction, the arrangement of the keys enabling both hands to be used at once, and thus facilitating the execution of extended passages, where the music proceeds to extreme degrees of the scale; and also producing a much superior style of harmony to what can be attained on the Accordion, giving a richness and fullness to the music such as no other instrument,

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<sup>375</sup> Where a different note is sounded on the press and the draw this is termed “single action”.

<sup>376</sup> The Edinburgh musical instrument firm of Glen bought in large numbers of accordions and related parts during this period. See Myers, The Glen Account Book...



left

right



Figure 6.1a 10 Key German Concertina Layout.



Figure 6.1b 20 Key Anglo-German Concertina Layout.

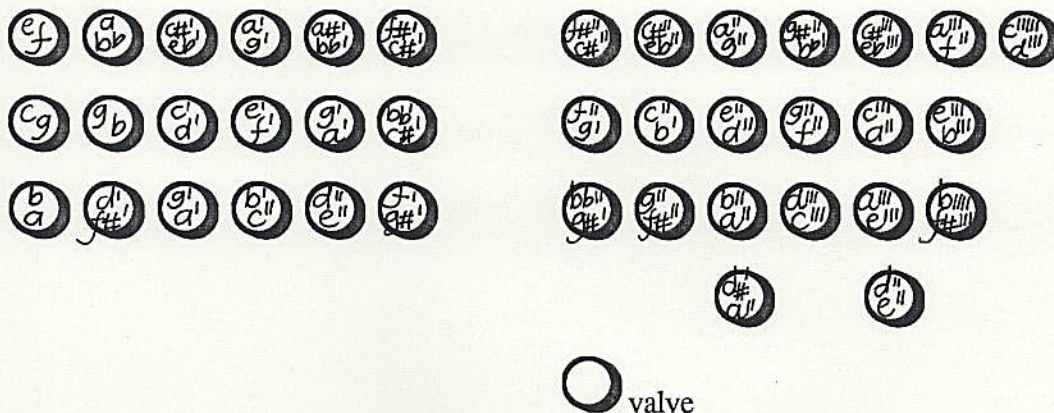


Figure 6.1c Chromatic Anglo-German Concertina Layout.

Upper values are notes on closing bellows  
Lower values are notes on drawing bellows

Although the sample layouts are typical,  
instruments are found in a variety of sizes,  
layouts and key combinations.



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except those constructed on the principle of the Pianoforte or Organ, is capable of producing.<sup>377</sup>

Later in the century it was possible to claim:

The melodion [German button accordion] is similar in form and construction to the French accordion, an instrument extremely popular until the introduction of the German concertina, which came rapidly into universal favour with musicians, amateur and professional.<sup>378</sup>

I do, however, urge caution in regarding musical instruments as being in competition with each other, for, in a rapidly expanding market, a number of similar products can comfortably co-exist, each serving different musical and social functions.

Although it is not known precisely when the German instruments were first imported into Britain, evidence from advertisements confirms that they were on sale by the mid- 1840s. It is an instrument of this kind that is played by the subject of Millais' famous "The Blind Girl", painted in Scotland in the early 1850s.<sup>379</sup> Wheatstone and Co. recognised the potential market for the German imports when they developed their own rectangular instrument called the duett.<sup>380</sup> This instrument shared the construction and external appearance of the German instrument but had the double action of the English type and comprised two manuals of 24 buttons which limited playing to a single key. Wheatstone and Co.'s records note the sale of several duett concertinas in the early 1860s. These were priced between 12s. and £1.12s., in contrast to the 5-10 guineas being charged for English models.<sup>381</sup> A tutor was published<sup>382</sup> for the duett but the instrument met with little commercial success.

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<sup>377</sup> The Concertina Preceptor or Pocket Guide to the Art of Playing the Concertina (Glasgow, Enlarged and Improved Edition, c1850), p.29. British Library a.77.a..

<sup>378</sup> Gems of Song for the Melodion (Glasgow, c1880), p.3. Published by Cameron and Ferguson, Glasgow.

<sup>379</sup> The Blind Girl by John Everett Millais, City of Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. The figures and foreground were painted in Perth, Scotland with the artist's wife Effie and later two local girls posing for the work. According to the April 1857 entry in Diary of Effie (London, n.d.) "the concertina was lent us by a Mr. Pringle who had an only daughter who played it. She died about six months ago and he said sadly that we might keep it as long as we liked for it would never be played on anymore". Other examples of the concertina being played by blind beggars are discussed later in this thesis.

<sup>380</sup> This instrument should not be confused with the duet forms discussed earlier and in later chapters. Examples of Wheatstone's duett instruments are held in the Concertina Museum, Belper, The Science Museum, London and the private collection of Stephen Chambers, Dublin.

<sup>381</sup> Chidley, K.V. "The Duet Concertina -Its History and the Evolution of its Keyboard" Free Reed 17 (1974), pp.15-6. Wheatstone's rival, Louis Lachenal of London advertised 24 key duett concertinas at £1 2s.- £1. 6s. at the same time as he sold his best quality 48 keyed English models at £3-8s.: Advertisement in Musical Directory and Advertiser (London, 1862).

<sup>382</sup> Wheatstone and Co. Instructions for Performing on Wheatstone's Patent Duett Concertina (London, 1856).

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By the 1850s, a hybrid Anglo-German concertina (commonly abbreviated to “Anglo”) was being marketed in which the hexagonal shape (Figure 6.2) of the English type was combined with a keyboard layout based on that of the early German instruments (Figure 6.1b). It is not known how and when this version of the instrument emerged, but it has been suggested that it was a London concertina maker C. Jeffries who was responsible.<sup>383</sup> The Anglo-German concertina was subsequently made both in England and in Germany. The best British instruments were generally of a constructional standard comparable with native English system concertinas while the German made instruments were typically less durable. These less expensive instruments also had a somewhat “brasher” timbre. In the 1880s, an additional third row and other notes were being added to the instrument to provide sharps and flats to complete the chromatic scale (Figure 6.1c). A typical version of this Chromatic Anglo-German or Anglo-Chromatic concertina is given in Figure 6.3.

After 1860, increased free trade made a substantial contribution to the distribution of cheap instruments from Germany. Ehrlich has noted that as late as 1853 import duties on “fancy articles”, including musical instruments, were “applied with bureaucratic punctiliousness”.<sup>384</sup> Import duty of 5s. was charged for every 100 “notes”<sup>385</sup> of “common German square concertinas” and 4s. each for “concertinas of octagonal form, not common German”.<sup>386</sup> With the removal of protective tariffs in the 1860s, a highly competitive international market emerged, encouraged by cheap labour and large scale industrial production. This drove down the price of instruments. Swift developments in musical instrument manufacture in Germany during the 1870s and 80s, based upon “a formidable amalgam of qualities, technical, commercial and cultural”,<sup>387</sup> stimulated a large output of pianos, string, free-reed and brass instruments. The cottage industries of Chemnitz and Klingenthal evolved rapidly into large scale factory production and took advantage of new machine tools, a progressive technical/commercial educational system, a clear marketing strategy and a national musical prestige.<sup>388</sup> This contrasted greatly with the situation in England where most musical instrument production remained as a craft rather than an “industry”. Although seen as a novelty at first, it could be claimed by the 1850s that the Anglo-German concertina “is now also manufactured and sold at such a moderate price as presents an additional inducement to its extended use”<sup>389</sup> and it was only a short time before increased disposable income and leisure time among the working classes would make purchase of the instrument easily affordable.

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<sup>383</sup> Pilling, “Concertina”, p.462. This is highly unlikely for according to Cowan, Joel “A Brief History of the Jeffries Concertina” in Concertina and Free Reed 1, No.2 (Spring 1983), pp.6-7, Jeffries did not commence manufacture until around 1870.

<sup>384</sup> Ehrlich, The Music Profession..., p.100.

<sup>385</sup> This may refer to either buttons or reeds.

<sup>386</sup> Buxton, Charles Finance and Politics, a Historical Study 1783-1885 Vol.1 (London, 1888), p.201. I am grateful to Cyril Ehrlich for this reference by personal communication.

<sup>387</sup> Ehrlich, The Piano..., p.71.

<sup>388</sup> Autorenkollektiv, Das Akkordeon, pp.28-30.

<sup>389</sup> The Concertina Preceptor..., p.29.

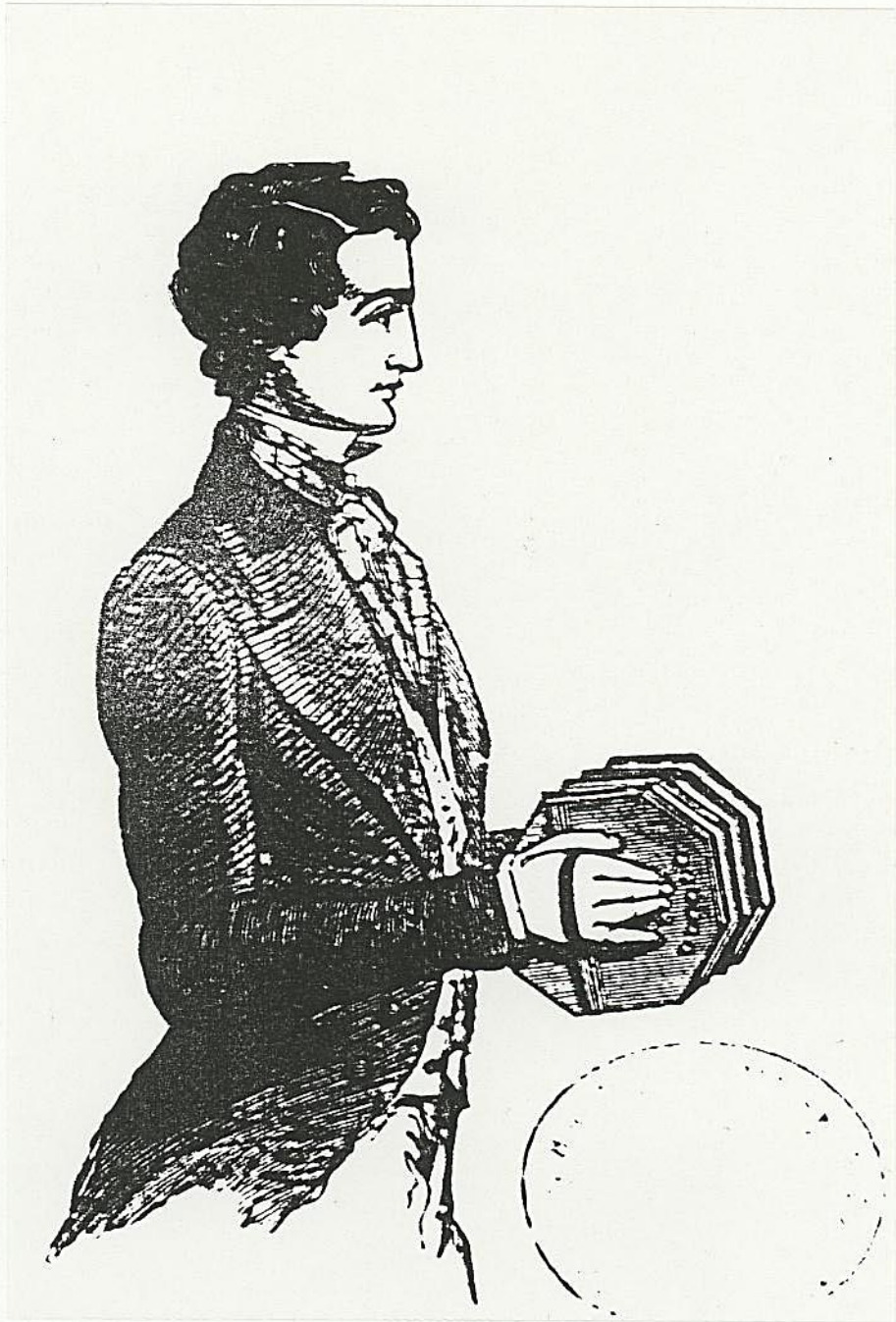


Figure 6.2 Player of Anglo-German Concertina.  
Source: Concertina Preceptor (Glasgow, 1855). Copy in  
British Library.



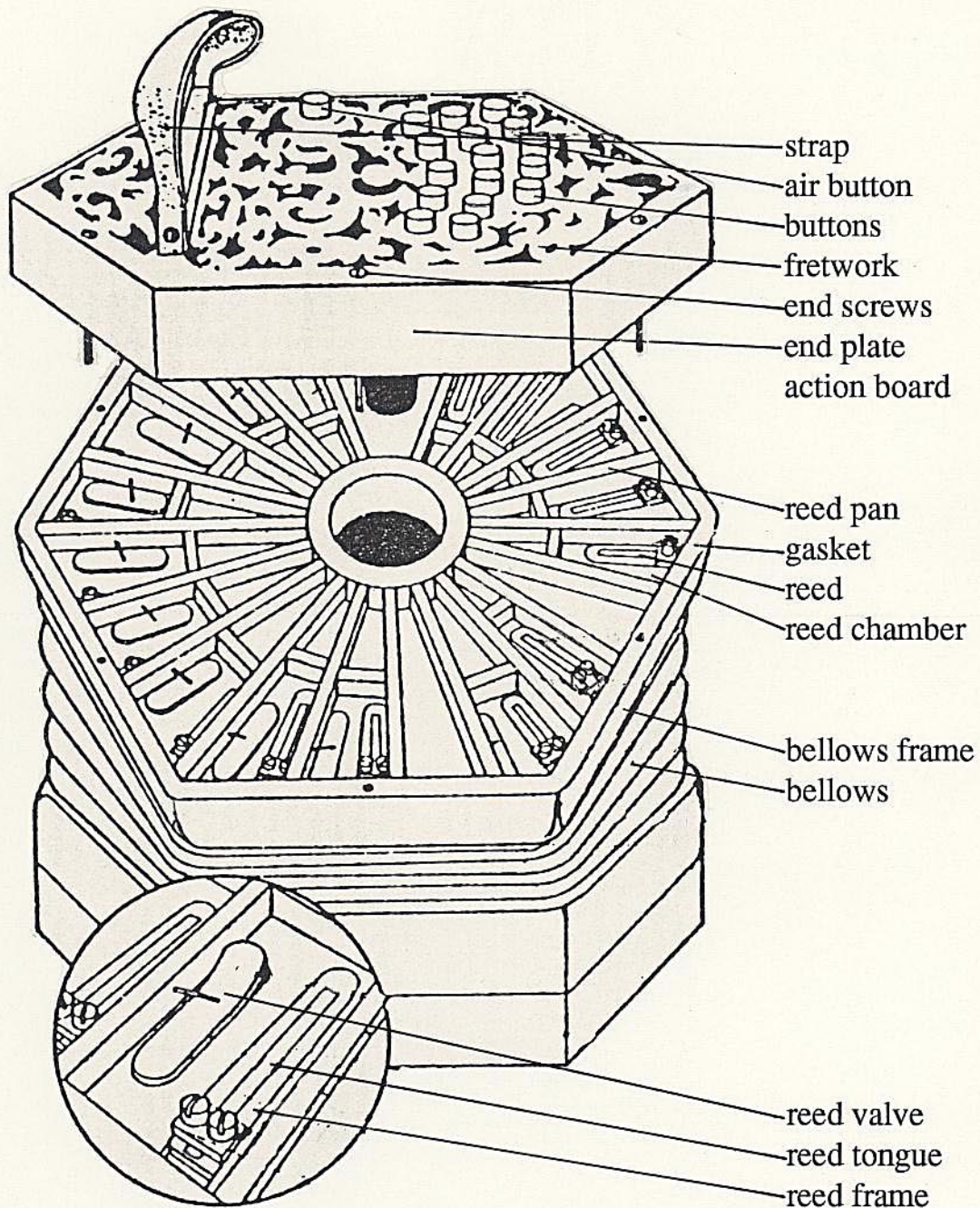


Figure 6.3 Typical Anglo-German Concertina, c.1890.  
 Source: NGDMM Vol.4, p.626, additional text added.

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The German producers offered a large range of models tailored to suit different musical requirements and pockets. Wayne has suggested that the most prominent importers of German concertinas into Great Britain were the firms of M. Howson, Winrow and Son and Jabez Gregory, who were “based in the warren of streets around Hollow Stone, Nottingham.”<sup>390</sup> However, trade advertisements and directories show that importers were operating in all large centres of population and included Köhler of Edinburgh and Campbell and Co. in Glasgow. Campbell and Co. (established c.1840) offered a large range of both Anglo-German and English concertinas. They operated a retail mail order service throughout Britain and Ireland and were also major suppliers of the melodion or German accordion.<sup>391</sup> According to an advertisement of 1900, they had branches in London, Berlin and Dresden<sup>392</sup> and elsewhere they claimed the “largest stock outside London”.<sup>393</sup>

Anglo-German concertinas of quality were made in England by a number of companies, most of whom were already involved in the manufacture of English models. Of these, George Jones had a particularly high output.<sup>394</sup> As a part-time music hall performer, he claimed to have been the first person in Great Britain to perform publicly on the German concertina.<sup>395</sup> Jones commenced commercial production of the Anglo-German concertina in the early 1860s and was immediately successful in securing large orders from J. Scates of Dublin, Campbell of Glasgow and other provincial retailers. He developed and made “organ toned” instruments in which two sets of reeds were tuned to play an octave apart and he produced both English and Anglo concertinas under the name “Celestial”.<sup>396</sup> In 1870, he introduced “Broad Steel Reeds” of powerful tone. His catalogue of c.1900 listed over fifty varieties of “Anglo” of his own make, grouped into qualities A, B and C. In 1884, Jones patented his “Improvements in Anglo-German Concertinas”, the basis of the fore-mentioned Perfect Chromatic Anglo-German Concertina, and wrote a tutor for the instrument which was published by Wheatstone and Co.<sup>397</sup> and remained in print into this century.

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<sup>390</sup> Wayne, Neil “George Jones, An Echo From the Past: The Concertina Trade in Victorian Times” Free Reed 16 (November, 1973), p.15.

<sup>391</sup> Campbell and Co. Privilege Price List (Glasgow, 1890-91). Copy supplied by Kingussie Folk Museum. There is a photograph of Campbell’s shopfront showing a display of concertinas in the Stephen Chambers Collection, Dublin. The Mitchell Library, Glasgow has a photograph of the interior of Campbell’s workshop (Photograph no. 1956).

<sup>392</sup> Advertisement in The Celtic Monthly (November, 1900).

<sup>393</sup> Quiz (24 March 1898).

<sup>394</sup> Jones, George “An Echo from the Past: The Concertina Trade in Victorian Times” (with notes from Neil Wayne and Frank Butler) Free Reed 16 (November 1973), pp.14- 20. Butler, Frank E. “The Story of George Jones” (with additional notes and commentary by Joel Cowan) Concertina and Squeezebox 20 (Summer 1989), pp.5-14.

<sup>395</sup> Ibid. Jones, p.15.

<sup>396</sup> According to Autorenkollektiv, Das Akkordeon, p.16, it was the Viennese harmonica maker Wilhelm Thie who invented the “Celeste” tuning (or mistuning) by which two reeds were set slightly out of tune to effect a form of vibrato.

<sup>397</sup> Jones, George Tutor for the Anglo-German Concertina, with 26 or 30 Keys, comprising Rudiments of Music, scales, Exercises and a large Selection of Popular Airs and Melodies, including Imitation of

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Anglo-German concertinas were also made by Wheatstone and Co., and the companies of Lachenal, Crabb and Jeffries. Instruments by the last mentioned gained a particularly high reputation and are still prized.<sup>398</sup>

The large range of concertina models on offer can be viewed as a classic example of product diversification resulting from attempts to cater for the widest musical market. Around 1890, George Jones' "Class A" Anglo-German instruments sold for between £1 2s. 6d. for a 20 key brass- reed, mahogany ended model and £3 3s. for a 32 key, steel- reed nickel ended instrument,<sup>399</sup> and Campbell and Co.'s best (most likely made by Jones) were between £1 15s. and £5 5s..<sup>400</sup> Both offered a large range of cheaper "quality" instruments starting from 4s. 6d., but even these were twice as expensive as many imported instruments which were available for as little as 2s 6d.<sup>401</sup> from "toy dealers, stationers and cheapjacks".<sup>402</sup> Pegg<sup>403</sup> identifies low cost as an important factor in the adoption of the Anglo-German instrument by the working-class musicians of the late nineteenth century but also notes how the instrument's adoption must be considered within the context of a larger instrument family. The Anglo-German concertina, mouth-organ and button accordion share the same single action and basic layout of notes and therefore the player of one could move with some ease to the others. As the cheapest, the mouth- organ was often the beginner's instrument but later he or she might move onto the accordion or concertina as economic circumstances allowed or musical requirements changed. The double action English concertina was outwith this group.

### **Late Nineteenth Century Popularity**

The capabilities of the German concertina to rank high in the scale of musical instruments has rendered it, in the present day, one of the greatest favourites in the family musical circle. It has many varied and excellent qualities. From its sweetness and peculiarity of tone it is

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the Bells. (London, n.d.).

<sup>398</sup> Cowan, A Brief History....

<sup>399</sup> Extract from company catalogue reproduced in Butler, "The Story of George Jones..." , p.8. His 48 key English concertinas ranged from £2 2s. to £14 14s.

<sup>400</sup> Privilege Price List, p.2.

<sup>401</sup> Bradshaw, Harry notes accompanying cassette recording William Mullaly: The First Irish Concertina Player to Record (Viva Voce 005, 1992), p.3. Charles Middleton of Hamilton advertised a wide range of Anglo-German concertinas from 2s. 6d. upwards: advertisement in Middleton's Selection of Humorous Scotch Songs (Hamilton, c1880).

<sup>402</sup> Campbell's Privilege Price List, p.35. In 1855 Rudall, Rose and Carte and Co. of London advertised German concertinas at one halfpenny, 2 row instruments at 1d. and octagonal instruments at one and a half penny! Their English concertinas sold at between 6 and 15 guineas: Musical Directory and Advertiser (London, 1855).

<sup>403</sup> Pegg, "Musical Choices...".

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exquisitely adapted for the performance of sacred music, hymns, chants etc...<sup>404</sup>

A working man's instrument, ideal for proletarian musical junkets.<sup>405</sup>

These seemingly contradictory images of the Anglo-German concertina are not uncommon and serve to illustrate the instrument's adoption into domestic music-making across a broad class base in the Victorian period. Increased spending power and leisure-time enjoyed by certain sectors of the working-class in the last quarter of the nineteenth century led to a dramatic rise in the demand for musical instruments for amateur use, a demand which was in large part satisfied by the free-reed instruments.

It has been suggested in popular historical writing that, during the last decades of the nineteenth century, there was a piano or harmonium in nearly every home in Britain, irrespective of the class of its occupants.<sup>406</sup> While I hope to prove later that this is a gross exaggeration, such perceptions do recognise the great blossoming in the ownership of commercially produced musical instruments which occurred.<sup>407</sup> The form of musical instrument adopted by members of a working-class household was dependent not only on cost and musical requirements but also housing conditions. Throughout the nineteenth century, cramped living conditions were a major feature of working-class life. Taking Scotland as an example, in 1861, 27 per cent of the whole population lived in "houses" of one room and another 38 per cent in those of two: the one-room cottage and the "but-and-ben" cottage, or their urban equivalent. Fifty years later, the combined total for both types was still very nearly 50 per cent and the census of 1951 showed that it had only been reduced to just under 30 per cent.<sup>408</sup> Even when not a necessity, single-room living continued as an inheritance from the rural housing from which many of the urban workers came. Furthermore, housing was only available in tenement buildings of three to four storeys to all but the highest income groups in Scottish cities. Each level would contain several flats or "houses" which were reached by a common stair, sometimes with galleries or balconies. This prevailed well into the present century. Even when keyboard instruments could be afforded, living conditions ruled out acquisition, lack of space, combined with high densities and low security of tenure favouring smaller, portable and quieter alternatives such as the accordion and concertina.

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<sup>404</sup> Moore's Irish Melodies, (Published by Cameron and Ferguson, Glasgow, c.1880) p.2.

<sup>405</sup> Pearsall, R. Victorian Popular Music (Newton Abbot, 1973), p.128.

<sup>406</sup> For example, "little more than a generation ago [i.e. 1830-60], pianofortes were to be found only in the houses of the well-to-do; but now [1894] there are few working-men's homes in which there is not either a pianoforte, a harmonium, or an American organ.": Aird, Andrew Glimpses of Glasgow (Glasgow, 1894), quoted in Farmer, A Musical History..., p.350.

<sup>407</sup> By 1880 "ownership of playable instruments [pianos] had extended to at least one for every twenty people, perhaps one in ten": Ehrlich, The Music Profession..., p.102.

<sup>408</sup> McWilliam, Colin Scottish Townscape (London, 1975), p.151.



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As with the English concertina and the early accordion, the Anglo-German concertina found acceptance among both male and female amateurs. The Steven Chambers collection includes an early Victorian portrait photograph of a young girl in fashionable tartan attire posing at a table bearing an Anglo-German concertina. This depiction of the new instrument as a symbol of refined female respectability has many parallels in portraits featuring the accordion. By the early twentieth-century, it was known as a women's instrument in a number of communities including Co. Clare in Ireland<sup>409</sup> (perhaps because of the associations of the existing traditional instruments with a solely male performance tradition) and in the northern isles of Scotland where Peter Cooke has gathered evidence of the instrument being brought in by women labourers returning from working in the fishing ports of the East Coast mainland.<sup>410</sup>

The Anglo-German instrument was promoted as an instrument of "rational recreation" as middle-class reformers sought to impose their ideology of the "improving" benefits of musical participation on the lower classes. This is particularly apparent in the large amount of music published for the instrument in the period 1850-1890.

Unlike the English concertina, which can be used for performance from music written out for other instruments, the common diatonic Anglo-German instrument requires its music to be played by ear or specially arranged to suit, unless it is of appropriate range and simplicity. Furthermore, for some musicians of the nineteenth century, the acquisition of the concertina often represented a first entry into musical activity and the peculiarities of the novel instrument required explanation and demonstration. As a consequence, the rise in popularity of the instrument was accompanied by demand for published music and primers. The desire for large amounts of cheaply produced music also coincided with a substantial drop in sheet music prices brought on by a combination of structural changes in the print industry, new technology, reduced paper costs, fiscal benefits and improved distribution.<sup>411</sup>

During the 1850s, we find a modest number of tutors and collections of a catholic nature from small companies<sup>412</sup> but, by the late 1860s and the 1870s, the largest London publishing firms were compiling extensive catalogues and beginning to dominate the national market.

The tactic of most of these companies was to supply a large number of separate volumes, each concentrating on a different part of the contemporary popular music repertory. Music was often published under the name of some leading musician,

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<sup>409</sup> Breathnach, *Folk Music and Dances...*, p.86.

<sup>410</sup> Cooke, *The Fiddle Tradition...*, p.22. Cooke notes that the instrument was known in Shetland as the "peerie accordion". In my own family it was known as the "wee melodeon".

<sup>411</sup> Ehrlich, *The Music Profession...*, p.103.

<sup>412</sup> For example: Charles Coule's *The Casket for German Concertina* (London, 1855), Coleman's *Gems of Sacred Melody for German Concertina* (London, 1855) and Rock Chidley's *Chidley's Instructions for the German Fingering Concertina* (London, 1858).

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invariably without endorsement. A particularly blatant case of this was the large list issued by C. Sheard<sup>413</sup> under the name of Regondi, the great English concertinist:

Regondi's Concertina Melodist  
Regondi's 100 Country dances, Jigs, Reels etc...  
Regondi's Comic and Christy Album, Books 1-6  
Regondi's Tutor  
Regondi's 20 Selected Quadrilles  
Regondi's 200 Melodies  
Regondi's Christy Minstrel and Buckley Songs  
Regondi's Sacred Airs  
Regondi's Dance Album

Metzler and Co. issued over a dozen editions under the name of Carlo Minasi<sup>414</sup> at 6d. each for 25 to 30 pieces, including:

Minasi's Favorite Songs and Ballads, Books 1-4  
Minasi's Hymns, Ancient and Modern  
Minasi's Popular Comic Songs, with words  
Minasi's Popular Scotch Songs, with words  
Minasi's Popular Songs of the Day  
Minasi's Twenty-five Favourite Songs and Ballads  
Minasi's Twenty-five Popular Waltzes, Gallops, Polkas etc...

Like other champions of the emerging national music industry, Metzler was also closely involved in the manufacture, import and sale of all forms of musical instruments and in the promotion of concerts.<sup>415</sup>

Boosey and Co.'s "Instrumental Library"<sup>416</sup> also included similar collections at between 1s. and 1s. 6d. for between fifty and one hundred pieces and the firm also published, every Saturday (at only 1d), its serial Weekly Concertinist: A Miscellany of the Newest and Most Popular Music. Issue XVII<sup>417</sup> comprised:

The Patti Polka  
"Violetta" Polka Mazurka

Alfred Mellon  
Carl Faust

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<sup>413</sup> British Library catalogue.

<sup>414</sup> Advertisement in Metzler and Co.'s Selection of Quadrilles, Waltzes, Gallops, Polkas, Etc., for the Violin (London, n.d.). Minasi was an arranger for Metzler and his name is also found on a tutor for the German concertina published by Boosey and Co.

<sup>415</sup> Scott, The Singing Bourgeois, pp.122-3.

<sup>416</sup> Advertisement in writer's collection.

<sup>417</sup> (London, c.1875), p.99-104.

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“Quell ‘agil pie” (from William Tell)	Rossini
When the Swallows	F. Abt.
The Sun Smiles in Beauty	Welsh Melody
Far, Far O’er Hill and Dale	
Ciel Pietoso (from Zelmira)	Rossini
Oh! Boys, Carry Me ‘long	S. C. Foster
Dwy You Know Dat	M. Pike
Darkies, Sing	Christy’s
Old Memories	S. C. Foster
Clare de Kitchen	Christy’s
I would not have the young again	S. Massett
Root, Hog, or Die	Christy’s
Happy Haidee	M. Pike
The Bowery Gals	Christy’s

Although less “artistic” than much of the music published for the English concertina, this selection is, nevertheless, quite “up market” and confirms the Anglo-German concertina as a respectable instrument at the time. The large amount of minstrelsy and music by Stephen Foster is striking. The presence of Foster’s music is not surprising given its “folksy” sentiment, melancholy and gentle pace which made it so popular in the English speaking home of the mid- nineteenth century, irrespective of class. Just as Scott<sup>418</sup> has shown how Foster’s “up tempo” music was closely tied to the emerging popularity of the banjo, so it could be argued that the character of his sentimental songs was well matched to the sound character of the new free-reed instruments, including the Anglo-German concertina, the harmonium and the North American lap-organ.

In addition to the output of the London based publishers, a large amount of music for the Anglo-German concertina was published in Glasgow during the period 1850-1885.<sup>419</sup> The publishers were all small scale stationers, printers and booksellers serving the developing commercial sector in the city and the expanding markets of popular education and respectable domestic leisure.

William Hamilton published his Concertina Preceptor or pocket guide to the art of playing the concertina comprising a complete course of lessons on music with instructions, scales and a selection of favorite airs arranged in an easy and progressive style<sup>420</sup> as early as 1855. Hamilton was an enterprising publisher and educationalist who launched the national journal, The British Minstrel, in 1842 (two years before

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<sup>418</sup> Scott, The Singing Bourgeois, p.86.

<sup>419</sup> Eydmann, Stuart Concertina Music Published in Scotland 1850-1885: a Preliminary Checklist (Edinburgh, 1994). Unpublished typescript in National Library of Scotland.

<sup>420</sup> British Library BL a.77.a. A copy is included in the catalogue of the Advocate’s Library, Edinburgh but is now missing.

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Novello's Musical Times) and experimented with patent forms of music notation in which the tonic sol-fa equivalents were printed inside each note.

George Cameron (b. Inverness 1814 d. Glasgow 1863) was a noted composer of psalmody and publisher of school books, catechisms and sacred and instrumental music. His eight collections for the concertina,<sup>421</sup> issued during the 1850s, can therefore be seen within the wider context of his publication of other "rational" material.

John S. Marr was successor to George Cameron and published 14 concertina books under his own name during the 1880s.<sup>422</sup>

Cameron and Co. operated from around 1865<sup>423</sup> and published a series of twelve collections for the concertina under the title "Adams's". This was after either Richard and Robert Adams, noted musicians and music dealers in the city at the time who also led "Adams's Band", "the most popular in the city, and in great request at concerts, balls and soirees",<sup>424</sup> or Thomas Julian Adams, composer and conductor from London who formed an orchestra during the 1850s and held weekly concerts in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Greenock.<sup>425</sup>

The output of the Glasgow publishers largely reflected that of the London houses with the exception of a larger component of Scottish song and dance music<sup>426</sup> as in Adams's Scottish Dance Music for the Concertina<sup>427</sup> which contains 25 reels and strathspeys, 6 jigs, 2 highland schottische, 2 sets of quadrilles and 5 country dances.

John Cameron<sup>428</sup> was a publisher of songs and music for various instruments including the accordion and melodion. He published 26 collections for the Anglo-German concertina, including a number under the title "Mitchison's".<sup>429</sup>

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<sup>421</sup> For example Cameron's Selection of Concertina Music... (Glasgow, 1857) (copy in The British Library a.7.b (2)), Cameron's Selection of Concertina Music... (Glasgow, 1861) (copy in New York Public Library), Cameron's New and Improved Concertina Tutor (Glasgow, 1860), (copies in The British Library a.7.b (1) and New York Public Library).

<sup>422</sup> All are held in the British Library.

<sup>423</sup> Post Office Directory (Glasgow, 1865).

<sup>424</sup> Industries of Glasgow (London, 1888), p.227.

<sup>425</sup> Brown and Stratton British Musical Biography, p.2.

<sup>426</sup> Such as Adams's 100 Scottish Airs for the concertina: with complete instructions and scales (Glasgow, c.1860), Copy in National Library of Scotland MH.s.259. Stamped Willam [Mac?]Duff, Concertina [M?]aker, Perth and signed "Margaret Ann Campbell, Auch[?]jeck, August 16th. 1866". Gaelic note written on page 12. Illustrated cover (Figure 6.5).

<sup>427</sup> (Glasgow, c1860). Copy in The National Library of Scotland MH.v.458.

<sup>428</sup> According to the Post Office Directory he operated from around 1865 and through the 1870s.

<sup>429</sup> William Mitchison (b. circa 1809 d. Brooklyn 1867) was a pioneering publisher of inexpensive sacred and traditional music in Glasgow between 1839-54.

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Cameron and Ferguson grew out of Cameron and Co. around 1875<sup>430</sup> and continued to publish music under the “Adam’s” title. The catalogue of fourteen publications for concertina included “Ethiopian” and Christy minstrel selections, the new sacred music of Moody and Sankey and several collections of Irish melodies,<sup>431</sup> the latter reflecting the large immigrant population in the publisher’s city. The cover illustrations of many of these editions (Figures 6.4 and 6.5) show the concertina in “up-market” settings and, although this may have been in reflection of the reality of its use, it is more likely that they sought to sell the image of upper middle-class respectability.

The output of the Glasgow companies can be read not only as an indication of the popularity of the instrument in Scotland at the time but also as a provincial attempt to meet a widely based local demand not provided for by London publishers. By 1890, most of these small publishers had ceased to exist and music publishing in Glasgow became the concern of a smaller number of larger businesses. It is an indication of the fall in popularity of the Anglo-German concertina in Scotland that none of the new publishers issued music for it, demand continuing to be met by London houses.

In all the above mentioned publications for the Anglo-German concertina, the music is printed in both the conventional treble clef form and in a coded system which indicates the required fingering and direction of bellows movement. The commonest forms are shown in Figure 6.6. The coded version allowed the musically non-literate to obtain early results and encouraged self learning. Although there are crotchets and bar-lines, readers of the code only have no indication of tempo or rhythm. Code is therefore appropriate for the performance of music which was already “in the head” of the player, where learning was by a combination of reading and ear or where the expected rhythm and tempo were standard, as in much traditional dance music. It is also possible that the sole use of code places less emphasis on “correctness” and allows for a greater degree of personal interpretation and expression. Such tablature systems have been extensively used by melodeon players well into this century<sup>432</sup> and are still employed by accordion teachers and in published tutors for the harmonica. A number of children’s musical instruments come complete with instructions based upon similar methods of instruction.

The presentation of two different notation systems is further evidence of the wide base of adoption of the Anglo- German concertina. It suggests that the instrument was targeted not only at different class sectors but also at two seemingly contradictory attitudes to popular music-making in the nineteenth century; the “improving/literate”

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<sup>430</sup> Post Office Directory, 1875.

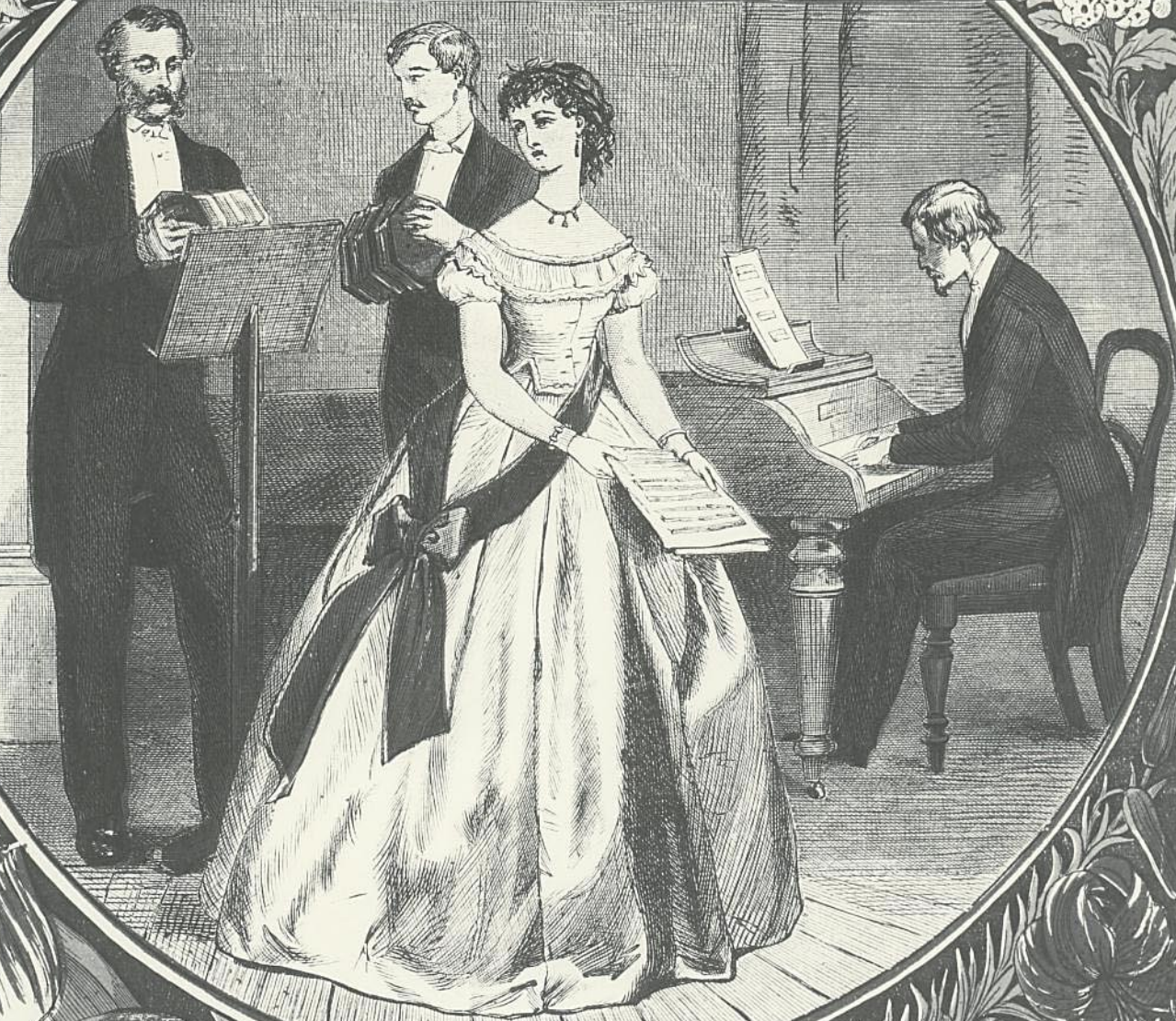
<sup>431</sup> Extant examples include Sixty Irish Songs, Music and Words for the Concertina (Glasgow, n.d.) (copy in The Mitchell Library, Glasgow) and Moore’s Irish Melodies, (copy in The National Library of Scotland, MH.s.53).

<sup>432</sup> Breathnach, Folk Music..., p.85. Non-standard notation systems of this type were also used by teachers of traditional fiddle. See, for example, Mac Aoidh, Caoimhín, “Aspects of Donegal and Kerry Fiddle Music” Ceol 21 (Vol.VII, Nos. 1 and 2, December 1984), pp.20-28.



# SIXTY IRISH SONGS

## MUSIC AND WORDS FOR THE CONCERTINA



GLASGOW: CAMERON & FERGUSON.

LONDON: 12, AVE MARIA LANE.

Figure 6.4 Cover, *Sixty Irish Songs etc... for Concertina*.  
Source: Mitchell Library, Glasgow.



*Margaret Ann Campbell Acquired August 16<sup>th</sup> 1876*

MH. s. 259

WILLIAM GUY,  
CONTRACT MAKER

**ADAMS'S**  
**100**  
**SCOTTISH AIRS**  
FOR THE  
**CONCERTINA;**

*With Complete Instructions and Scales.*



**GLASGOW: CAMERON & CO., 88 WEST NILE ST.**  
**LONDON: F. PITMAN, 20 PATERNOSTER ROW.**  
SOLD BY ALL BOOK AND MUSIC SELLERS.

Figure 6.5 Cover, Adam's 100 Scottish Airs for the Concertina.  
Source: National Library of Scotland.





+ bellows in

- bellows out

Buttons numbered 1-10, left to right, outer row first.

Source: The Concertina Preceptor or Pocket Guide to the Art of Playing the Concertina (enlarged and improved edition) (Glasgow, n.d.). British Library Catalogue a.77.a.



^ bellows in

- bellows out

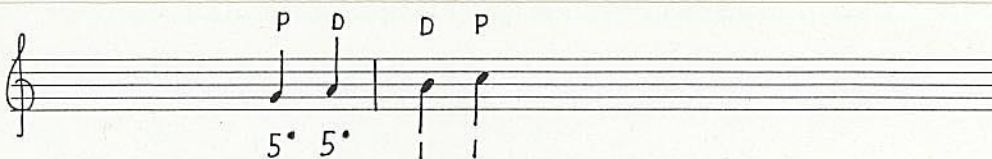
Source: Adam's Scottish Dance Music for the Concertina (Glasgow, n.d.). National Library of Scotland Catalogue MH.v.458.



^ bellows in

- bellows out

Source: Roylance, C. Tutor for Chromatic Anglo-German Concertina (London, n.d.).



P bellows in (Press)

D bellows out (Draw)

• indicates left hand manual.

Source: Kail, Bob The Best Concertina Method - yet! (Carlstadt, N.J., n.d.).

Figure 6.6 Anglo-German Concertina Code Systems.

### *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

and the “plebeian traditions”,<sup>433</sup> both of which were in tension throughout the nineteenth century. By the 1880s, literacy had come to permeate most forms of popular music making although in Scotland the conservative nature of the strong musical traditions may have dictated that change occurred more slowly.

While some have viewed the nineteenth century popularity of cheap, mass-produced musical instruments as a major contribution to a decline, degeneration or abandonment of “authentic folk music” through the corrupting, commercial exploitation of a duped public, I prefer a more positive angle which recognises the unprecedented opportunities for working-class participation in instrumental music-making which the Anglo-German instruments offered. The adoption of the instrument can thus be seen not as an impoverishment but rather as a diversification, which contributed to the democratisation of music in the nineteenth century by offering a foot on the ladder of instrumental music while occupying an important place in the transition to a literate musical society. Although the Anglo-German concertina was, for a time at least, associated with the promotion of the ideology of organised, “improving” musical activity among the working class, I would suggest that, rather than destroying “traditional” musical forms and practices, it may have helped enrich and even consolidate and maintain older music in a period of musical and social change.

### **Contemporary Comment and Status**

The Teutonic instrument of the midnight Mohawk.<sup>434</sup>

The nineteenth century saw the reform of many popular and traditional activities. In addition to the promotion of music as a more “rational”, improving activity, certain existing musical practices were dismantled or transformed from above. It is not surprising, therefore, to find the Anglo-German concertina’s adoption into the “plebeian tradition” heavily criticised in contemporary comment. Gammon and Gammon<sup>435</sup> have shown how such texts are crucial to an understanding of popular music in the nineteenth century as they provide information relating to repertory and practices and help map out contemporary social and class divisions in musical activity.

Middle-class commentators saw the instrument as a nuisance, disturbing public peace and order. George Bernard Shaw, an advocate of the English concertina, singled out the Anglo-German instrument for attack:

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<sup>433</sup> Gammon and Gammon, “From ‘Repeat and Twiddle...’”.

<sup>434</sup> Shaw, George Bernard, in *The Star* (8 March 1889) quoted in Laurence, *Shaw’s Music* Vol.1, p.575. Mohawk refers to the “Mohawk Minstrels”, one of the most influential blackface minstrel troupes in Britain. According to Scott, *The Singing Bourgeois*, p.87, they were formed in 1867.

<sup>435</sup> “From ‘Repeat and Twiddle...’”, pp.125-129.

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Pawnbroker's shops should be searched for second-hand brass instruments and German concertinas; and the law as to their possession should be assimilated to that concerning dynamite. Amateurs wishing to practice should, until they can obtain a diploma from an examining board, be confined to a four-mile radius measured from the centre of Salisbury Plain.<sup>436</sup>

This complaint was repeated by others:

German cheap labour has caused, of late years, to be indissolubly associated in most minds with 'Arry and 'Arriet on 'Ampstead 'Eath.<sup>437</sup>

and

Regarded as an instrument of torture by peaceable inhabitants of the London suburbs.<sup>438</sup>

Even if not directly attacking the instrument, comment was often condescending:

The German concertina is admittedly an inferior instrument. Still, we must not sneer at the thing. I believe it does give a measure of enjoyment to some of our hard working people; it is better for them to listen or to dance to a German concertina than to hear no music at all. In time they will learn to like something better.<sup>439</sup>

Advocates of the English concertina were continually at pains to distance their instrument from the Anglo-German type. As early as 1851, it was noted that "the English concertinas surpass, in beauty of tone and durability, those made on the continent".<sup>440</sup> In his paper promoting the merits of the English concertina, Wm. Cawdell lamented "the fact that inferior imitations have caused the Concertina in its perfect form to be comparatively little known",<sup>441</sup> and that "serious" concertina music "received as much ridicule as favour, partly owing to an inferior imitation made abroad and much patronized by street boys".<sup>442</sup> Elsewhere, he notes how "the English Concertina is making rapid strides in favour of amateurs, notwithstanding the

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<sup>436</sup> Shaw, George Bernard *The Dramatic Review* (2 January 1886) in Laurence, *Shaw's Music* Vol.1, p.439.

<sup>437</sup> Fraser, Norman "The Cult of the English Concertina" in *Cassell's Magazine* (June-November 1908), p.159.

<sup>438</sup> From *Era* (22 May 1899), quoted in Honri, Peter *Working the Halls* (Farnborough, 1973), p.55.

<sup>439</sup> Southgate, T.L. *English Music 1604-1904* (London, 1906) p.339.

<sup>440</sup> "Musical Instruments" *Illustrated London News* XIX No. 512 (Supplement, 23 August 1851) quoted in MacTaggart and MacTaggart, *Musical Instruments...*, p.60.

<sup>441</sup> Amateur, *A Short Account...*, p.6.

<sup>442</sup> *Ibid.*, p.13.



### *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

prejudice occasioned by the imperfections of its cousin-German”.<sup>443</sup> Shaw offered similar comment: I also heard the Brothers Webb, musical clowns who are really musical, playing the Tyrolienne from William Tell very prettily on two concertinas - though I earnestly beg the amateurs who applaud from the gallery not to imagine that the thing can be done under my windows in the small hours on three and sixpenny German instruments.<sup>444</sup>

By the end of the century, the Anglo-German concertina had come to symbolise working-class life. In *The Forsyte Saga*, John Galsworthy wrote of how, contrary to social custom, Soames Forsyte insisted on having a hot dinner on Sundays at a time when servants had “nothing to do except play the concertina”<sup>445</sup> and, elsewhere, he draws a picture of a drunken man emerging from a pub playing the concertina.<sup>446</sup> Similar images are not uncommon. The instrument commonly appeared in children’s writing as an object of fun. Shaw’s comments are reflected in the poem concerning the cat, Trilby Tabitha Mewlina:

Trilby Tabitha Mewlina  
Played the German Concertina-  
Played it on the roofs at night,  
Which, of course, was hardly right.  
When a piercing note she drew  
People woke at half-past two,  
And- which much increased their pain-  
Couldn’t get to sleep again.

“Fifty cats with bushy tails  
Must be practicing their scales,”  
Groaned those people as they lay  
Waiting for the dawn of day.  
They are wrong, as you’re aware.  
Only one small cat was there-  
Trilby Tabitha Mewlina with her German Concertina.<sup>447</sup>

It is not surprising to find the instrument played by two of Heath Robinson’s eccentric characters in his “Uncle Lubin” and “Bill the Minder”<sup>448</sup> and such comical associations began to appear regularly in clowning, music hall and early cinema,

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<sup>443</sup> Cawdell, William M. “A Vote for the Concertina” *South Hackney Correspondent* (27 July 1865).

<sup>444</sup> Shaw, George Bernard in *The World* (6 April 1892) quoted in Laurence, *Shaw’s Music* Vol.2, p.593.

<sup>445</sup> 1906.

<sup>446</sup> *In Chancery* (1920).

<sup>447</sup> Edwardian poem, provenance unknown, quoted in *Concertina and Squeezebox* 18 and 19 (1989), pp.18-19.

<sup>448</sup> Heath Robinson *Bill the Minder* (London, 1912).

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cartoons and other forms of popular “art”, including figurative ornaments, picture postcards and other ephemera. The low status suggested in these examples had implications for all forms of concertina and contributed greatly to the fall in popularity of the English concertina among the middle classes during the late Victorian period.

### **Musical Aspects of the Anglo-German Concertina examined through its use in Traditional Dance Music**

The Anglo-German concertina is principally a melodic instrument but one which allows the performance of chords and, to a degree, playing in parts. In contrast to the English model, which was evolved within the culture of bourgeois “art” music and can substitute for other instruments such as the flute or violin, the nature of the Anglo-German means that it imposes its own character on the form and sound of the music it carries. In its commonest form, the instrument is limited to only two related keys (usually C and G) and is therefore particularly suited to simple melodies such as folk songs, dance tunes, popular and sacred music. Music requires to be transposed to suit the particular keys of the instrument and, if the melody strays outwith the given scales, it requires to be “stripped down” or modified to fit. However, the “adjustment” of music to suit performance on the Anglo-German version should not be viewed merely as a debasing of the original version but rather as a reworking to suit a particular musical context and function. Similar “limiting” processes can be seen at work in other “folk” instruments, such as the Highland bagpipes, where music from outwith the tradition is “adjusted” to suit the particular scale of the instrument. The English concertina, of course, was deliberately designed to eliminate any “limiting” influence.

The keyboard layout and single action of the instrument also affect the musical output. The performance of certain intervals or passages might be awkward or impossible and again the music has to be altered to accommodate them.

Changes in bellows direction also imparts a distinctly jerky, staccato character to the music. Pegg<sup>449</sup> has suggested that the Anglo-German Concertina was adopted for dance music from the 1870s onwards largely on account its compatibility with the “sound ideal” of the country fiddlers and in particular their “distinctive style which combined a choppy bowing technique, an aggressive tone with no use of vibrato, and double-stopping and drone notes to provide a driving rhythmic sound suitable for dancing”.<sup>450</sup>

Example 6.1a shows a typical fiddle version of the traditional Scottish dance tune “The Wind That Shakes the Barley”, 6.1b is an Anglo-German concertina version

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<sup>449</sup> Pegg, “An Ethnomusicological Approach...”, pp.55-72.

<sup>450</sup> Ibid., p.67.



Example 6.1a The Wind that Shakes the Barley.  
 Source: Hunter, James Scottish Fiddle Music (Edinburgh, 1979) p.223.



Example 6.1b The Wind that Shakes the Barley.  
 Source: Adams' Scottish Dance Music for the Concertina (Glasgow, c1850) p.13.



Example 6.1c The Wind that Shakes the Barley.  
 Source: Transcribed from the playing of Mrs. Crotty by Michael Tubridy (?) c1964. Published in the leaflet Mrs. Crotty of Kilrush (n.d.).

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published around 1850<sup>451</sup> and 6.1c, a version of the tune from an elderly player within the Irish tradition,<sup>452</sup> recorded around 1950. In the 1850 version, the key has been moved to G major, one of the two principal keys (C and G) of the instrument. The Irish version shows the tune reworked within a separate, yet related tradition, which encourages individual interpretation. In line 3, bar 1, for example, we see the inversion of the original figures.

The Irish example also illustrates the degree of adjustment which can take place within the limitations of the instrument and is notable for the performance of the melody in octaves. This device has also been used by players within the English Morris dance tradition to add volume (valuable in the open air or crowded room) or to emphasise certain passages. In the playing of octaves, the limitations of the instrument dictate that, where a tune goes below the range of the right hand, it becomes necessary to move up an octave in each part to accommodate the lower notes and still keep the octave effect. This too can lead to the adjustment of the music, as can be found in Example 6.2. Such playing also influenced the work of Cecil Sharp who took down the melody “The Willow Tree” from the playing of William Kimber and published it (thus establishing the “authorised version”) as a single line melody complete with curious octave leap.<sup>453</sup>

A number of notes occur on both rows of the manual of the common Anglo-German concertina and these offer alternative fingerings and bellows movements which can be drawn upon to facilitate performance or for musical effect. Where a scale or passage can be played using different combinations of buttons and bellows, each imparts its own precise phrasing implications, with differing degrees and occurrences of “smoothness” or “lilt” which can be selected to suit the personal taste of the musician, musical or ergonomic requirements. For example, on a chromatic concertina (Figure 6.1c), it is possible to play both the notes a’ or g’ on any of four different buttons. This offers a wide range of possible bellows change/fingering sequences which can be exploited as required. One combination might involve a particularly abrupt change of bellows direction but, if the required notes can be found elsewhere on the concertina in locations which do not require the change, then “cross fingering” can allow an execution which does not interrupt the flow of the music. In contrast, playing passages involving dramatic bellows changes can be employed to enliven the music.

Single action instruments have the disadvantage of running out of air if the performance involves too much use of the same bellows direction. In his study of the

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<sup>451</sup> Adams’ Scottish Dance Music for the Concertina (Glasgow, c.1850), p.13.

<sup>452</sup> From Mrs Crotty of Kilrush, leaflet in The Irish Traditional Music Archive, Dublin. Thought to have been transcribed by Michael Tubridy from a recording made around 1950. Mrs. Crotty (1885-1960) of Kilrush, Co. Clare, played for dancing and represents the old style of concertina playing in this part of Ireland where the instrument has remained popular. Mrs Crotty also played a version of the tune “Heilan’ Laddie” for a kind of sword dance, “An Gabairín Bui”: see Beathnach, Breandán Folk Music and Dances of Ireland (Dublin, 1971), p.42.

<sup>453</sup> Kirkpatrick, John “How I play the Anglo, Part 3” NICA 337 (May 1986). p.12.



The image shows two staves of handwritten musical notation in 6/8 time. Staff (a) is labeled 'a' and contains a single melodic line. Staff (b) is labeled 'b' and contains two lines of music: a lower line for the bass and an upper line for the treble. The notation in (b) is an octave transposition of (a). A bracket in (b) highlights a specific note in the fourth bar of the upper line, marked with an asterisk (\*).

a : basic tune  
 b : tune in octaves with adjustment in bar\*

**Example 6.2 Bobbing Around (extract).**

Source: Kirkpatrick, John "How I Play the Anglo, part 3"  
 NICA 337 (May 1986) p.12.



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Irish concertinist, Paddy Murphy of Bealraggan, Co. Clare, ó hAllumhuráin notes that the player has consciously developed a style with:

A very even bellows movement throughout the melody which gives the proper pulse movement to the phrasing of tunes, as well as overcoming gushing sounds of air from the bellows.<sup>454</sup>

The player of the concertina version of the Shetland fiddle tune “Underhill”, notated in Example 6.3, suggests using different rows of the concertina keyboard for ergonomic convenience and for musical effect. The outer row (scale of C) is used for the first part of the tune because it is easy to play and offers a “lilting” effect. In the second part, by contrast, he deliberately employs the inner row (scale of G) to allow a “call and response between the right and left hand of the instrument” which is less lilting and more akin to the syncopation which fiddlers achieve in bowing the repeated figure fsharp"- a".<sup>455</sup>

The division of the instrument into both bass and treble manuals allows the performance of separate parts and offers opportunities for harmony, albeit far removed from those available to the performer of the English model. While there is no obvious logic or symmetry to the keyboard layout which would encourage adventurous harmony, the performance of basic chords is quite straightforward and can be achieved almost accidentally by simply sounding the buttons adjacent to those of the melody note. Figure 6.7 demonstrates how simple triads can be sounded by using a basic pattern of three adjacent notes on the same row. On the outer row of the left hand manual, holding down buttons 3, 4 and 5 while compressing the bellows produces chord I and reversing the action gives chord II. The same simple fingering pattern on the other row (buttons 8, 9 and 10) gives chords V and VI. Moving the finger pattern down a button (7, 8 and 9) and compressing the bellows gives chord III and if repeated on the outer row (2, 3 and 4) Chord I is sounded on compression and chord VII on opening the bellows. The only deviance from the three adjacent button block is the combination of buttons 4, 5 and 9 or 4, 8 and 9 with the bellows drawn to sound chord IV. The simple triads can, of course, be varied through the use of the other available notes and those on the right hand manual.

“Double-stopping”, produced by playing adjacent notes in the row (thirds or sixths), is another simple technique which found its way into the performance of traditional dance music. The harmonic potential of the Anglo-German concertina gave traditional musicians a new facet to their music. Johnson suggests it was “the first naturally harmonic Scottish folk instrument”, its popularity around 1880 being an

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<sup>454</sup> ó hAllumhuráin, Gearóid “The Concertina Music of Paddy Murphy” *Treoir* 13, No.4 (1981), pp.18-19; “Part 2” 13, No.5 (1981), pp.29-31; “Part 3” 13 No.6 (1981), pp.17-21; “Part 4” 14 No.1 (1981), pp.17-20. The quotation is from “Part 1”, p.19.

<sup>455</sup> Levy, Bertram “The Correct Row on the Anglo” *Concertina and Free-reed* 1 No.2 (Spring 1983), p.13.

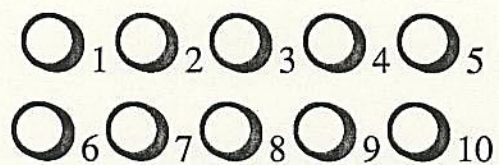
ROW II R L RL RL R L RL R L

ROW III R LR R LR LR LR LR L

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff is labeled 'ROW II' and the bottom staff is labeled 'ROW III'. Both staves are in 2/4 time and have a key signature of one sharp (F#). The top staff contains a sequence of eighth and sixteenth notes with fingerings: R, L, RL, RL, R, L, RL, R, L. The bottom staff contains a sequence of eighth and sixteenth notes with fingerings: R, LR, R, LR, LR, LR, LR, L.

Example 6.3 Underhill.

Source: Levy, Bertram "The Correct Row on the Anglo"  
Concertina and Free-Reed Vol. 1 No.2 (Spring 1983) p.13.



chord	buttons	bellows
I	3 4 5	in
II	3 4 5	out
IV	4 8 9	out
III	7 8 9	in
IV	4 5 9	out
V	8 9 10	in
VI	8 9 10	out
VII	2 3 4	out
I	2 3 4	out

Figure 6.7 Simple Triads played on the Anglo-German Concertina.

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important step in the modernisation of the country's traditional music.<sup>456</sup> The ease of sounding simple chords encouraged the adoption of the Anglo-German instrument into the accompaniment of traditional and popular song. The left hand manual can be used to provide a harmonic accompaniment to a melody performed on the right. This renders the instrument more versatile than its distant cousin, the melodeon or German accordion, in which the left hand offers only fixed chords.

In the chromatic version of the Anglo-German concertina, the extra notes allow the performance of music in all keys and of greater complexity. It gives further opportunities for alternative fingerings and bellows movement and offers the possibility of a smoother, flowing style. The chromatic Anglo-German concertina can come close to sharing much of the repertory of the English model and it is recorded that it was commonly used in North West England in the early years of this century for the public performance of brass- band marches and up-to-date popular music.<sup>457</sup>

Young musicians in the Irish tradition have come to exploit the opportunities of the chromatic instrument's additional row in playing traditional dance music not just in the inherent "home keys" but in others also by picking notes from all over the keyboard as required. They have also developed intricate forms of decoration ("rolls", "cuts", "cranns") derived from the fiddle, pipes and flute repertoires.<sup>458</sup> Certain forms of traditional ornamentation, such as the fast triplet, can be reproduced on the Anglo- German concertina in imitation of the fiddle with careful use of the bellows. Other ornaments, however, are less easy to emulate due to the form of the instrument. In "cutting", where a note is ornamented by a rapid higher note which precedes it, the diatonic keyboard dictates that the ornamental note is almost always two notes above that decorated, if bellows direction is maintained (Example 6.4a).

Performance of the "roll", as commonly found in fiddle music, is not possible on the Anglo-German concertina but is substituted by the "grace note run" which uses a complex selection of button and bellows direction to sound a series of individual grace notes to create a similar effect (Example 6.4b).

Despite these opportunities, it has been noted that many performers of the chromatic instrument continue to play "single line" music with little harmony in the older styles associated with the diatonic concertina.<sup>459</sup>

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<sup>456</sup> Johnson, *Music and Society...*, pp.93, 192. Johnson informs me that he selected the year 1880 on account of an advertisement for the instrument found in an Orkney newspaper of that year.

<sup>457</sup> Ward, Alan "Fred Kilroy: Lancashire Concertina Player, Part 2" *Traditional Music* 3 (1976), p.5.

<sup>458</sup> Cowan, Joel "The Concertina Tradition in County Clare" *Concertina* 1 No.4 (Autumn 1983), pp.9-12; Cowan, Joel "Interview with Noel Hill" *Concertina and Squeezebox* 13 (1986), pp.17-22; Worrall, Dan "The Irish Anglo at the Willie Clancy School" *Concertina and Squeezebox* 13 (1986) pp.36-39.

<sup>459</sup> Koning, Jos *Irish Traditional Dance Music: a sociological study of its structure, development and function in the past and present*. Doctoral Thesis, University of Amsterdam (1976), p.64. This thesis contains transcriptions of traditional concertina players in Co. Clare.

fiddle ornament (♯)      Anglo-German concertina ornament (♯)

Example 6.4a "Cutting" on Anglo-German Concertina.

fiddle "roll"      "grace note run"

Example 6.4b "Grace Note Run" on Anglo-German Concertina.



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Even in its most sophisticated forms, the peculiarities of the Anglo-German concertina encourage players to devise their own solutions to bellows movement, harmony and ornamentation and as a consequence it has become associated with those who play by ear. It was therefore at odds with ideology behind the elevating, “correct” and smooth playing of nineteenth-century bourgeois musicians who would have been more attracted to the English concertina. The gulf between the two markets is illustrated in early tutors for the Anglo-German concertina which suggested that “a very effective crescendo or swell can also be introduced on the Concertina, by waving the instrument in the air while the passage requiring it is being played”<sup>460</sup> and in “airs requiring a certain expression, a most pleasing effect is produced by gently swinging or waving the instrument to and fro.”<sup>461</sup> Such practices were strictly forbidden in contemporary tutors for the English instrument, such as that by Signor Alsepti:

The author wishes to protest against the practice indulged by many performers who “swing” the instrument whilst playing. No one wishing to uphold the character of the instrument will do this. The immortal Regondi, in his Method (page 52) says, “avoid all such movements of the body, arms or hands, as may appear affected, and ridiculous,” which remark the Author wishes to endorse.<sup>462</sup>

By the turn of the century, the German accordion or melodeon had started to dominate as the principal instrument in working class social dance in Scotland. This instrument was louder than the concertina and, in many respects, was easier to perform on. The provision of fixed accompaniment chords on the left hand manual and the fuller sound from its multiple were also perceived as major benefits. The Anglo-German concertina was still heard in Scotland during the first half of the present century in traditional music and was used by players of sacred music unable to afford the more expensive English version. Although a number of my informants remember players of the Anglo-German concertina between the wars, I was unable to trace any older players active in the 1980s and 90s. Fortunately, one player, Searus McDairmid of Wormit and Newport-on-Tay, Fife, was recorded in the early 1960s while he was in his eighties.<sup>463</sup> His repertory comprised simple song and dance tunes usually played slowly and in a “lilting”, unadorned manner. I am unable to identify any of the eight tunes collected from McDairmid (Example 6.5 and 6.6) and this might suggest that they were his own compositions or highly personal versions of existing music.

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<sup>460</sup> The Concertina Preceptor..., p.29.

<sup>461</sup> Moore's Irish Melodies, p.2.

<sup>462</sup> The Modern English Concertina Method, p.64.

<sup>463</sup> Letter with music examples from Rick Ulman, Manchester, St. Louis in Concertina and Squeezebox 1, No.4 (Autumn 1983), pp.20-23. In a personal communication in 1984, the writer informed me that his musical transcriptions are approximate and may contain errors. The original tape has since been lost in a fire.

Handwritten musical score for 'Mussels in the Burn'. The score consists of five staves of music in treble clef, 4/4 time. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a common time signature. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some rests. The second and third staves contain a first and second ending, respectively, marked with '1' and '2'. The fourth and fifth staves continue the main melody, with some notes marked with a fermata.

Example 6.5 Mussels in the Burn.

Source: Transcribed from the playing of Searus McDiarmid by Rick Ulman. Published in Concertina and Squeezebox Vol.1 No.4 (Autumn 1983) p.22.

Handwritten musical score for 'Cutting Thyme'. The score consists of six staves of music in treble clef, 3/2 time. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a 3/2 time signature. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some rests. The second and third staves contain a first and second ending, respectively, marked with '1' and '2'. The fourth and fifth staves continue the main melody, with some notes marked with a fermata. The sixth staff concludes the piece with a double bar line.

Example 6.6 Cutting Thyme.

Source: Transcribed from the playing of Searus McDiarmid by Rick Ulman. Published in Concertina and Squeezebox Vol.1 No.4 (Autumn 1983) p.23.

## Other Principal Areas of Use

So far I have discussed the instrument's principal use in domestic, amateur music-making. Some other areas of adoption are worthy of special attention.

### Street Music

Towards Findlater's church a quartet of young men were striding along with linked arms, swaying their heads and stepping to the agile melody of their leader's concertina. The music passed in an instant, as the first bars of sudden music always did, over the fantastic fabrics of his mind, dissolving them painlessly and noiselessly as a sudden wave dissolves the sandbuilt turrets of children.<sup>464</sup>

Despite official attempts to limit the use of public space for unregulated musical activities, the street was a major site of both amateur and professional music in the Victorian period and evidence confirms the Anglo-German concertina as a prominent instrument in such performance. Illustrations of Victorian beach entertainment, street minstrels and Derby Day commonly include a concertina player.<sup>465</sup> As suggested by Millais' "The Blind Girl", the concertina would appear to have been the favoured instrument of sight impaired buskers<sup>466</sup> (Figure 6.8 and 6.9) and it became particularly associated with the image of the London "coster" (Figure 6.10),<sup>467</sup> an image which was to be constantly reworked by music hall performers. There is a fine illustration of local tinkers playing Anglo-German concertina with bass and tenor drums in the town of Kinross in the early years of this century<sup>468</sup> and a commentator, writing of Dundee in 1894, stressed the popularity of the hand-held free-reed instruments in the city:

Concertinas and melodeons are as common as blackberries and the twilight hours are filled with their melody, poured forth by the enamoured youth at the stair-foot of his seniorita's seven-floor tenement.<sup>469</sup>

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<sup>464</sup> Joyce, James *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1914).

<sup>465</sup> Delgano, Alan *Victorian Entertainment* (Newton Abbot, 1971), p.90; "Returning from the Derby" in *Our English Cousins* (1894) reproduced in *Concertina and Squeezebox* 18 and 19 (1989), p.45. Cohen, David and Greenwood, Ben *The Buskers* (Newton Abbott, 1981), p.143, reproduces a photograph of three blackface "Ethiopian Serenaders" playing whistle, banjo and Anglo-German concertina, taken at Greenwich in 1884.

<sup>466</sup> For example: Painting by Ed Holt of Edinburgh c.1880 (private collection, photographic copy in collection of Stuart Eydmann); photograph of blind beggar from Nitshill in Pollokshaws, Glasgow c.1890 (People's Palace Museum, Glasgow Negative 84.87) and busker with dog playing in street Hartlepool, Cleveland c.1913 (Beamish Museum, Co. Durham Negative 3603).

<sup>467</sup> Picture postcard in Eydmann collection.

<sup>468</sup> Munro, David M. *Kinross in Old Picture Postcards* (Zaltbommel, 1985).

<sup>469</sup> Burn Murdoch, W.G. *From Edinburgh to the Antarctic* (London, 1894). Page number unknown. I am grateful to Mr Billy Kay for this reference.





Figure 6.8 Blind Concertina Player, Edinburgh c1890.  
Source: Watercolour by Ed Holt in private collection.



Figure 6.9 Blind Concertina Player, Pollokshaws, Glasgow  
c1890.  
Source: The People's Palace Museum, Glasgow.





Figure 6.10 Picture Postcard c1904.  
Source: Author's collection.

### *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

It is Henry Mayhew, however, in his “London Labour and the London Poor”,<sup>470</sup> who offers the best description of an itinerant concertina player through his lengthy portrait of a young London musician who played the Thames steamboats. The player talks of the great popularity of the Anglo-German concertina and how his father bought him one when he was eleven or twelve for 2s. 6d.:

I was about getting on for twelve when father first bought me a concertina. That instrument was very fashionable then, and everybody had it nearly.

He learned by ear, picking up tunes by listening to other bands on the steamers and following other street musicians:

I play entirely out of my own head, for I never had any lessons at all. I learn the tunes from hearing other people playing of them. If I hear a street band, such as a fiddle and harp and cornopean playing a tune, I follow them and catch the air; and if it's any sort of a easy tune at all, I can pick it up after them, for I never want to hear it more than twice played on an instrument.

He describes his repertory based upon customer's demands but noted his own preference despite the limitations of the instrument:

For myself, I prefer lively tunes. I don't know much operatic music, only one or two airs; but they're easier to play on the concertina than lively music because it's difficult to move the fingers very quickly. You can't hardly play a hornpipe. It makes the arm ache before you can play it all through, and it makes such a row with the valve working the bellows up and down, that it spoils the music.

The instruments were bought wholesale from the importers:

The concertina I use now cost me 16s. It's got twenty double keys - one when I pull the bellows out and one when I close it. I wear out an instrument in three months. The edges of the bellows get worn out; then I have to patch them up, till they get so weak that it mostly doubles over. It costs me about 1s. a week to have them kept in order. They get out of tune very soon. They file them and put fresh notes in. I get all my repairs done trade price. I tune my instrument myself. The old instruments I sell to the boys, for about as much as I give for a new

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<sup>470</sup> Mayhew, Henry London Labour and the London Poor (London, 1861), pp.182-185.

### *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

one. They are very dear; but I get them so cheap when I buy them, I only give 16s. for a 25s. instrument.<sup>471</sup>

Busking on the steamers was supplemented by performance along with fiddle, harp and fife in an orchestra playing for dance classes and assemblies:

The room is like a street, almost, and the music sounds well in it. The other three play from notes, and I join in. I learnt their airs this way. My mother and father were very fond of dancing and they used to go there nearly every night, and I'd go along with them, and then I'd listen and learn the tunes. I don't have any stand before me. I never look at any of the other's music. I look at the dancing. You've got to look at the time their dancing at, and watch their figures when they leave off.<sup>472</sup>

A player in Cornwall paints a similar picture of the popularity of the instrument around 1890:

In these days, the 'tina was a very popular instrument in Cornwall, you could hear one in many houses. You could always buy a 'tina in the shops from 4s. to 5s. and many used to buy one just to have a bit of fun for the Christmas, and my belief is that is why many learnt the 'tina. Of course, they only had brass reeds, and when they went out of tune we should throw them into the dust bin. You could not get them tuned. But if you had one with steel reeds, German make, you could not wear them out. My father had one called "The Nightingale" for 21s., it was a handsome 'tina. But lastly my father bought one by Jones of London: of a summer's evening you could hear it nearly 2 miles away.<sup>473</sup>

The concertina was used (along with bones, triangle and tambourine) for dance music and song accompaniment around the houses of the neighborhood, with the musicians blacked up and in strange clothing:

Groups of four or five would come around -we played mainly to the higher class folk, and to the farmers, when we would get a glass of cider and a piece of Christmas cake, but the working class, who were

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<sup>471</sup> The poor durability of cheap Anglo-German concertinas was always a problem which must have contributed to the abandonment of the instrument in favour of more robust instruments. In response to problems of maintenance *Amateur Work* 3 (1883), pp.298-300 published a do-it-yourself guide "Concertina and Melodeon Tuning and Repair" by Henry Dryerre.

<sup>472</sup> Mayhew's description suggests a fairly respectable dance-hall. This, and the fact that a good quality Anglo- German concertina was still expensive in the 1850s is intriguing. Although inexpensive for many workers, one would tend to assume that the cost of a new concertina would be high for a player relying solely on busking and dance music for income.

<sup>473</sup> Collins, F.J. "The Concertina in Cornwall, Around 1890" in *The Concertina Newsletter* 7 (August 1972) pp.9-10.

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mainly players, would join in with us with their concertinas. and we found many good players. Sometimes they gave us a step dance in the kitchen, with a glass of wine. The 'tina was a lovely instrument for quick music. Then at Christmas time we'd have dance parties in the kitchen. We used to have one dance, we would do, "The Polka", and at intervals all dance and meet at the centre. Then we had another dance called "The Heel and Toe", and we finished with a jig... You was lucky to get a shilling from each house in the olden days but as the years passed, we got more... Then of a Saturday night or at Christmas time, many would take their 'tinas to the pubs and after closing time they would do step dancing on a farm wagon with the 'tina, and dance for prizes.<sup>474</sup>

Collins, like Mayhew's informant, suggests that players learned by ear, gathering music from wherever they heard it: "Many players would go to a fair and learn some of the fair organ tunes, and would play them off when they got home".<sup>475</sup> Here we have an early example of aural learning from the repetitive reproduction of pre-programmed music which prefigured the role of the gramophone record in the dissemination of music in the current century.

### **The Anglo-German Concertina in Non-European Cultures**

It is possible to identify some major areas of adoption outwith the British Isles. The world market was shared with the square German Konzertina family which found favour in South America<sup>476</sup> and in a number of cultures of North America.<sup>477</sup> The Anglo-German concertina was adopted by native South Africans in the late nineteenth century<sup>478</sup> and up to the 1960s and 70s was used by Zulu migrant workers in the cities. The instrument was often used to accompany walking, song and dance. Several non-standard tunings evolved to suit different functions and traditions. To this day it enjoys an elevated status as the principal instrument of Boer folk music or "Boermusiek".<sup>479</sup> The instrument was also popular among the working classes of

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<sup>474</sup> Ibid., p.9.

<sup>475</sup> Ibid., p.10.

<sup>476</sup> In particular the bandonion of Argentina associated with the tango. See, for example, Åhlén, Carl-Gunnar Det Mesta Om Tango (Stockholm, 1984).

<sup>477</sup> In particular the Chemnitzer system brought to the United States by Henry Silberhorn and popularised among the German and Middle European immigrants of the Midwest where it is still popular today.

<sup>478</sup> For a contemporary study see Clegg, Johnny "The music of Zulu immigrant workers in Johannesburg: a focus on concertina and guitar" Symposium on Ethnomusicology: papers presented at the symposium on ethnomusicology 10-11 October 1980 (Rhodes University, 1981). See also Scurfield, Harry "Squashbox" in Folk Roots (September, 1993), pp.31-33.

<sup>479</sup> For example: "Boermusik Olympics 1982" Concertina and Squeezebox 3 No.3 (Summer 1985), p.5; notices from South African Sunday Times (January 1988) in NICA 355 (March 1988), p.8 and NICA 355 (March 1988), p.8.

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Australia and New Zealand in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The discovery of surviving instruments, much iconographic evidence and recent research by enthusiasts<sup>480</sup> in these countries, confirm links with the immigrants from the British Isles. The benefits to both purchaser and manufacturer/distributor of inexpensive, portable and durable instruments are obvious. Furthermore, Ehrlich, in his history of the piano,<sup>481</sup> notes that the large scale export of inexpensive, but durable, free-reed organs was used by the entrepreneurs to develop markets within the British colonies which were to be exploited later through the distribution of more valuable pianos. Was the inexpensive Anglo-German concertina also used as a musical emissary to help build up demand for musical hardware in developing countries?

### **Conclusion**

The Anglo-German concertina suffered rejection by its adherents and gave way, with the exception of a few residual pockets, to the German Accordion or melodeon in popular and traditional dance, to the English concertina (which was being taken over by the working-classes) and, in the cities at least, to other more fashionable instruments: “The ladies of the East End are discarding their favourite instrument, the concertina, for the more attractive one of the West, the banjo”.<sup>482</sup> After serving as an entry into the world of instrumental music making, this concertina was in turn abandoned in the face of changing musical taste and ideology and alternative attractions.

The Anglo-German concertina remained tied to the fortunes of “plebeian” music making (both folk and popular) as the nineteenth century drew to a close. The rise of cheap, reliable pianos, violins, the English concertina, brass and other “respectable” instruments, organised music making in bands and choirs, the availability of formal tuition, and the attractions of alternative musical instruments offered new opportunities. Under the influence of social reformers, rational recreationalists and a new bourgeois-dominated taste, the less refined musical practices became marginal, residual or died out. “Traditional music” was changing too and the rise in popularity of more chromatic dance tunes in the late nineteenth century helped reduce the instrument’s attractiveness.<sup>483</sup> In England, the Anglo-German concertina survived among isolated groups of dance musicians or as a child’s toy and in Ireland it continued in use in some rural communities for the performance of dance music.

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<sup>480</sup> See various articles in *Concertina Magazine*.

<sup>481</sup> Ehrlich, *The Piano...*, pp.130-131.

<sup>482</sup> *The Sketch* (13 December 1899). Both the banjo and mandolin were popular instruments in urban Scotland during the period 1890-1930. The latter was mainly associated with women players and a number of bands performed regularly.

<sup>483</sup> For example the compositions of fiddlers Peter Milne, James Hill and James Scott Skinner which were to become popular with players of the English concertina in the early twentieth century: see Chapter 10.0.



*The Life and Times of the Concertina*

# The Concertina in the Music Hall and Variety Theatre

## Introduction

Mid-nineteenth century urban Britain witnessed the emergence of the music hall as a major cultural institution. The music halls offered a varied programme of acts to a mainly working and lower middle-class audience which benefitted from increased leisure time and income available for disposal on entertainment. In many respects, the music hall represented “the decline of folk amateurism and collectivity”<sup>484</sup> and was the prime example of the “expansion, diversification and nationalisation”<sup>485</sup> of popular music in the industrial period. It was a major manifestation of the burgeoning of commercial concert activity and one of the ways in which working-class music making became formally organised and shifted away from communal, public areas towards “framed public spaces which eventually became constituents of a national and international musical commodity market”<sup>486</sup>.

The music hall developed gradually from a number of existing musical institutions, including miscellaneous and popular concerts, tavern concerts,<sup>487</sup> minstrel shows,<sup>488</sup> the “free-and-easy”, the travelling show,<sup>489</sup> street music, pleasure gardens, public spectacles and “harmonic” societies, glee clubs and popular theatre. Each contributed to the music hall elements of their organisation, repertory, performance practice, musical style and use of musical instruments. Many of these and other emerging musical institutions (e.g. holiday resort entertainment and the concert party) continued

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<sup>484</sup> Middleton, *Studying Popular Music*, p.55.

<sup>485</sup> Russell, *Popular Music...*, p.1.

<sup>486</sup> Middleton, *Studying Popular Music*, p.80.

<sup>487</sup> Arnold Bennett, in his novel *Clayhanger* (London, 1910), describes an evening in a public house in the Potteries in the 1870s when there was “some concertina- playing, with a realistic imitation of church bells borne on the wind from the distance! Late in the evening, Mrs Offlow, a Champion clog dancer, happening to be on tour with her husband through the realms of her championship performed a dance in short red and black velvet skirts, accompanied by her husband on concertina”.

<sup>488</sup> According to Cohen and Greenwood *The Buskers*, p.141: “Around 1850, the St. James’ Theatre saw the first performances of a man named Pell, who played the bones. He was accompanied by Harrington on the concertina, White on violin, Stanwood on banjo and Germain on tambourine”.

<sup>489</sup> The movements across rural South West Scotland of John Carson, “Concertina King” and “celebrated concertina player” are recorded in local newspapers. *Dumfries and Galloway Standard and Advertiser*: Burnhead, 22 January 1879; Kirkbean, 5 March 1879; Dumfries, 26 March 1879; Burnhead, 2 April 1879; Dunsore, 9 April 1879. *Wigton Free Press*: Stranraer, 6 February 1879.

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in parallel with the music hall as an “extensive undergrowth and feeder system”,<sup>490</sup> part of a wider system of commercial music making and consumption which allowed a flow of musicians and musical ideas to and from the halls. Performers could thus be drawn “upwards” into the halls from low status performance settings, such as the street and circus, or “downwards” from an increasingly competitive “art” music where professional musicians were being displaced by the rapidly changing concert world. In charting the use of the concertina, it is therefore important to view music hall as “an entire section of the music industry”<sup>491</sup> with its own “structure and processes”<sup>492</sup> rather than a more rigid or limited sphere concerned with a typical theatre or building housing popular music or a simply defined musical style.

Individual halls varied considerably in scale and organisation; they were continually in a state of flux and development was uneven. As the century progressed, improved communications and increased capital investments encouraged the development of a national and international touring system which allowed “star” artistes to reach a massive audience and exert unprecedented influence over popular taste. Although many halls continued as small-scale local affairs, by the time of its “golden age”, in the period 1890-1914, the hall circuit had become highly organised with fewer, larger and more luxurious establishments under the control of a small number of entrepreneurs who operated a massive infrastructure. As the century came to a close, “variety” companies presenting the complete programme came to the fore, there was a move towards more opulent and spectacular shows and there was increasing competition from musical comedy and revue. During the period 1920-40, the halls suffered through competition from fashionable American originated dance and alternative musical attractions, such as the radio, cinema and gramophone, began to dominate popular music consumption. Many aspects of the music hall, including the use of the concertina, survived in these or in related fields of entertainment, such as seaside concerts, concert parties, pierrot groups or pantomime and are therefore also included here.

### **The Concertina in the Halls**

The music of the mid-nineteenth century halls reflected that of the institutions which contributed to their development. This included material from Italian opera, sentimental songs, ballads, glees, salon music, national songs, instrumental solos (including showy virtuoso playing which was being abandoned from the high status concert), and popular dance music selections.

A common music hall language developed during the third quarter of the nineteenth century. Elements of “art” music remained (mainly overtures and operatic selections

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<sup>490</sup> Bailey, Peter *Music Hall: The Business of Pleasure* (Milton Keynes, 1986), p.xi.

<sup>491</sup> Russell, *Popular Music*, p.73.

<sup>492</sup> Bailey, *Music hall...*, p.viii.

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played by the house orchestra) along with much minstrelsy, novelty acts, physical feats, dance, burlesque and, in Scotland and North East England at least, elements of local traditional music and song. Although smaller halls had only a piano or harmonium for accompaniment, it became standard for many establishments to employ their own house orchestras. These ensembles, which were highly variable in standard and reliability, required that the singer or performer carried parts for the band's use. The orchestra could also help with dramatic effects, providing links between verses and supporting the informal, parlando, narrative delivery of much music hall song, accompanying non-vocal activities and generally helping in the build up of a performer/audience relationship necessary in the larger halls which lacked the intimacy of the earliest establishments.

Each "house" (and there could be several in one night) comprised a programme of up to 15 or more acts drawn from a large range of types. The concertina had a place in a variety of forms of act, as discussed below.

### **Singers**

The concertina found favour with music hall singers for a number of reasons. The instrument provided support for vocalists and was well suited to self accompaniment (prior to the rise of the piano accordion in the late 1920s only the keyboard instruments, harp or guitar could offer such facility). This would be especially welcome where the orchestra was unreliable or non-existent. The singer could swing the concertina to good effect in conducting the audience, leading choruses and adding dramatic visual emphasis to a performance in a manner not possible with any other self-accompaniment instrument. This was highly important in the larger halls where each performer had to work hard to build up an effective relationship with the audience. Having his or her own accompaniment meant that the singer could take complete control of the musical production and shape of the performance, an important advantage in a competitive market where each strove to develop an individual style. On a non-musical level, I would like to suggest that the concertina also solved the stage singer's problem of "what to do" with one's hands, just as contemporary popular singers might use a microphone or guitar, although I have no evidence other than my own experience as a performer to support this.

### **Musical Clowns**

The concertina found favour in clowning through the exploitation of its humorous as well as its musical potential. The bellows action offered many opportunities for fun and manufacturers were always willing to construct unusual sizes of instrument (hyperbole was a major ingredient in the music hall) and "specials", such as instruments with unusually long bellows and concertinas which could come apart or had hidden chambers to contain butterflies or confetti. Some were fitted into other objects, such as the miniature concertina hidden in an enormous bow tie or the

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property dog whose body formed the bellows.<sup>493</sup> The concertina could also offer a variety of sound effects and whistles were often incorporated into them.

Clowning was often combined with a high degree of musical skill, contradiction (e.g. slapstick v. virtuoso) being a common element in music hall performance. The Webb Brothers (“JoJo and Ruté”) of London,<sup>494</sup> for example, undertook a comprehensive training in dance, acrobatics, fencing and music (concertina was learned from George Jones, manufacturer and music hall performer) in order to perfect their act during the last decades of the nineteenth century. The duo used miniature concertinas as well as conventional instruments for instrumental pieces, sentimental songs and music performed during acrobatic stunts. Their performance usually closed with a march played on treble and baritone English concertinas accompanied by the house band, orchestra or organ. Playing was “bravura in style, and they swung their concertinas unashamedly”<sup>495</sup> but they also gave “serious” recitals which attracted the attention of George Bernard Shaw who praised their taste and skill.<sup>496</sup>

Perhaps the most notable concertinist to combine a high degree of musical talent with humour was Grock, the Swiss musical clown. Equally at home in both circus and music hall, Grock was highly influential in bringing continental clowning to the British stage using mime and a variety of musical props including miniature violin, grand piano and English concertina. It is worth repeating in full a description of his use of the concertina:

[Grock] produced from somewhere a concertina. He climbed onto a chair, an ordinary cane chair, and sat on the curved back of it, knees crossed, a most precariously balanced position. He leaned towards the footlights, and, after deep intake of breath, blew them out, left to right. A single “lime” shone on his face in the prevailing darkness. He prepared himself to play the concertina. His fingers pressed the keys and, faintly we could here the beginning of the quartette from “Rigoletto”. What is more, Grock was hearing it too. He listened intently. He looked up and down, seeking the source of the music. When he had traced it to the concertina which he held far from his body in the truly professional manner, his chuckle of enchanted surprise was more and more onomatopoeic.

Next, he indicated to the conductor that he was, at long last, really ready for serious playing with full orchestral accompaniment. The conductor raised his arms and baton. And before the orchestra could begin a note, there was a crash, a splitting noise, not merely of wood and of cane, but as of a whole universe, the bottom dropping out of it.

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<sup>493</sup> Honri, Peter *Working the Halls* (Farnborough, 1973).

<sup>494</sup> Butler, Frank “The Webb Brothers” *Concertina and Squeezebox* 18 and 19 (1989), pp.11-14.

<sup>495</sup> *Ibid.*, p.13.

<sup>496</sup> Laurence, Dan H. (ed.) *Shaw’s Music* Vol.2 (London, 1981) p.593.



## *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

Grock had crashed clean through the chair at this moment of the conductor's, the orchestra's, and everybody else's suspense.<sup>497</sup>

### **Character Acts**

In the expanding musical market, each performer required a style, repertory and "image" recognisably their own and this led to the development of a wide range of specialties and "character acts". Emulation of the most successful acts, a stereotyping of certain assumed roles and a common response to the demands of performing resulted in the emergence of particular personae and stylistic elements. The concertina was suited to a wide variety of character types and by the time of the height of the music hall's success was already laden with much symbolism derived from other areas of adoption (middle class, working class, minstrelsy, street music, sacred etc...) which could be exploited to the full.

Again, deliberate contradiction and humorous juxtaposition were important elements (e.g. the musical tramp playing music "above his station"). One performer active in the 1930s, "The Rt. Hon. Lady Lyveded", made play of her title in her "novel musical specialty"<sup>498</sup> in which "she performs extremely well on the instruments, one being the size of two tea cups placed together -her smallest being only 1.5 inches across -on which she plays Scottish airs"<sup>499</sup>. As noted previously, the concertina had been used from an early date in minstrelsy and it continued well into the present century as the instrument of the music hall blackface artist. The concertina found particular favour with Cockney "costermonger" acts, perhaps as a result of its popularity in metropolitan street life, and was often associated with pirate or sailor characters. Many of these music hall associations carried over into cinema and have remained with the concertina to the present day.<sup>500</sup>

### **Concertina Ensembles**

Although the "classical" concertina ensembles discussed in Chapter 4.0 had gone by the late nineteenth century, small concertina groups did find a place within the music hall. One act which exploited the potential of the English concertina in both art and popular music was "The Fayre Four Sisters" quartet which played from the early twentieth century through to the 1950s, touring Great Britain, Europe and the United States.<sup>501</sup> All four were daughters of Joe Webb, one of the Webb Brothers, the musical clowns discussed earlier. Surviving recordings<sup>502</sup> display brilliant playing in

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<sup>497</sup> Cardus, Neville Full Score (London, 1970) p.33.

<sup>498</sup> Copy of handbill The People's Palace (London, 16 January 1938).

<sup>499</sup> From The Western Morning News (19 January 1937) quoted in publicity bill. Copy in collection of writer.

<sup>500</sup> One "serious" player writing in NICA (18 October 1956), p.6, strongly condemned the damaging effect of the use of the instrument in drinking and "character" scenes.

<sup>501</sup> Amateur cine film of the Fayre Four Sisters in action survives in the Scottish Film Archive, Glasgow. It was recorded at a local theatre around 1951/2 and may be from the pantomime "Humpty Dumpty". There is a photograph of the group in Carlin, Richard The English Concertina, p.39.

<sup>502</sup> All the following items were re-released on The English Concertina by Folkways Records (FW 8845).

### *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

novelty pieces and medleys mostly arranged by Tina, the eldest sister. “Speak Easy”<sup>503</sup> and “Raggin’ the Scales”<sup>504</sup> combined popular American music with themes from Gershwin, including “Rhapsody in Blue”. Their “Russian Fantasy” includes quotations from “The Volga Boatman”, Tchaikovsky’s “1812 Overture” and a concluding “Imitation of Church Bells”. “The Flight of the Bumblebee/Forgotten Dreams”<sup>505</sup> paired Rimsky-Korsakov’s piece of 1900 with Leroy Anderson’s popular song. Their act also included preludes by Chopin, ragtime and pieces which involved dancing while playing, such as waltzing during “The Blue Danube”. In 1950, they recorded “Morning”<sup>506</sup> by Grieg, a piece already popular with amateur concertinists (Tape Item 7.1). Their popular “The trip Round the British Isles” brought together a number of national melodies and their act would often close with a rendition of “The Lost Chord” with the players dressed as choir boys.

Other well known family ensembles active in the first decades of the present century included The Royal Bartle Quartet (Steve Bartle with Estella, Essie and Babs; “The best dressed and staged act ever seen in the Music Halls. There is nothing to equal it. It stands alone.”<sup>507</sup>), The Paget Trio and The Musical Elliots (led by Tommy Varley) from the North East of England. These acts were all popular in Scotland and a number of my informants have referred to the outstanding skill of the last mentioned.

#### **Musical Imitations and Novelties**

Many music hall performers used the concertina in imitation of other musical sounds. The imitation of bells was particularly common and had its origins in much earlier music and song (e.g. Charles Dibdin’s “The Jolly Ringers” and Nathaniel Gow’s “Caller Herrin”). With the double action and split manual of the English concertina, it is possible to finger dramatic peals in which each note slightly overlaps the next. Performance of the bell selections were usually undertaken with a dramatic movement of the instrument in a wide circular motion. In addition to contributing to the overlapping sound,<sup>508</sup> this added a visual aspect to the instrumental performance. The technique, which was highly criticised by “classical” concertinists, became commonplace with street and music hall players and their amateur imitators:

One night, as I gingerly worked the bellows, it struck me that the music sounded rather cheezy and commonplace, so I determined while playing to give it an overhead swinging movement, as I had seen done

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<sup>503</sup> Great Scott Records (A154).

<sup>504</sup> Great Scott Records (A151).

<sup>505</sup> (Master No. 01-748-7150A).

<sup>506</sup> (Master No. 01-748-7150A).

<sup>507</sup> Advertisement in *The Performer* (1913) p.133.

<sup>508</sup> A similar technique had been used in the playing of the *Bell Harp*, a late eighteenth century English instrument in which strings were plucked by the thumbs as it was swung around to “give it an undulating tone” (Exhibition note, Victoria and Albert Museum Collection (VA 240-1882 non keyboard 15/7)).

### *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

by a chap on stage who was billed at the local theatre as the “Concertina King”. I managed the swinging part fairly well, but the waltz time of “Smile Awhile” suddenly developed into a syncopated rendering of a funeral march. The energetic swinging motion made me involuntary misfinger some of the notes. To say the least, I was surprised. I continued the vigorous swinging movement and to my surprise I found myself playing, without previous practice, “The Campbells are Coming”. I was delighted -enraptured. Then the words of that famous old time song flashed across my mind, “Swing me just a little bit higher, Obadiah, do”. With renewed zest, I swung the concertina round and round and invited “The Campbells” to come again. Alas! it was all in vain, and I fear it is only in Heaven I shall hear that lost refrain.

However, I consoled myself with the reflection that, standing up, whirling the instrument around, at least looked more professional like than sitting in the old arm-chair tamely holding the darned thing like a cut of wool.<sup>509</sup>

Henri Albano, working from Liverpool in the early years of this century was claimed as “The Greatest English Concertina Act of the World”, “The Paganini of the Concertina” and “The Monarch of All English Concertina Players”.<sup>510</sup> He made a speciality of his “Imitations of Church Bells and Organ”, the score of which was published by C. Wheatstone and Co. (Example 7.1) and taken up by other professional players.<sup>511</sup> This medley opened with “Caller Herrin”, an early nineteenth century tune by Nathaniel Gow (1763-1831) which was written to portray the cries of Edinburgh fishwives in its first part set against the peal of a city church in the second. In the English concertina setting, the peal is played in octaves. This is followed by “The Bells”, in which the player is instructed to “swing the instrument to obtain the effect of the chimes” and to play very quietly “to imitate bells in the distance”. The peal rises in volume and leads into a rapid arpeggio or “firing” before an imitation of the Westminster chimes and the sound of Big Ben striking the hour. The melody “Sweet Chiming Bells” introduces other peals before the concluding “Abide with me” which imitates a church organ. An advertisement in the trade press (Figure 7.1) shows Albano swinging his instrument during “The Bells” and waving and playing two concertinas simultaneously in another novelty piece, his “Echoes of the Wood”.

“Vasco the Mad Musician”, a musical novelty artist who enjoyed international fame during the period 1897-1923, developed the theme of instrumental imitations in his grand finale in which he lay on his back, striking hanging bells with his feet while

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<sup>509</sup> Hill, John W. *Leisure Hour Gleanings: Songs, Sketches and Rhymes* (Paisley, 1923) pp.54-55.

<sup>510</sup> Advertisements in *Performer Annual* (1911) p.201.

<sup>511</sup> Catalogue No. 2490. “As Performed By The Author On His Tour Round The World”. “Church Bells” (H. Albano) was recorded by James Hume on Zonophone Records (serial 1754 X- 2-49109).

2460

# IMITATION OF CHURCH BELLS AND ORGAN

INTRODUCING  
CALLER HERRIN, "SWEET CHIMING BELLS"  
AND "ABIDE WITH ME"

ARRANGED FOR THE  
**CONCERTINA**  
by  
**HENRI ALBANO**  
(AS PERFORMED BY THE AUTHOR ON HIS TOUR ROUND THE WORLD)

Copyright. Price 1/6 net.

London:  
**C. WHEATSTONE & CO.**  
INVENTORS, PATENTEES & MANUFACTURERS OF CONCERTINAS & REOLAS.  
15, WEST STREET, CHARING CROSS ROAD, W.C.

## HENRI ALBANO

SIR  
ALLOW ME TO PRESENT  
TO YOU THE GREATEST  
ENGLISH CONCERTINA  
ACT OF THE WORLD.  
TAKE SINCERELY  
HENRI ALBANO

The "Paganini" of the concertina. "Absolutely" the greatest concertina act (one man) of the age.

## HENRI ALBANO

### THE MONARCH OF ALL ENGLISH CONCERTINA PLAYERS.

IMITATION  
CHURCH BELLS  
AND ORGAN

MAKING  
THINGS HUM  
NIGHTLY IN  
VAUDEVILLE

Per. address: 127 Edge Grove, Fairfield, Liverpool. London address: 15, West Street - Charing Cross Road, W.C.

## HENRI ALBANO

ECHOES  
OF THE  
WOOD

Figure 7.1 Henri Albano, Music Cover and Trade Advertisements.

Source: The Performer Annual (21 December 1911) p.201 and Carlin, R. The English Concertina (New York, 1977).



"CALLER HERRIN."

Moderato

Musical score for "CALLER HERRIN." in G major, 2/4 time, Moderato. The piece begins with a forte (f) dynamic. The first staff contains the main melody. The second staff features a more complex texture with triplets and a fortissimo (ff) dynamic. The third staff continues the melody with a piano (pp) dynamic and ends with a fortissimo (ff) dynamic.

The BELLS.

(Concertina to be played swinging to obtain the effect of the chimes.)

Musical score for "The BELLS." in G major, 2/4 time. The piece is marked fortissimo (ff) and is intended to be played swinging. It consists of several staves of music, including a section marked ppp (pianissimo) to imitate bells in the distance, and a section marked ff (fortissimo) towards the end.

FIRING.

(The notes in each bar to be played in rapid arpeggio style.)

WESTMINSTER CHIMES.

BIG BEN.

(Striking the hour)

Musical score for "FIRING.", "WESTMINSTER CHIMES.", and "BIG BEN." in G major, 2/4 time. "FIRING." is marked Example and consists of three bars of chords. "WESTMINSTER CHIMES." and "BIG BEN." are marked with accents and consist of several bars of notes.

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Example 7.1 Imitations of Church Bells and Organ (extract).

Source: Arranged by Henri Albano. Published by Wheatstone and Co. (London, c1900).



### *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

playing a concertina accompanied by the house orchestra.<sup>512</sup> Sam Auckland and his daughter Betty performed with “Little Tweet, The Canary Caruso”.<sup>513</sup> Their gramophone record, from around 1930, features the ubiquitous “Bells of St. Mary’s”<sup>514</sup> and “A Londonderry Air” against which the bird provides an obbligato.

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the imitation of natural sounds (a crying baby, birdsong etc...) or other musical instruments was a common feature in traditional fiddle playing in Scotland and Ireland and we find this taken up by concertinists too. The Highland bagpipes was a common subject for imitation and the music hall musician J. Howard Shackleton made an arrangement for concertina (Example 7.2) which was published by Wheatstone and Co. This solo is more of a parody than an imitation. The introductory drone, with pulses in march time and expansion into full chords, a typical orchestral device used to parody the bagpipes, leads into that archetypal pipe tune “The Campbells are Coming”. The drones, which are continued throughout the march and the following strathspey “Tullochgorm”, are awkward to finger at the same time as the melody and they tend to dominate the tune. Because of the air loss in playing sustained notes, frequent bellows changes are required (most likely at each bar line) and this tends to interrupt the drone. Where the drone notes are even slightly out of tune with each other this results in a particularly humorous effect.

#### **Soloists and Virtuosi**

The music hall and variety circuit was able to support a small number of outstanding concertina virtuosi and a larger number of lesser, more local solo performers. Many of the lesser acts were semi-professional players filling out the programme. From its earliest days, the music hall offered opportunities for the amateur and self taught musician and served as an interface between professional and amateur music making. Necessity often forced or encouraged amateur players into the halls. George Jones, a noted concertina manufacturer of the Victorian period, recalled how he supplemented his income through performance: “having a good voice [I] took engagements at Music Halls and came out as a vocal and instrumental artist”.<sup>515</sup> Similarly, the maker Harry Crabb often performed popular songs and band music during cinema intervals.<sup>516</sup> Other music hall players would often combine performance with teaching, playing in dance bands and other musical activities.

The halls, of course, featured soloists on a wide variety of instruments. The violin was common, the xylophone and other tuned percussion were popular and the saxophone, another “novel” instrument, found a place while still excluded from the symphony orchestra. In most cases, the repertory contained a major element of “art” music. While reflecting the wide range of popular taste of the late nineteenth and

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<sup>512</sup> Frank Anderson, untitled article in *Free Reed* 12.

<sup>513</sup> *NICA* 18 (October 1956) p.5.

<sup>514</sup> Edison Bell Winner (Nos. 4909: 12300 and 12299).

<sup>515</sup> Jones, George “Recollections of the English Concertina from 1844” *NICA* 327 (May 1985).

<sup>516</sup> Carlin, *The English Concertina*, p.55.



# Imitation of Bagpipes.

CONCERTINA SOLO.

J. HOWARD SHACKLETON.

**Introduction.**  
*Marcia.*

March. "The Campbells are coming."

Strathspey. "Tullochgorum"

C. W & Co. 2495.

Example 7.2 Imitation of Bagpipes (extract).

Source: Arranged by J. Howard Shackleton. Published by Wheatstone and Co. (London, c1900).

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early twentieth centuries, this was also an expression of the proprietors' aspirations to respectability and a "defence against the attacks of critics who contested the granting of licences with charges of intemperance and immorality".<sup>517</sup> Such music would add to the variety of a performance and help endorse the player as a "high-class act". The work of "great" composers also offered the performer opportunities for parody and humorous juxtaposition.

Although the music hall suffered in the early decades of this century through the rise of American dance music and new entertainment forms, some areas of its instrumental music were able to respond to the new fashions. Among music hall instrumentalists, the concertinists were perhaps most able to absorb and interpret the fashionable music of the native brass band tradition, the American marching bands, military bands, ragtime and related musics.

Although the Anglo-German concertina was not unknown (Dutch Daly was a well known player in the halls and on early gramophone records at the turn of the century<sup>518</sup>), most music hall players of the nineteenth century used the English model. However, during the first decades of this century, a number of outstanding performers of the "duet" concertina came to prominence, and they are considered below.

### **The Maccann Duet Concertina: Instrument of the Music Hall Virtuoso**

Mention has been made in earlier chapters of "duet" forms of the concertina. Although Charles Wheatstone's first patents covered instruments of a form with separate bass and treble keyboards and the company produced a number of versions commercially, it was not until John Hill Maccann of Plymouth<sup>519</sup> developed the instrument bearing his name that the concept met with any great success. Maccann adapted Wheatstone's earlier layouts<sup>520</sup> into a double action concertina which was:

Fitted with a complete chromatic scale continuing from the left hand to the right hand side so that all the treble notes are on the right hand side,

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<sup>517</sup> Bailey, *Music Hall...*, p.x.

<sup>518</sup> Dutch Daly was the first treasurer of the music hall trade union The Variety Artistes Federation. He recorded two sides, "American Airs" and "Imitations on a Concertina" (labels and numbers unknown), in London in 1903. According to *The Glasgow Programme* (December 1898) he played at the Glasgow Empire Theatre in December 1898.

<sup>519</sup> Patent 4752 *Improvements in Concertinas* Provisional Specification (12 March 1884). Maccann's address is given as 30 Morley Street and 37 Morley Place, Plymouth. According to Brown and Stratton, *British Musical Biography*, p.258, he was a "Concertina player in business as a concertina maker at Plymouth. He has appeared in many concerts in the locality". *Reeves Musical Directory* of 1895 lists a J. H. Maccann of London and a W. H. Maccann of Plymouth, both as teachers and players of the concertina.

<sup>520</sup> Chidley, K.V. "The Duet Concertina: Its history and the evolution of its keyboard" *Free Reed* 17, pp.15-17.



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the bass or lower notes being on the left, so that the melody can be entirely played on one side leaving the other hand at liberty to play the accompaniment (as on the pianoforte). There are six rows of keys which are simply arranged so that each finger has its proper row.<sup>521</sup>

This he named the “Improved Chromatic Duet English Concertina”<sup>522</sup> although it became popularly known as the “Maccann Duet”<sup>523</sup> to distinguish it from other forms which evolved later.<sup>524</sup> The keyboard layout of a typical 72 button model is shown in Figure 7.2. Particular notice should be taken of the fact that there is a substantial overlap in the range of the manuals which allows alternative fingerings and playing in unison, features unique to the duet concertina. Although there is apparently no logical pattern to the keyboard layout and players require to memorise a separate fingering pattern for each key played, professional performers recognised the distinct musical advantages over the other concertina forms in its fuller sound, potential for musical effects (through the duplicated areas of the keyboard), wide range<sup>525</sup> and suitability for extensive and convenient playing in parts.

The arrival of this instrument reflected the peak in popularity of the piano and music written for the keyboard could be performed on this concertina with relatively little rearrangement. In part playing on the English concertina, the different voices tend to blend together but on the duet they are more distinct. The division into right and left hands also tailored this concertina to the syncopated nature of much of the popular music which was emerging at the time.

Maccann wrote a tutor for his instrument which was published by Lachenal<sup>526</sup> and he issued “The Concertinists Guide”.<sup>527</sup> He was a noted performer and teacher and he brought the instrument to the public through his performances (with a piano accompanist) at the Great International Exhibition, Edinburgh in July 1888. The champion of popular refined music, Barr, noted the content of his programme:

Fan Valse	(Duet)	Asher
Masaniello	Overture	Auber
Cupid’s Arrows	Galop	Barthmann
Aux Flambeaux	March	Clarke

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<sup>521</sup> Patent 4752, Improvements in Concertinas.

<sup>522</sup> Ibid.

<sup>523</sup> Often given as “Mccann Duet”.

<sup>524</sup> A number of other duet concertina forms followed soon after, including the “Crane” or “Triumph” duet favoured by sacred music performers and discussed in Chapter 9.0; the “Jeffries” system which “seems to defy all logic”: Concertina 14 and 15 (1987) pp.74-75 and the “Linton” duet devised by the music hall virtuoso Charles Gray (Linton) for use in his own concertina band: The Concertina Newsletter 11 (April 1973) pp.20-21.

<sup>525</sup> The instruments were first made by Lachenal of London and later by other firms in sizes between 46 and 80 buttons, i.e. up to a range of 5 octaves.

<sup>526</sup> MacCann J.H. New Method of Instructions for... Duet English Concertina (London, c.1884).

<sup>527</sup> (London 1888), 12pp. This is listed in the British Library catalogue (7808 c14(14)) but is missing.



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Blau Veilchen	Mazurka Caprice	Eilenberg
Die Neinzelnmaunchen	Mazurka Caprice	Eilenberg
Les Etoiles	Air de Ballot	Eaton
True till Death	Song	Gatti
Zampa	Overture	Herold
Tel-el-Kebir	Battle March	Jonghmanns
Lyrics of Scotland	Fantasia	Jonghmanns
Opera Reminiscences		
Levithian	Polka de Concert	Lévy
Cornelius	March	Mendelssohn
Tel-el-Kebir	Descriptive piece	Maccann
Anantie	Valse (Duet)	Maccann
Iolanthe	Selection	Sullivan
The Lost Chord	Song	Sullivan
Mikado	Valse (Duet)	Sullivan
For Ever and for Ever	Song	Tosti
The illage Blacksmith	Song	Weiss <sup>528</sup>

An advertisement of 1892 announced:

Without Equal  
**PROF. MACCANN R.S.O.I.**  
The world renowned musical specialty in his high-  
class refined entertainment,  
**MERRY MUSIC**  
Engagements attended any part of the globe;  
Theatres, Circuses etc.. taken on share or rental  
for his various combinations.<sup>529</sup>

Given his repertory of light opera, drawing room songs and popular “art” music and the type of work he engaged in, Maccann can be seen as bridging the gap between the declining use of the concertina in the concert hall and the emerging forms of popular entertainment.

The Maccann Duet was soon taken up by others in the music hall circuit, the most notable being Percy Honri, Ernest Rutterford and Alexander Prince. Percy Honri (1874-1953) came from a musical family which had been involved in the music hall business at Blackpool and Banbury since the mid- nineteenth century. His father,

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<sup>528</sup> Barr, Robert *Music for the People* (Edinburgh, 1889) pp.206-7.

<sup>529</sup> Advert from specialist music hall press dated 1892, origin unknown. Maccann’s address is given as 3a Tottenham Court Road, London. Honri, *Working the Halls*, p.38, refers to Maccann playing at Hengler’s Cirque, Liverpool in April 1891.

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who played English concertina, had been a blackface minstrel and part of a duet (“Virto and Thomson, Musical Savages”) before forming a family act in which Percy was a child singer, clog-dancer and instrumentalist. Percy recalled how his concertina playing was added to the act:

You see my father happened to possess common sense. My voice was bound to break, so he suggested I should learn some instrument -the piano or the violin. What did I fancy? I fancied the Concertina, overcame my father’s dismay, bought a shilling piano catechism -and here I am, Percy Honri, The Concertina Man.<sup>530</sup>

Honri was promoted as a concertina virtuoso in his early teens and he attracted the praise of Maccann.<sup>531</sup> His repertory comprised a mixture of descriptive songs, sentimental songs, blackface minstrelsy, light classics (“The Lost Chord”, Rubinstein’s “Melody in F”, “Barcarolle” from Tales of Hoffman etc...), “things that have never been attempted before by any concertina player and nearly every overture published”.<sup>532</sup> He toured Europe and North America and soon claimed to be “the world’s greatest concertinist”. He demonstrated the duet concertina for Lachenal in the United States where he came to the attention of the bandmaster John Philip Souza who invited him to join his company as a soloist for a world tour.

In the early years of this century, he developed his act into a pioneering touring revue (Figure 7.3) and introduced back projection and one of the first uses of cinema into his shows. The synopsis of his act in 1902 confirms an amalgam of many areas of music hall music making:

Plays Wagnerian Selection  
Sings High-class Ballad  
Pantomime Action  
Quick Change to “Jester”  
Magnificent Scenic and Electric Display  
Shakespearian Musical Recitation (H. Godfrey)  
Plays Concertina Necktie  
Quick Change to “Coster”  
Eccentric Dance  
Tells really Humorous “Gags”  
Novel Imitations on Concertina  
Quick Change to “Romeo”  
Classic Solo on the Finest Concertina in the World  
ENCORE  
Illusion Explosive Basket of FLOWERS

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<sup>530</sup> Honri, *Working the Halls*, p.35.

<sup>531</sup> *Ibid.*, p.38.

<sup>532</sup> *Cambria Daily Leader* (4 August 1898) quoted in Honri, *Working the Halls*, p.55.

# Percy Honri

ON THE  
BARRASFORD  
TOUR

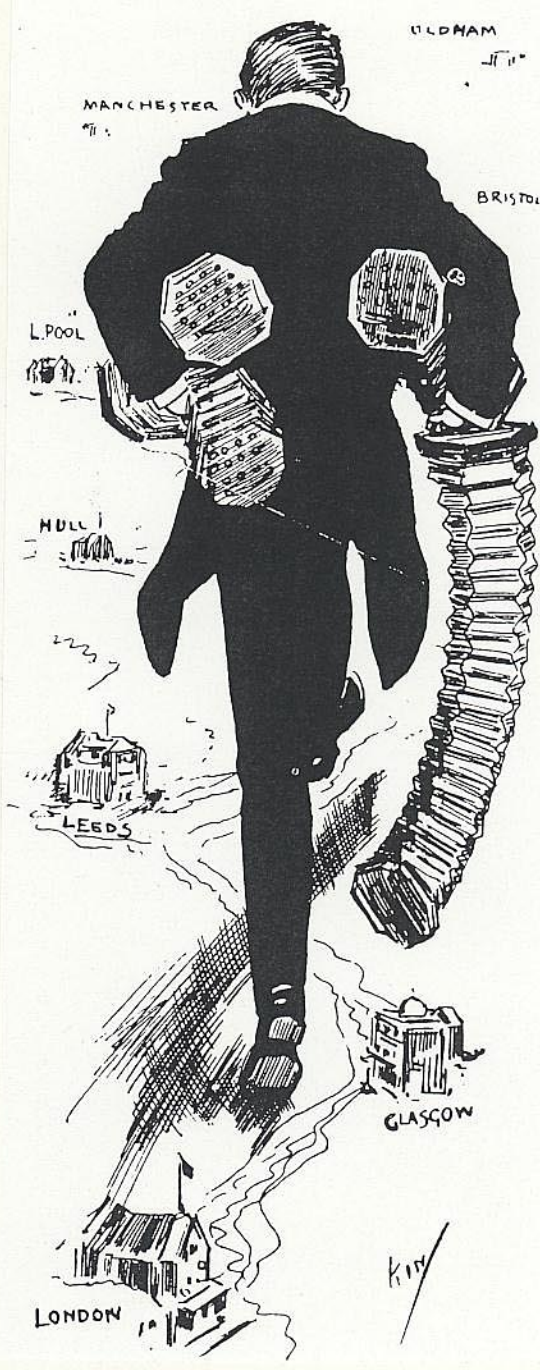


Figure 7.3 Percy Honri, Trade Advertisement.  
Source: Honri, Working the Halls, p.63.

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Quick Change to “The Newest Dandy” introducing the Great Cinematograph Novelty of the Age OH MISTER MOON<sup>533</sup>

After 1917, Honri reverted to solo work and was later joined by his daughter during the mid 1930s. The breadth of his act was reflected in his few commercial gramophone recordings (his earliest was in 1898<sup>534</sup>) which included minstrel material, popular and humorous songs, sketches, popular classics and the music hall and circus anthem, “The Entry of the Gladiators” by Julius Fucik. He was popular in South Africa during the 1930s and produced some records in Afrikaans.

The personal and musical background of Alexander Prince (Figure 7.4) is more obscure. Born Alexander Sutherland into a Scottish professional musical family<sup>535</sup> around 1870, he later became established in Nottingham as a professional concertinist and achieved considerable fame as a soloist and prolific recording artist during the period 1906-1924. His gramophone recordings reflect popular musical taste across the first decades of the present century and include Victorian drawing-room material as favoured by Maccann and Honri (“The Lost Chord”, Gounod’s “Nazareth”), modern American dance music (“Kunnin Kaffir’s Cake Walk”), contemporary British brass and wind band compositions (“Woodland Flowers” and “Darkie’s Holiday Schottische” both by Felix Burns) and military marches (“The Call of the Drum” by A. E. Godfrey and “The Great Little Army”<sup>536</sup> by K. J. Alford). There is novelty music (“Bluebells of Scotland, with Bell Effects”), medleys of popular songs from contemporary musicals (“Rose Marie” by Rudolf Friml and “No, No, Nanette” by Vincent Youmans, both 1924), traditional Scottish dance music and modern dances and marches drawing on Scottish themes (“Tam o’ Shanter Two Step”, “Lads of Scotland March”).

Prince’s performance of Scottish music is interesting on a number of counts, as can be illustrated by transcriptions from one of his recordings (Tape Item 7.2). In his medley of dance tunes, “Blue Bonnets Schottische”,<sup>537</sup> he employs a range of treatments to add variety and interest. His opening fanfare, in octaves and with a concluding chord, is more a part of the music hall, brass band or circus than the dance hall (Example 7.3a). In the first tune, “The Laddie wi’ the Plaiddie” (Example 7.3b), he uses the left hand manual to harmonise what would traditionally have been monophonic fiddle music, but in a manner which does not smother the tune or detract from the rhythmic pulse. There is a crisp handling of the dotted rhythms and skillful bellows work is displayed in the phrasing of the groups of triplets in the final section. In the first part

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<sup>533</sup> *The Era* (January 11 1902).

<sup>534</sup> His discography is included in Honri, *Working the Halls*, pp.142-3.

<sup>535</sup> Walsh, Jim “Favorite Pioneering Recording Artists: Wizards of Accordion and Concertina” *Hobbies* (March 1953) pp.32-37, 42.

<sup>536</sup> Said to have been written in 1916 in reply to the Kaiser’s reference to the British Expeditionary Force as a “contemptible little army”.

<sup>537</sup> Played on gramophone record Regal G 7003 (28023).





ALEXANDER PRINCE.

Figure 7.4 Alexander Prince.

Source: The Performer Annual (21 December 1911) p.202..



$\text{♩} = \text{F}\sharp$  tempo  $\text{♩} = 174$  pitch and tempo variable due to 78rpm format.

Example 7.3a Introduction.

bass one octave lower than written

3

3

long bellows breath

Example 7.3b The Laddie wi' the Pladdie.

Source: From the playing of Alexander Prince on gramophone record Blue Bonnets Schottische (Regal G 7003 [28023]).  
 Transcribed by Stuart Eydmann.

etc

bars one octave lower  
dotted notes are longer than shown

Example 7.3c Monymusk.

etc

continues for 4 bars then repeats

Example 7.3d What's a' the Steer, Kimmer?

right hand

left hand

etc

dotted rhythm is more exaggerated than shown

Example 7.3e Miss Betsy Robertson.

Source: From the playing of Alexander Prince on gramophone record Blue Bonnets Schottische (Regal G 7003 [28023]).  
Transcribed by Stuart Eydmann.

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of “Monymusk” (Example 7.3c), the harmony becomes a sustained drone, played more sensitively than one finds in the typical musical hall treatment (c.f. Example 7.2) and in the second part, the tune is played in octaves. Elsewhere, he plays in thirds (Example 7.3d) and also in unison (Example 7.3e), a technique which is unique to the overlapping manuals of the duet forms of concertina. To the music hall performer, playing in octaves, unison etc... offered advantages of enhanced volume and enriched tone. Its use may also have been encouraged by the rise of the modern accordion which has sets of reeds tuned to sound together in octaves.

During my field work with concertina players active during the period 1910-1945, the name of Alexander Prince was raised on many occasions as the leading soloist of his day and a major source of inspiration and repertory for amateurs.

Ernest Rutterford was also a prolific recording artist and band leader who employed the concertina in his orchestra which played at the Alexandra Palace, London during the 1920s.<sup>538</sup> The music of Souza (“El Capitan”, 1896) and the British military band composer Alford (“On the Quarter Deck”) are both represented in his records and his playing of dance music shows a clear influence of American ragtime. His “light classics” included “Humoresque” by Dvorak, “Berceuse de Jocelyn” by Godard, “Le Cygne” by Saint-Saens and the overture to Wagner’s “Tannhauser”, a piece popular with brass bands. Example 7.4 is his arrangement of the “early rag”<sup>539</sup> tune “A Coon Band Contest” by Arthur Pryor.<sup>540</sup> The close correlation with the original piano version confirms the suitability of the Maccann concertina as an instrument for reading from piano scores. Rutterford had music published by Wheatstone and Co., including Sousa’s “The High School Cadets”, and a tutor for his duet concertina.<sup>541</sup> Like Prince, Rutterford’s recordings cover a wide range of styles. As well as playing solo, he also performed and recorded with the cornet player Lloyd Shakespeare (thus combining two areas of contemporary popular working-class musical taste, as the Salvation Army also did); often he acted as accompanist, exploiting the potential of the duet concertina as a substitute for a piano or full band.<sup>542</sup>

The success of these virtuosi encouraged many other professional<sup>543</sup> and amateur imitators. They also had a great influence on the styles of players of the English

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<sup>538</sup> I know little of Rutterford’s background, dates etc.

<sup>539</sup> Berlin, Edward A. *Ragtime: A Musical and Cultural History* (Berkeley, 1980) p.163.

<sup>540</sup> Written 1899. Arrangement circa 1914. Copy in International Concertina Association library.

<sup>541</sup> Rutterford, Ernest *A Practical and Comprehensive Tutor for the Duet Concertina* (Wheatstone’s Instructions for the Duet Concertina) (London, 1914). Copy in British Library, catalogue h.261.a(18).

<sup>542</sup> According to Wallis and Malm in *Big Sounds from Small Peoples*, p.2: “The acoustic recording techniques used at the time favoured the loud noises made by industrially produced instruments like the brass and the accordions”. The concertina was used as a convenient substitute for organ on early recordings. Batten, J. *Joe Batten’s Book* (London, 1956) p.56, notes how “the bass concertina made a convincing substitute in Elgar’s “Dream of Gerontius”.

<sup>543</sup> One such player, Tommy Williams of Battersea, London, was recorded by Neil Wayne in 1968. The interview was published in *The Concertina Newsletter* 4, 5 and 7 (January, May and August 1972) and with musical recordings on the disc *Tommy Williams, Springtime in Battersea* issued by Free Reed



# A Coon Band Contest.

1

Duet.  
Concertina Solo.

(A. Pryor.)

TWO STEP.

Arranged by  
ERNEST RUTTERFORD.

Moderato.

The musical score is written for a duet in 2/4 time, marked 'Moderato'. It consists of five systems of music, each with a treble and bass staff. The first system includes a left-hand part (L.H.) with a forte (ff) dynamic and a triplet of eighth notes. The second system begins with a forte (f) dynamic. The third system features a sequence of fingerings: 4 3 1 3 4. The fourth system includes a left-hand part (L.H.) with a triplet. The fifth system includes measures 19 and 20, with measure 20 containing a triplet. The score concludes with a final cadence in measure 20.

C. W. &amp; Co. 2477.

## Example 7.4 A Coon Band Contest.

Source: Composed by Arthur Pryor (1899), arranged by Ernest Rutterford. Published by Wheatstone and Co. (London, c1914).

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concertina who strove to match their complex arrangements, full chords, effective syncopation and full rich sound within the limitations of their own instruments.

### **The Concertina in the Scottish Variety Theatre**

The music hall and variety theatre in Scotland can be viewed as a microcosm of a larger “nationally organised market and production system”.<sup>544</sup> Although it is commonly accepted that music hall, variety and related forms of entertainment flourished in Scotland and there are vast quantities of primary evidence in libraries and archives, there is very little published research to provide any context for my own work. Random sampling of the music hall press of the period 1880-1930 confirms that all the major concertina acts played in the principal halls of urban Scotland.<sup>545</sup> However, two important sections of the Scottish scene are worth considering within the context of this study:

1. There was a strong national element within popular musical taste, embracing dance tunes, traditional music and “national” music and song, which was reflected in the halls,<sup>546</sup> and
2. There were highly developed local networks in the entertainment industry involving many lesser halls and theatres, reflecting local taste and featuring their own “stars” and infrastructure.

Walter Dale of Glasgow was a prominent player of the English concertina during the period 1910-1935 who was little known outwith Scotland.<sup>547</sup> Like many music hall

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Records (FRR 008) in 1976. A music hall poster in the People’s Palace Museum, Glasgow shows a female player of the duet concertina alongside a clown with piano.

<sup>544</sup> Middleton, *Studying Popular Music*, p.21.

<sup>545</sup> For example: “Variety holds the stage at the Empire this week. Percy Honri is there with his concertina as musical and amusing as ever” in *The Glasgow Herald* (11 November 1919). According to *The Era* (1 January 1920) Steve Bartle, “The Concertina King” played Scotland in early 1910. “The Fayre Four” played the Glasgow Empire for a week in June 1919: *The Glasgow Programme* (June 1919). Dutch Daly played the Glasgow Empire for one week in December 1889. An illustrated article in *Quiz* (9 July 1896), p.262, notes Fred W. Malburn of Stockport appearing at the Glasgow Britannia Music Hall and *The Stage* of 18 January 1900 records him at the Peoples’ Palace Dundee. According to Littlejohn, J.H. *The Aberdeen Tivoli* (Aberdeen, 1986), p.9, “Vasco the Mad Musician” played at the Aberdeen Tivoli in 1911 and the *Glasgow Evening Times* (24 March 1914) recorded Minnie Paget, “The Concertina Queen” playing the Glasgow Pavilion. My informants also referred to performances by Grock, Prince, the Musical Elliots and other leading stars.

<sup>546</sup> A similar situation existed in North-East England. There has always been a great deal of musical interchange between Scotland and this part of England.

<sup>547</sup> There were also many lesser known players. For example Alec Reid, “Concertinist and instrumentalist” (Photograph in writer’s collection), or Rex Allan who recorded Scottish traditional music for Regal-Zonophone during the late 1930s. I have found many other references to concertina



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performers, he combined his playing with teaching of the instrument, he played in dance bands and, in common with players on the Manx, Thames and Irish Sea ferries, he was often heard playing on the Clyde steamers.<sup>548</sup> A number of my informants speak of his influential role in concertina playing in the West of Scotland in the years immediately after the First World War. His gramophone recordings<sup>549</sup> reflect twin facets of conservative working-class musical taste in the Scotland of the time: brass band music (e.g. “Honest Toil” by William Rimmer and “Administration March”<sup>550</sup>) and traditional fiddle music (e.g. “Irish Medley”/ “Scottish Reels”,<sup>551</sup> “The Bonny Lass o’ Bon Accord etc...”/ “Cradle Song etc...”<sup>552</sup> and “Orange and Blue”/ “Hornpipe Medley”<sup>553</sup>). Much of the Scottish music is from the publications of the fiddle player James Scott Skinner (1843-1927) whose compositions have had an important place in the canon of Scottish instrumentalists since the early years of the century. The music of Skinner was not inappropriate for a player of the English concertina interested in Scottish music, for it was written during the peak of the instrument’s popularity and reflected many aspects of wider musical taste. His output was wide-ranging and included many slow tunes of a sentimental nature within the Victorian drawing-room tradition favoured by many concertinists. It also included showy virtuosic pieces that betrayed his rigorous classical training (they feature extended arpeggios and runs of triplets) and fast dance tunes which today have a distinct, late nineteenth-century “feel” and include a degree of chromaticism for which the English concertina is well suited. Skinner’s tunes use all the familiar building blocks of the Scottish fiddle idiom and in particular the so called “double tonic” effect, a sequence of a melodic figure on a major triad followed by the same or another figure on the major triad, a tone lower. I have already demonstrated in Chapter 5.0 how the basic triads are easily fingered on the English concertina.

The air, “The Bonny Lass of Bon Accord” (Example 7.5), was originally published with variations in 1888<sup>554</sup> and later gained a further strain in the tonic minor. Dale’s recorded version compresses the tune by abandoning the central strains, moving quickly to the minor variation for an earlier dramatic effect and to make space on the record for the customary strathspey and reel which follow. As the transcription shows, his interpretation of the tune is close to Skinner’s published version. The harmony is sparse but does include some octave playing. This may have been used to boost the instrument’s volume or perhaps a response to the fact that it had become central to music hall concertina playing through the outstanding players of the duet

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players in Scottish halls about whom I have no background information.

<sup>548</sup> A gramophone record from the 1930s by “Alex Reid and Company” features a comic sketch “Doon the Clyde” based on a journey on a Clyde steamer. The sketch features an appearance by Walter Dale as himself when he plays a hornpipe (Sterno 560, copy in collection of Frank Bruce, Edinburgh).

<sup>549</sup> In addition to the Sterno recordings which are described, Dale also made a number of discs for the Homophon label around 1912.

<sup>550</sup> Sterno, numbers unknown.

<sup>551</sup> Sterno (596).

<sup>552</sup> Sterno (589).

<sup>553</sup> Sterno (568).

<sup>554</sup> Alburger, *Scottish Fiddlers...*, p.184.

## The Bonnie Lass o' Bon-Accord

Violin Solo

Moderato  $\text{♩} = 84$ 

J. Scott Skinner

Musical score for the main piece, consisting of three staves of music in G major (one sharp) and common time. The tempo is Moderato with a quarter note equal to 84 beats per minute. The score includes various dynamics such as *mf* and *f*, and features several triplets and slurs. Fingerings are indicated with numbers 1-4. The piece concludes with a repeat sign.

VAR. I

Musical score for Variation I, consisting of four staves of music. It begins with a *p* dynamic and includes a *mf* section. The variation features more complex rhythmic patterns, including triplets and slurs, and ends with a *rall.* (rallentando) marking.

VAR. II

Sadly

Musical score for Variation II, consisting of four staves of music. It is marked *p* and *Sadly*. The variation includes first and second endings, indicated by bracketed numbers 1 and 2. Dynamics range from *mf* to *f*, and it concludes with a *rall.* marking.

## Example 7.5 The Bonnie Lass o' Bon-Accord.

Source: Composed by James Scott Skinner and published in *The Scottish Violinist* (Glasgow, n.d.) p.1. Overlay shows variations on the original as played by Walter Dale on gramophone record (Sterno 589), transcribed by Stuart Eydmann.



# The Bonnie Lass o' Bon-Accord

Violin Solo

Moderato ♩ = 52

*Dale's version limited to areas in boxes*

J. Scott Skinner

VAR. I

VAR. II

*Sadly*

*continues one in unison  
octave below as shown*

Example 7.5 The Bonnie Lass o' Bon-Accord.

Source: Composed by James Scott Skinner and published in *The Scottish Violinist* (Glasgow, n.d.) p.1. Overlay shows variations on the original as played by Walter Dale on gramophone record (Sterno 589), transcribed by Stuart Eydmann.

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models. The melody of the strathspey, “The Miller O’ Hirn” (Example 7.6), is also played very much as published although many of Skinner’s bowing subtleties are ironed out. Dale uses chords rather than double stopped unisons in the first notes of each strain and there is none of the pointed rhythms, crisp, staccato bowing or exaggerated accents one would expect from fiddle players from the Skinner’s homeland in the North East of Scotland.

In its original form, the reel “Miss Shepherd” (Example 7.7a), makes full use of the fiddle’s compass with the opening section played on the G and D strings. Dale’s version (Example 7.7b) raises the pitch of the opening bars by an octave to avoid the difficulty of playing fast passages in the lower range of the English concertina.

Dale skilfully plays rapidly repeated notes, as in the traditional “birls” in his version of “Harvest Home” (Example 7.8a). These can be bowed with ease on the fiddle but are particularly difficult to execute cleanly on the concertina. However, they can be fingered in a number of different ways as shown in Example 7.8b. It is also possible to take advantage of the duplicate Eb and Ab notes which exist on the English concertina and these are employed to good effect by Dale in another passage of “Harvest Home” (Example 7.9) and (to more dramatic effect) in the “Reel o’ Thuilleachan” (Example 7.10). In both of these pieces, the key has been transposed by Dale from Skinner’s published original to deliberately allow use of the duplicate notes. Each of these tunes include a number of accidentals and demand the rapid performance of runs which would have been impossible to render on most accordions of the day.

Walter’s son, Tommy Dale, was also a professional concertinist. During the 1930s he became associated with the Logan family which has occupied a central position in variety theatre in Glasgow throughout this century.<sup>555</sup> A season spent in New York may account for the inclusion of American pieces on a gramophone record made during the 1930s (“Marilyn” and “Lopeziana” by Lou Adler<sup>556</sup>). He later formed the musical act “Douglas, Dex and Dale” (piano, saxophone and concertina) which met with some success on the Scottish variety circuit. A descendant, Ron Dale, was active in the Scottish variety scene during the 1950s, 60s and 70s<sup>557</sup> as a multi-instrumentalist who included the concertina in his act.

My informant Willie Smith (b1904) (Figures 7.5 and 7.6) worked as a miner but found, during the early 1920s, that he was able to earn as much playing concertina in the evenings. His teachers were Walter Dale and George Simpson and he was a great admirer of Alexander Prince, who he said could play “more than I ever thought could be done with 10 fingers, with the amount of music that was comin’ out of it”.<sup>558</sup> He recalled that “Prince could fill a concert hall in Glasgow [at a time] when people were

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<sup>555</sup> Personal communication with Buddy Logan, Glasgow, 1985.

<sup>556</sup> *Sterno* (552).

<sup>557</sup> Littlejohn, J.H. *The Scottish Music Hall 1880-1990* (Edinburgh, 1990) p.22.

<sup>558</sup> Willie Smith: Eydmann 85.07.A8.



tempo ♩ = 156

Skinner writes this piece one fifth lower but Dale has transposed it to flow directly from The Bonny Lass o' Bon Accord. The higher pitch results in a more brilliant effect in the closing two bars.

**Example 7.6     The Miller O' Hirn.**

Source: Composed by James Scott Skinner and published in The Scottish Violinist (Glasgow, n.d.) p.2. As played by Walter Dale on gramophone record (Sterno 589), transcribed by Stuart Eydmann.





Example 7.7a Miss Shepherd (extract).

Source: Composed by James Scott Skinner and published in The Scottish Violinist (Glasgow, n.d.).

Skinner writes the crotchets marked \* as birds:



These are difficult to finger on the concertina at this speed.

Example 7.7b Miss Shepherd.

Source: As played by Walter Dale on gramophone record (Sterno 589), transcribed by Stuart Eydmann.



Example 7.8a Harvest Home (extract).



Example 7.8b Harvest Home (extract).



Example 7.9 Harvest Home (extract).

Source: Composed by James Scott Skinner and published in The Scottish Violinist (Glasgow, n.d) p.44. As played by Walter Dale on gramophone record (Sterno 568), transcribed by Stuart Eydmann.



right 2 left 1 left 1 right 1 left 1

Example 7.10 Reel o' Thulleachan (extract).  
 Source: Composed by James Scott Skinner and published in The Scottish Violinist (Glasgow, n.d.) p.25. As played by Walter Dale on gramophone record (Sterno 589), transcribed by Stuart Eydmann.



Figure 7.5 Willie Smith on Clyde Steamer c1964.  
Source: Author's Collection.

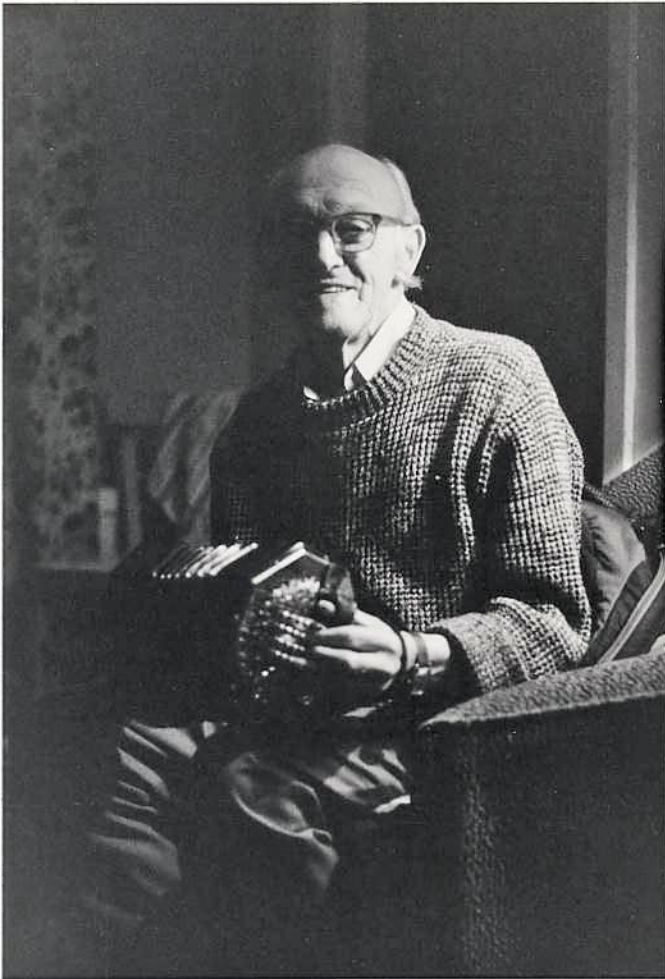


Figure 7.6 Willie Smith, Greenock 1984.  
Source: Author's Collection.



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abandoning the variety theatre”.<sup>559</sup> During the miner’s strike of 1926 Willie took up music as his sole employment<sup>560</sup> playing in local dance bands<sup>561</sup> and concerts:

The concertina was a popular instrument then. If you could play the concertina the whole district was coming to your home, or could hear you play or were going to the concerts, a concert maybe in your own district. The whole place would turn out. “Billy’s playin’ tonight! come an’ we’ll hear Billy playing this, that, you know”.<sup>562</sup>

He learned clarinet and graduated to playing in the orchestras of the larger variety theatres in the city. Opportunities declined as the cinema expanded so he added saxophone to his skills and took work in more fashionable dance bands too. By the early 1930s he had to return to his concertina to make a living:

W.S.:            Instead of the variety they went to the talkies, and that was the orchestras all done away with and lo and behold I had to go back to my concertina for a year or two but I got on the stage just the same.

S.E.:            In the variety halls?

W.S.:            In variety halls, and just played the teeny [concertina] and all the kiddin’ and swankin’ and blowin’ them round my head and imitating the bells and a’ that kind of thing and I got a living that way...<sup>563</sup>

The last paragraph refers to the strutting, exaggeration and novelty playing expected from concertina players in the halls. Willie played clarinet and saxophone for many years as part of the small orchestras on board the liners of the Glasgow- Quebec and Southampton-South Africa lines.<sup>564</sup> In these situations he would use his concertina to vary the programme by playing music of a “nautical” nature. As with other players of the music hall, he had a wide personal repertory which included overtures, light music, Scottish dance music, novelties and general popular music.

Willie Smith’s concertina playing became widely known in the 1950s through his performance in the theme music of the Ealing comedy “The Maggie”<sup>565</sup> and in the

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<sup>559</sup> Ibid.

<sup>560</sup> “Rigby and Royal, The Musical Miners”, two brothers from Yorkshire also took to the stage with their concertinas during the miner’s strike of 1926: *NICA* 6 (May/June 1955), p.10-11.

<sup>561</sup> The concertina in local dance bands in Scotland is discussed in detail in Chapter 10.0.

<sup>562</sup> Willie Smith: Eydmann 85.07.A9.

<sup>563</sup> Ibid., A2.

<sup>564</sup> Just before the Second World War ship’s musicians sailing from the Clyde had a basic rate of £14 per month: *Musician’s Union Scottish Branches Price Lists 1938-42*. Copy in National Library of Scotland.

<sup>565</sup> Ealing 1953. Known in the U.S. as “High and Dry”. Music by John Addison (1920- ). The use of

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1960s through his playing of the theme for the B.B.C. comedy drama “The Vital Spark”. Both productions drew on the themes of Neil Munro’s “Para Handy Tales”,<sup>566</sup> short stories published in the Glasgow Evening News during the early years of this century, which featured the antics of the crew of a cargo ship working the waters of the West Coast of Scotland.

The music of “The Maggie” takes as its theme the Scots fiddle tune “Hamilton House”. This lively jig, which dates from the eighteenth century, is played by the concertina in a variety of tempi and styles for dramatic effect (one of the leading characters in the film plays the concertina and Willie Smith himself makes a brief appearance as a concertina player in a ceilidh scene). In the title sequence, the tune is played by an orchestra with the concertina taking solo passages. The jaunty simplicity of the tune, combined with Willie Smith’s lively playing, offers a flavour wholly appropriate to the humour and spirit of the film which is Scottish in character yet avoids stereotypes. The use of free-reeds had a parallel in Larry Adler’s harmonica music for the film “Genevieve” of the same year.

The “Vital Spark”<sup>567</sup> theme (Example 7.11) is closer to the popular music of the early twentieth century. In the style of the polka or schottische, it matched the lighthearted nostalgia and humour of the programmes. Incidental music, including minor key variations on the theme, featured the concertina and jew’s harp. Both projects further promoted and emphasised the popular image of the concertina as a seafarer’s instrument in Scotland. Like his teacher Walter Dale before him, Willie Smith was a well known performer on the Clyde steamers during the 1960s (Figure 7.5). He is remembered by several other informants:

On the Waverley, on the boats doon the Clyde. Aye he wisna a big man, he was a wee man that played the concertina. But... the harp was an enormous size and for a while, I can mind for a while they had a piana as well on the boat and they pulled it out on the deck and they played the piana and harp and the concertina and a fiddle.<sup>568</sup>

On the Waverley, they used to have pianos all over the boat. There was usually a violin player and the piano was there a’ the time and

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the concertina was in keeping with Addison’s other film work in which he favoured solo instruments with a specific character such as the oboe in “The Girl with the Green Eyes” and the harpsichord in “Tom Jones”.

<sup>566</sup> Munro, Neil Para Handy Tales (Collected edition, Edinburgh, 1955). In Munro’s stories it is the melodeon and trump (jew’s harp) which are the instruments of the seamen.

<sup>567</sup> Composed by Ian Gourlay (1915-1993).

<sup>568</sup> Jimmy Lindsay: Eydmann 86.03.A8. In Colour on the Clyde: Memories of the Clyde Steamers (Rothsay, 1970), Cameron Somerville records that “On the [ship] Isle of Arran... there was a harp, two violins and a concertina, and there was much good singing of Scottish songs, in which the passengers joined with immense gusto.” There is a photograph of a concertina player and harpist on board a Clyde ship in the collection of Rosa Michaelson, Fife (Figure 7.7). The concertina player may be Walter Dale, discussed earlier.

tempo ♩ = 160

I

A

B

C

played IAABBACAA

**Example 7.11** The Theme from The Vital Spark.

Source: Composed by Ian Gourlay, c1965. As played by Willie Smith, transcribed by Stuart Eydmann from tape Eydmann 83.01.A1.





Figure 7.7 Musicians Playing on Clyde Steamer.  
Source: Collection of Rosa Michaelson.



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maybe an accordion and a saxophone and the concertina. This was the band they had. There was always a concertina there.<sup>569</sup>

Jack Easy (Joe Maley d.1980) was another outstanding Glaswegian concertinist of the Scottish music hall. He worked extensively as a soloist throughout Britain and took his own show to resorts in Ireland for the summer season. During the 1950s and 60s he followed in the footsteps of Tommy Dale by becoming associated with the Logan Family and played in their shows and revues throughout Scotland. He made occasional appearances on television in Scotland during the 1960s. In the early 1970s he retired to Fleetwood, Lancashire. A field recording made in 1977<sup>570</sup> shows him to have been a highly skilled player, able to bring a large repertoire of colouring and expression to his arrangements, including playing in octaves and a sensitive tremolo similar to that employed by harmonica players. His pieces invariably opened with a flourish and closed with a bravura ending and made full use of his brilliant technique.

As with the other music hall players, his repertoire was diverse and included brass band pieces (e.g. “Under Freedom’s Flag”), Latin American style dance music (“Pablo the Dreamer”), blackface minstrel music, sentimental choruses, “hits” from shows and films and Scottish and Irish traditional dance music played in a fast, showy fashion. Ragtime tunes such as “12th Street Rag”, “Leicester Square Rag” and “Black and White Rag” featured prominently in his repertoire and were appropriate showpieces for his outstanding technique. This material was more closely linked to popular taste of the 1930s and 40s and the ragtime revival of the early 1970s than a direct link to the music of the early twentieth century.<sup>571</sup> His Dixieland Medley (Tape Item 7.3) is chosen to illustrate his skillful playing.

A popular part of his act was an appearance on stage dressed as a Merchant Navy sailor: “a most immaculate figure, with a white hat”.<sup>572</sup> He introduced this act with a selection of naval tunes including “Anchors A-weigh”. Again we find the exploitation of the theme of the concertina as a seamen’s instrument (West Central Scotland was the location of a number of major ports). He would follow this with “A Life on the Ocean Wave”, and “Every Nice Girl Loves a Sailor” and “then you could play anything you liked after that”. He invariably included one of a number of his Scottish and Irish medleys in his act. One was the published “Savoy Scottish Medley

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<sup>569</sup> Danny Toner: Eydmann 85.02.A7. There is a photograph of “The Kaye Orchestra” playing on a steamer c1939 which shows piano, cello and saxophone (played by Willie Smith?) in McCrone, Ian To The Coast: One Hundred Years of the Caledonian Steam Packet Company (Glasgow, n.d) p.57.

<sup>570</sup> Made by Ross Campbell in Fleetwood. A copy of the tape is lodged in the North West Sound Archive.

<sup>571</sup> Dating from 1914 “12th Street Rag” was revived in the film “Close Harmony” in 1929 and was later featured on a hit record of 1948 by Pee Wee Hunt. “Leicester Square Rag” is by Harry Roy (1900-1971) whose band supported films in the newly opened Leicester Square Theatre, London. “Black and White Rag” of 1908 was revived with great success by the Trinidadian pianist Winifred Attwell (1914-1949) in the 1940s.

<sup>572</sup> Fred Osbourne “The Concertina on the Variety Stage” Concertina Newsletter 5, p.19.

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One Step”<sup>573</sup> and another, the “Savoy Irish Medley One Step”, which dated from Debroy Summer’s directorship of the Savoy Orpheans dance band at the Savoy Hotel, London in the mid 1920s. The former includes a whole palette of Scottish gimmicks including, bagpipe effects, sentimental songs, bell effects (the ubiquitous “Caller Herrin”), Robert Burns’ songs and dance tunes bound together by a quickstep rhythm. Similarly, his “Piper’s Wedding Medley” (which has no relation to the bagpipe tradition) was a pastiche of Scottish melodies which managed at one point to combine strains from four tunes (“Auld Lang Syne”, “Annie Laurie”, “Caller Herrin” and “Peat Fire Flame”) in as many bars before concluding with an imitation of bells. “The Wee MacGregor Patrol” opened with an imitation of a pipe band rising in volume and closed with it fading out as if marching past and into the distance. His own “Irish Medley”, which he played at the Metropole Theatre, Glasgow, crams seven familiar songs and dance tunes of different measure into a few minutes:

*song:song:reel:song:hornpipe:song:jig*

The field recording features another Scottish selection of his own arrangement which combined the following tunes in the order listed:

Westerin’ Home	song/waltz
My Bonny Lies over the Ocean	song/waltz
The Road to the Isles	song/march
Mairi’s Wedding	march/march
The Inverness Gathering	march
Unidentified Quickstep	quickstep
The Barren Rocks of Aden	quickstep

The selection faded out with drones suggesting the sound of the bagpipes.

Modern polkas featured prominently in his repertory including “The Swedish Polka”, “Hopscotch Polka” and “The Bluebell Polka”, a popular tune from the pen of Jimmy Shand, a Scottish accordionist who has played a central role in Scottish dance music in the period after the Second World War.

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<sup>573</sup> Published 1924. Recorded by the Savoy Orpheans on Columbia (939).

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Outwith the Glasgow conurbation, George Morris (also known as “Dod” or “The Buchan Chiel”),<sup>574</sup> was a music hall performer who associated himself with the language and humour of the north-east of Scotland. He is remembered mainly as a writer, publisher and singer of “bothy ballads”, several of which he recorded for the Beltona label during the 1930s.<sup>575</sup> He also performed comic material and instrumental pieces<sup>576</sup> using concertina. His monologue “A Sunday Morning Ramble”, transcribed here from a gramophone recording,<sup>577</sup> contained all the typical novelty effects heard on the concertina in the music hall:

[Concertina playing chimes, as in Big Ben]

Oh me! Whit a fat heid I hiv this mournin. I think I’ll hae soda water and reflection for my breakfast.

[Concertina playing a peal of bells]

Great Scot! There’s the kirk bells. I’ll hae tae dress an’ get outside.

[Peal becomes louder]

It’s a fine morn this mornin’ is’n’t it Jimmy? I doubt we’re ower late for the kirk, eh? Never mind, come on round by the kirk door an’ we’ll hear the organ.

[Concertina playing in imitation of church organ]

Man Jimmy, that’s fine, eh? Na, ya canna beat the auld tunes. It’s gettin awfa het is’n’t it tae? Whit about a walk down the beach. eh? You’ve tae be back for yer denner at ane o’clock? Och, we’ll easy manage that.

[Concertina drones, as in bagpipes]

Come on. Sic a crowd at the end o’ the street. Wonder whit’s a dae. Listen man! It’s the Deebank boy pipers mairchin tae their Kirk parade. Come on an see them Jim.

[Concertina playing “Cock of the North” and “All the Blue Bonnets are o’er the Border” in imitation of bagpipes]

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<sup>574</sup> Extract from Beltona *Electrographics* catalogue, not dated, writer’s collection.

<sup>575</sup> Morris, G.S. *Kerr’s “Buchan” Bothy Ballads* Books 1 and 2 (Glasgow, n.d.).

<sup>576</sup> For example: “Nonsense”/“Comin’ Fae ‘Rury” (comic songs) Beltona (1876), “Uryside”/“Bennachie Schottische” Beltona (1877).

<sup>577</sup> “A Sunday Morning Ramble”/“Way Down South” Beltona (1718, M13733E and M13734).

### *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

Come on! Man that's fine. Look at this.

[Bagpipe imitation fades as if band marching away]

In "Way Down South", on the reverse side, he played a selection of minstrel style tunes.

As in other parts of Britain, the music hall and variety theatres of Scotland largely disappeared after the Second World War. However, many of the acts continued in seasonal shows in the cities and seaside resorts and on television, although the programmes became dominated by a particular formula of "Scottish entertainment" which, drawing on the music hall tradition, combined aspects of popular and traditional music in a category now known as "tartanry". The accordion, which had assumed the role of principal instrument in Scottish dance music, became an important element of such shows, in dance music, song accompaniment and for listening. The concertina, which had been in decline in any event, became marginalised. A number of more recent Scottish variety artistes played the concertina (often a miniature version) but have used it more as a novelty or as a clowning prop in a wider act.<sup>578</sup> These included Jimmy Logan, Billy Crotchet the musical clown,<sup>579</sup> and the comedian Lex MacLean. Such acts reinforced the humorous aspects of the instrument to the detriment of its more serious side and contributed to its abandonment in the longer term. Laden with these associations, the concertina was never adopted as the instrument of an overtly "Scottish" act in the way that the killed accordionist has become de rigueur.<sup>580</sup>

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<sup>578</sup> During this period the concertina found favour with a number of fashionable cabaret artistes outwith Britain. These included Raymond Devos and "Fred and Frederika" in France and Margaret Scott in New York.

<sup>579</sup> Billy Crotchet and Jeannie were part of "The White Heather Club Show" during its four week season at the Edinburgh Empire in 1959 (Programme, Edinburgh Public Libraries). They appeared at the Aberdeen Tivoli in the show "The Swing o' the Kilt" in the same year (Littlejohn, *Aberdeen Tivoli*, p.83).

<sup>580</sup> One exception was "Jock Harris, Scottish Entertainer" who performed on concertina in formal Highland Dress. Photograph, c.1920, in writer's collection.



*The Life and Times of the Concertina*

## Concertina Bands

### Introduction

The late nineteenth century saw the emergence of many new forms of organised working-class music making including bands, orchestras and choirs. The most widespread and enduring of the instrumental ensembles were those of the “brass band movement”, an institution now recognised as “one of the most remarkable working class cultural achievements in European history”<sup>581</sup> and “one of the more important aspects of British art music as well as popular music in the nineteenth century”.<sup>582</sup>

Trevor Herbert<sup>583</sup> has shown how the brass band movement developed from a variety of early nineteenth century roots to become fully fledged around 1880. By the end of the century, thousands of bands were in operation, their classic location being small, relatively self-contained industrial communities. In common with other working-class leisure activities of the period, the movement involved major elements of middle-class inspiration and patronage embracing reforming zeal or an “improving” educational drive. This included a “downward flow” of attitudes and music (generally transcriptions of “art” music) to the working classes who made “them their own, investing them with a new and lasting identity”<sup>584</sup> and developing a popular repertory. The formation of bands was tied to the new leisure patterns, opportunities for performance and emerging aspirations of both players and audiences. As with the development of the free-reed instruments, the brass band movement was dependent on important developments in musical instrument technology, design and manufacture.

The brass band movement also accommodated a network of concertina bands, ensembles using the English instrument but quite distinct from the professional and amateur affairs of the Victorian middle classes discussed in earlier chapters. Information relating to these bands is limited and scattered but there is enough material, particularly reminiscences and brief histories of individual bands, to paint a broad picture of their development and activities. The growing critical literature relating to the brass band movement helps us to understand their context.

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<sup>581</sup> Russell, *Popular Music...*, p.162.

<sup>582</sup> Herbert, Trevor *Bands: The Brass Band Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, (Milton Keynes, 1991), p.7.

<sup>583</sup> *Ibid.* and Herbert, Trevor “The Rise of the Brass Band Movement”, paper delivered to the symposium *Brass Roots: 150 Years of Brass Bands* held at Edinburgh University of Collection of Historic Musical Instruments (25 August 1989).

<sup>584</sup> Herbert, *Bands...*, p.49.

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The first concertina bands appeared in the 1880s, the time of the consolidation of the brass band movement, and adopted many if not all of its conventions and aspirations and much of its repertory without any evolutionary contribution of their own. The specific forces behind the formation of the first concertina bands are difficult to identify. The fact that the English concertina was regarded by some as an instrument of rational recreation ensured its suitability for organised music making and is one likely factor. Local circumstances and individual initiatives would also have been highly important. The South Shields Concertina Band was started as a consequence of a lively social scene in which the concertina already enjoyed a high degree of popularity and the Heckmondwike English Concertina Band developed from a loose collection of musicians in the Heckmondwike and Liversedge areas of Bradford who, in 1902, joined up with a few more players from the neighbouring areas of Cleckheaton and Low Moor.<sup>585</sup> Keighley Concertina band was formed in 1893 by four brothers who were enthusiastic players.<sup>586</sup>

Concertina bands were most commonly found in the industrial North of England, in areas which were also the cradle of many successful brass bands. Russell has noted a great concentration in the Yorkshire textile districts<sup>587</sup> where at least twenty-two concertina bands were active between c.1885 and 1814.<sup>588</sup> The largest numbers were located within an area encompassing Halifax, Bradford and the towns of the heavy woollen district, Batley, Dewsbury and Morley, where one of the first successful bands, Wyke and Low Moor Model, acted as a stimulus.<sup>589</sup> According to Nigel Pickles,<sup>590</sup> other important centres of concertina band activity were Ashton, Oldham, Manchester and Heywood in Lancashire and Mexborough and Heckmondwike in Yorkshire. Bands also emerged in North East England and, to a limited degree, in industrial Central Scotland. The Brass Band News of October 1889 was able to claim that it had over two hundred concertina bands on its advertising list, though no truly accurate count is available.<sup>591</sup>

Like brass bands, the concertina ensembles were comprised mainly of working-class males who shared the principal sources of employment in the area. Tony Kell,<sup>592</sup> for example, has noted that the South Shields Concertina Band was formed by miners, shipyard workers and seamen while my own research suggests that the Glasgow English Concertina Band drew a number of its members from the Springburn locomotive works in the city.

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<sup>585</sup> Pickles, Nigel "The Heckmondwike English Concertina Band" NICA 351 (October 1987), pp.5-9.

<sup>586</sup> Woods, Steve "Keighley Concertina Band" TCN 8 (October 1972), p.12.

<sup>587</sup> For early histories of bands in this area see The Cornet (August 1903), The British Bandsman (8 June 1907).

<sup>588</sup> Russell, Popular Music..., p.284.

<sup>589</sup> Ibid., p.195 and Pickles, "The Heckmondwike...", p.5.

<sup>590</sup> Pickles, Nigel The Mexborough English Concertina Prize Band Liner notes, Plant Life Records (PLR 055) 1983.

<sup>591</sup> Russell, Popular Music..., p.195.

<sup>592</sup> Kell, Tony "South Shields Concertina Band" in NICA 334 (February 1986).

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Exceptions to the typical concertina band were those associated with the Orange Movement in Liverpool.<sup>593</sup> These were more part of a sectarian sub-culture which elsewhere has spawned flute or accordion bands. Serving a different function, these were not tied to the infrastructure, repertory and conventions of the brass band movement and accommodated female as well as male members. As discussed in Chapter 9.0, the Salvation Army and other evangelical groups also developed concertina ensembles to suit their own purposes.

### **The Concertina Band**

The standard brass band format dictated the make up of the emerging concertina ensembles, and manufacturers readily produced instruments of different compass to match their brass counterparts. Some concertina bands were informally organised in reflection of their principal role as entertainment at local social events. Others, particularly those involved in competitions, had a more formal structure, including assigned parts, designated as in brass bands. The Ashton-under-Lyne Concertina Band, for example, was divided into:

- Bandmaster
- Conductor
- Soprano
- 2 Solo Cornets
- 1st. Clarionet Repiano
- 2 2nd. Cornets
- 4 3rd. Cornets
- Euphonium
- 1st. Baritone
- 2nd. Baritone
- 1st. Trombone
- Solo Tenor Horn
- 1st. Horn
- Drummer<sup>594</sup>

The musical evidence suggests that conventionally tuned instruments were used and that bands used specially arranged concertina parts rather than reading directly from brass band arrangements.<sup>595</sup> The fact that the otherwise versatile instruments, if tuned to other pitches, would be unsuitable for many other uses outwith the band must have

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<sup>593</sup> NICA (September 1956), p.2. According to Concertina World 388 (November/December 1992) p.3, The Merseyside Concertina Band is still in existence.

<sup>594</sup> "Ashton English Concertina Band" in unidentified news cutting c.1930 reprinted in Concertina Newsletter 17, p.27.

<sup>595</sup> However, I have encountered second-hand concertinas tuned to Bb and other keys.



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been an important consideration in the adoption of standard, rather than specially tuned, instruments. Some bands used orchestral arrangements, naming the instruments 1st. Violin, 2nd. Violin etc... and others, such as the Northumberland and Durham Concertina Club, simply named the parts according to the range of different concertinas commonly available; Treble, 2nd. Treble, Tenor-Treble, Baritone, Bass and Double Bass. In the latter case (Example 8.1), all parts were written in the treble clef to take account of the fact that different sizes of English concertina have the same keyboard arrangement but sound different octaves.

Although most bands comprised only English concertinas, it is noted that one band used Anglo-German models until they could afford to upgrade<sup>596</sup> and, in others, Duet concertinas were used by some players. Oral sources suggest that, typically, members owned their instruments rather than relying on the band's resources, although it is reasonable to assume that the circumstances of ownership might vary from band to band. The large bass instruments and other "specials" are likely to have belonged to the ensemble. The concertina band should not be viewed as a "poor man's brass band", for manufacturers' price lists offer quality brass instruments at considerably lower prices than their equivalents in concertina catalogues.<sup>597</sup>

Performances usually took place with the bands in seated position but they could also play on the march, with the heavier instruments supported by light straps. It is noted how in one band:

All instruments were provided with a brass socket into which a lyre-clip screwed to hold the music cards... Another accessory which was used was an open-ended cylinder of waterproof material, elasticated at the ends; this fitted over the bellows to protect them when playing outdoors in inclement weather.<sup>598</sup>

Photographic<sup>599</sup> and oral evidence shows that uniforms similar to those worn by brass bands were standard.

Other instruments had a place in the concertina band. It has been noted that the South Shields Concertina Band had an accompanist on piano and harmonium<sup>600</sup> and the concert harp was also used. Percussion was common, as in the Glasgow band:

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<sup>596</sup> This use of cheaper, less advanced instruments in the early years of bands was not unusual. Flute bands, for example, often began with tin whistles until they could afford flutes.

<sup>597</sup> Myers, Arnold, in "Instruments and Instrumentation in British Brass Bands" (Appendix 1 in Herbert, *Bands*, pp.169-195) notes that top quality Cornets in Bb were being offered at £9 in 1889, £14 14s 6d in 1913 and £10 15s 8d in 1927. Their concertina equivalents were sold at considerably higher prices.

<sup>598</sup> Woods, "Keighley Concertina Band", p.13.

<sup>599</sup> E.g. Photograph and feature on the Barnsley and Worsbrough Bridge United Concertina Band circa 1920 in *Barnsley Chronicle* (11 August 1972).

<sup>600</sup> Tony Kell, "South Shields Concertina Band".

The Lambton Worm

*Treble*  
*1st*

*Allegro.*

*mf*

*Chorus*

*2nd Treble*

*Allegro*

*mf*

*Chorus*

*Tenor-Treble*

*Allegro*

*f*

*mf*

*Chorus*

*Bass*

*Allegro*

*f*

*mf*

*Chorus*

Example 8.1 The Lambton Worm.

Source: Library of the Northumberland and Durham Concertina Club, The North East of England Open Air Museum, Beamish (Catalogue 1985.348).

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Concertinas, it was all concertinas and side drums and the big drum and all the effects. And bells and everything. It sounded marvellous you know.<sup>601</sup>

Often the programme would be varied through the inclusion of a solo from an outstanding player, a guest singer or another instrumentalist, such as a flautist or a cornet player from the brass band world.

### **Repertory**

Evidence from programmes and band libraries confirms that the repertory of the concertina band was modelled closely on that of the brass ensembles. In his history of the Heckmondwike English Concertina Band,<sup>602</sup> Nigel Pickles identifies the principal items in the band's repertory:

Scottish Memories, (with imitations of bagpipes)	W Rimmer
Memories of the Opera	W Rimmer <sup>603</sup>
Precioso	Brooke
Washington Greys	Graffula
Hallelujah Chorus	Handel
Alpine Rose, fantasia	Rimmer
Pirates of Penzance, selection	Sullivan
Chorus (from 12th Mass)	Mozart

A programme<sup>604</sup> for a public park concert by the South Shields Concertina Band offered a similar selection:

March	The War Correspondent	G E Holmes
Overture	The Arcadians	Monkton and Talbot
Intermezzo	Simplicity	H Sullivan
Overture Selection	In the Land of Scott	Craig
Selection	From the 12th Mass	Mozart
Intermezzo	Les Sylphides	O Cussans
Selection	Navyland	Edw. St. Quentin

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<sup>601</sup> David Galloway: Eydmann 86.01.05.

<sup>602</sup> Pickles, "The Heckmondwike...", p.6.

<sup>603</sup> The band corresponded with the composer regarding this arrangement.

<sup>604</sup> South Shields Public Library (n.d.).

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March	Our Nominee	W. Esberger
Hymn Tune	Abide with Me	Liddel
God Save the King		

Nigel Pickles has also listed the music in the library of the former Mexborough English Concertina Prize Band:<sup>605</sup>

Polka	Lady Florence	J. Ord Hume
Quick March	Our Cavalry	Oliver Herzer
Intermezzo	Village Bells	A. Piquard
March	Martial Air	H. Purcell
Fantasia	Echoes of Scotland	W. Rimmer
Quick March	Death or Glory	R.B. Hall
Descriptive March	Jamie's Patrol	Sidney Dacre
Schottische	Merry Men and Maids	J. Ord Hume
Prelude and Air		H. Purcell
Quick March	The Celebration	J.A. Greenwood
Polka	The Sentinel	J. Ord Hume
Grand Fantasia	Memories of Britain	W. Rimmer

Here we find many parallels with the music of the brass band world. This comprised “respectable” popular music, including “art”, “light” and specialist band works, selected to serve specific functions such as marching, dance, entertainment, contests and civic ceremonies. Selections based upon popular Italian opera were used extensively in contests from the brass bands’ earliest period and were also heard in concerts alongside pieces from musical comedy and operetta, marches (often from the military band canon), patriotic or “national” (i.e. Scottish, Irish, British etc...) music, novelty pieces and solos. By 1890, sacred music had largely disappeared from the programmes of secular brass bands, this music having been taken up by the emerging Salvation Army and mission bands. Hymns were played at Sunday concerts and other occasions as required.

However, the general range of music associated with the concertina groups was more limited than that heard from brass bands. For instance, the selections based on Wagner, which were popular with brass bands from the 1870s, or the works of great composers such as “Gems from Chopin” and “Gems of Schumann” popular in the early twentieth century, found no place and there was little music composed specifically for the concertina band. Many concertina bands played selections of local material and popular dance music. The Northumberland and Durham Concertina Club, for example, included in its repertory selections of traditional dance tunes

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<sup>605</sup> Pickles, “The Heckmondwike...”, p.6.

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(Example 8.1) and local songs<sup>606</sup> and Steve Wood records how the Keighley Concertina Band's repertory contained many popular dance tunes in the way of marches, two-steps, fox-trots and waltzes.<sup>607</sup>

Steve Wood has also noted<sup>608</sup> how music was taken from various brass band journals and was either inserted into the player's tune book for use at practices and concerts or was pasted onto stout cardboard for use when marching. Such cards were known as "five on a card" as there were three tunes on one side and two on the other.

It is difficult to reach firm conclusions regarding the sound of the concertina band. Although several bands made gramophone recordings,<sup>609</sup> these do not offer a good insight into their natural sound. Nevertheless, a hearing of two discs: "Barcarolle from Tales of Hoffman" and "Glow Worm Idyll", by Ashton-Under-Lyne Concertina Prize Band, and "Sunday Parade" and "Old Memories", by the Heywood English Concertina Band,<sup>610</sup> lead me to suggest that the band sound was probably closer to that of an organ than that of a brass band. Furthermore, the character is somewhat mechanical, in the manner of a large barrel or fairground organ.

Nigel Pickles has recently reconstructed the sound of the Mexborough English Concertina Prize Band using the original scores and instruments.<sup>611</sup> The sound (Tape Item 8.1) can be described as full and rich but cold and heavy, lacking the clarity, "lift" and textural variety of the brass ensemble. The concertinas did, however, offer the full range of novelty effects, such as imitations of organs and bells and bagpipes, discussed in my chapter on the music hall.

The North of England Open Air Museum at Beamish holds a number of parts used by the Northumberland and Durham Concertina Club. In Example 8.1, I have copied the four parts of "The Lambton Worm" together for comparison.

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<sup>606</sup> For example, "Community Songs No.3" and "Jack Armstrong's Jigs" (Tape 1977.146) and "Selection of Hornpipes, Reels and Jigs" (music manuscript 1985.348) in the Library of The North of England Open Air Museum, Beamish, Co. Durham. The music was specially arranged for concertina ensemble by Henry Stanley, Birmingham.

<sup>607</sup> Wood, "Keighley Concertina Band", p.13.

<sup>608</sup> Ibid., p.13. The journals from which the music was taken were: The Liverpool Brass Band (Military) Journal, The Champion Brass and Reed Band Journal and Feldman's Brass and Military Journal. Other music was published by Hawkes and Son of London during the period 1913-1932.

<sup>609</sup> The Premier English Concertina band recorded "The Shamrock Irish Selection" and "A Darkey's Dreamland" (Albion 1130A), noted with photograph in Concertina Magazine 8 (Autumn 1984), p.19. The Ashton English Concertina Prize Band recorded six sides for HMV Records: "The Contest" (March by J. Ord Hume), "Nautical Moments" (Allegro Marsiale by Aubrey Winter) "Barcarolle from Tales of Hoffman" (Offenbach), "The Glow Worm" (Idyll by Paul Linake) "Narcissus" (Entr'acte by Ethelbert Nevin) and "Casino Tanze" (Grand valse by Gung'l), listed in "an Ashton Newspaper around 1930" and reproduced in CN 17, p.27. The Heywood English Concertina band recorded two sides: "A Sunday Parade" and "Old Memories".

<sup>610</sup> Stephen Chambers Collection, Dublin.

<sup>611</sup> Pickles, The Mexborough...



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The most striking feature of this arrangement is the texture, the heavy sound produced by three of the four instruments sounding three and four note chords, particularly in the verse where the second treble plays off-beat chords.<sup>612</sup> This extract, which is from a longer selection of local song tunes, was obviously not a listening piece arranged for the concert hall or competition platform and is more likely to have been used in informal gatherings, public house “smokers” and other social events where communal singing might be called for.

### **Performance Settings**

The bands undertook a variety of engagements in their home areas. Concerts in public parks, particularly on Sundays, were common and cinemas, gaols, hospitals, “smokers” and socials also used their services. James Ash, a member of The Ashton-under-Lyne Concertina Band in the 1920s, describes how:

At that time, we had engagements every Sunday in parks all over Lancashire and Yorkshire. Sometimes booked by an agent... During the summer we hired a 40 seater coach and for one week toured the Potteries, Durham and the Lake District moving on each day. We also did the Midlands, Malvern and round about, this went on for several years.

In winter, we did mostly Sunday concerts afternoon and evening quite a lot in the five towns of the Potteries, where they had first class concert halls, belonging to the local authority, with very comfortable tip-up seats and accommodation for between 100 and 200, we were very popular in those days 1930-35 going back year after year.<sup>613</sup>

During the 1920s, The Keighley band played in gala processions, dances at the local Mechanic’s Institute, open air dances in the parks in summer and the annual St Patrick’s Day Ball at the Roman Catholic Church. There was also an annual visit to York which included a band concert.<sup>614</sup>

In relation to ceremonial music, there is a surviving photograph<sup>615</sup> of the Heckmondwike band marching through a crowded street on the occasion of a Royal visit in 1912.

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<sup>612</sup> It should be noted that the Tenor sounds an octave lower than the Treble concertina and the Bass an octave lower than the Tenor.

<sup>613</sup> Ash, James “The Ashton-under-Lyne Concertina Band” *CN* 17, pp.25-7.

<sup>614</sup> Wood, *The Keighly Concertina Band*, p.13.

<sup>615</sup> Pickles, *The Mexborough...*

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Many concertina bands undertook engagements outwith their home areas and, as result, helped stimulate interest in the instrument, diffuse repertory and set standards of playing among amateurs. The Heckmondwike band from Yorkshire received offers of engagements from Lancashire, Wales and Belgium. The competition circuit was also a major site of concertina band activity.

### **Concertina Band Contests**

As in the brass world, contests were a central element of band life. Brass band contests had a long history<sup>616</sup> and had evolved their own rules and conventions throughout the emergence of “the movement”. Competitions were held for concertina ensembles intermittently from the 1880s in a variety of locations where bands flourished. In the early 1900s, major contests were held at Crystal Palace, London<sup>617</sup> and, from 1905, were held at the Zoological Gardens, Belle Vue, Manchester, at the same time as the brass band contests. The introduction of concertina band contests at Manchester was regarded as an important breakthrough in gaining recognition for the concertina band, but must also be seen as the organisers’ attempt to add variety to the day’s programme by including another attraction in the “big day out”. By then, the event also included side shows and fair grounds. Concertina competitions also helped fill a gap, as entries to the brass sections were declining. The Manchester concertina band competitions ran until the outbreak of war and resumed between 1922 and 1925. The lists of prizewinners<sup>618</sup> suggests a Yorkshire/Lancashire origin for the leading bands, although this may also have been a reflection of the expense of travel for bands from further afield. Travel to London was even more of a problem, particularly when the Manchester and London contests were held within two weeks of each other. As a result, only four or five bands appeared at the Crystal Palace on several occasions early in the century. The cost of instruments was also a constant problem for, as manufacturers began to produce their best quality instruments in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, wealthier bands could gain a definite advantage in terms of sound and facility.

The competition test pieces were invariably arrangements of nineteenth-century popular opera which had been previously used in brass contests. A list of the Manchester test- pieces comprises:

1905	Selection of their own choice <sup>619</sup>	
1906	Don Sebastiano <sup>620</sup>	Donizetti
1907	Händsel and Gretel <sup>621</sup>	Humperdinck

<sup>616</sup> Bevan, Clifford “Brass Band Contests: Art or Sport?” in Herbert, *Bands...*, pp.102-119.

<sup>617</sup> Russell, *Popular Music...*, p.195.

<sup>618</sup> Handbill for “The Great Band Contest” 1926, Neil Wayne Collection.

<sup>619</sup> Won by Heckmondwike Concertina Band playing “Memories of the Opera”.

<sup>620</sup> A selection arranged for brass band was first used as a test piece at Belle Vue in 1894.

<sup>621</sup> Opera first produced in Weimar in 1893 with a selection from it being used as brass test piece at

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1908	Rigoletto <sup>622</sup>	Verdi
1909	Semiramide <sup>623</sup>	Rossini
1910	Zampa <sup>624</sup>	Hérold
1911	Les Huguenots <sup>625</sup>	Meyerbeer

One exception to the borrowing of music from the brass competitions was “La Belle Sauvage” produced by William Rimmer for the 1908 Crystal Palace contest.<sup>626</sup> After 1922, the same music was used for both brass and concertina sections at the contest:

1923	Bohemian Girl	Balfe
1924	Merry Wives of Windsor	Nicolai
1925	Eugene Onegin	Chiakovsky

Concertina bands were therefore judged according to the high standards of brass bands of the time.

Prizes were modest. A hand bill<sup>627</sup> (Figure 8.1) advertising the Eleventh Annual Concertina Band Contest held at the Zoological Gardens, Belle Vue, Manchester, on Saturday 14 July 1923, offered prizes of £10, £5, £3 and £2 to the first four bands and a silver medal for the bandmaster of each prize winning band. An additional cash prize was offered to the winners by Wheatstone and Co. and Lachenal and Co. offered one of their instruments to the band placed second. The Uniform Clothing and Equipment Co. Limited of London offered a set of band books to the third. Bands were limited to 24 players and the test piece was a selection from Balfe’s “Bohemian Girl” arranged by Charles Godfrey (1839-1919), a former bandmaster of the Royal Horse Guards who adjudicated at Belle Vue on several occasions.

As with brass, the concertina bands exploited the communal competitive spirit of small communities. Judges’ decisions were often the subject of great controversy and stimulated correspondence in the band press, but contests were also a form of entertainment in themselves and set musical standards for the player and listener alike. The band structure and hierarchy also saw internal competition between players. This too had an effect on playing standards.

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Belle Vue two years later in 1895.

<sup>622</sup> Selection first used as brass test piece at Belle Vue 1898.

<sup>623</sup> Selection used in Belle Vue brass competition 1904.

<sup>624</sup> Overture, an established favourite with brass bands, was first used as a championship test piece at Belle Vue in 1860.

<sup>625</sup> First used as a brass test piece at Belle Vue in 1906 and at Crystal Palace brass competitions in 1911.

<sup>626</sup> Russell, *Popular Music...*, p.195.

<sup>627</sup> Manchester Public Libraries.

**2d.** Zoological Gardens, Belle Vue,  
MANCHESTER.

**THE ELEVENTH ANNUAL  
CONCERTINA BAND CONTEST**

(OPEN TO ALL AMATEUR BANDS)

WILL TAKE PLACE ON

**Saturday, July 14th, 1923.**

**PRIZES:**

First, £10; Second, £5; Third, £3; Fourth, £2.

And a SILVER MEDAL to the Bandmaster of each of the Prize Bands.

**Extra Prizes:**

Messrs. WHEATSTONE & CO., the celebrated Inventors, Patentees, and Manufacturers of Concertinas and Aeolus, of 15, West Street, Charing Cross Road, London, W.C. 2., will present in addition to the First Prize a prize to the Value of £5 5s.

Messrs. LACHENAL & CO., the old-established and original makers of Concertinas and the Edeophone, of 4, Little James Street, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C. 1., will present in addition to the Second Prize one of their "Standard Model" 48-Keyed Edeophone Trebles.

THE UNIFORM CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT CO. LIMITED, 5, Clerkenwell Green, Farringdon Road, London, E.C. 1., will present in addition to the Third Prize a Set of Band Books.

**GENERAL REGULATIONS.**

The Contest is open to all Amateur Concertina Bands.

The number of Players in each Band, including Conductor if a player, must not exceed 24.

Each Band must play the Selection of Music (chosen for the Contest) from Balfe's Opera, "BOHEMIAN GIRL," selected and arranged by Charles Godfrey.

No member of a Band will be allowed to play any solo other than is allotted to the instrument entered opposite his name on the Form of Entry.

A Professional Musician may be engaged as Conductor. He may also play with one Band which he conducts.

No objection will be entertained as to a performer being a professional, or upon any other ground whatever (except in connection with the playing of the Music on the day), unless full particulars are forwarded at least one week previous to the Contest.

Mr. Jennison's decision will be final in all cases of dispute.

The Prizes will be awarded according to the decision of the Judge or Judges, and no appeal will be allowed therefrom, except where a Band is disqualified for an infringement of the Rules. Where a Prize is withheld for a breach of the Rules, such prize will be given to the next in order of merit.

**JUDGE:**

Figure 8.1 Handbill.

Source: Manchester Public Libraries.

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Bands also acted as a focus for concertina playing within a community and helped forge links with musicians in other locations. While working in England, Willie Smith of Glasgow would visit local concertina bands and play informally with them:

I played with bands in England and oh they used to think it was great - a Scotsman playing an English, an English concertina , you see? You've got to say "English concertina".<sup>628</sup>

### **Concertina Bands in Scotland**

Evidence of concertina bands in Scotland is limited. Although there is, as yet, no published or academic study of the brass band movement in Scotland, it can be said with confidence that the country shared in the tendencies which prevailed in England and Wales.<sup>629</sup> However, the emergence of organised working class music in Scotland had followed a different path. The pipe bands, flute bands and strathspey and reel fiddle orchestras, which were more closely tied to native tradition and allowed expression of national sentiment, were alternative attractions to the amateur instrumentalist and may have limited the formation of concertina ensembles in the late nineteenth century. Nevertheless, I have found evidence of three bands playing in Scotland.

There is a report of the new Sterlina Concertina Band performing at Stirling in 1895 which reinforces my earlier comments on band sound: The effect was striking, and withal pleasing, and certainly seems capable of further development. When we think of such masters as Bridgeman [sic] and Carson, we can hardly accommodate ourselves to the quiet movements of this band, which thereby lost volume in tone, and were otherwise productive of a certain monotony of sound peculiar to the concertina. The movements of Messrs Bridgeman [sic] and Carson were a rhythmic singing of the instrument in harmony with the air being performed, producing a fullness which stationary action cannot emulate.<sup>630</sup>

Bands existed in Clydebank and Glasgow between the wars. Danny Toner remembers the Clydebank band as it included members of his own family:

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<sup>628</sup> Willie Smith: Eydmann 85.07.A14.

<sup>629</sup> According to Cook, Kenneth The Bandsman's Everything Within (London, 1950), pp.150-151, The Scottish Amateur Band Association was founded in 1895 and had a membership of 92 bands in 1950. Bevan, "Brass Band Contests...", p.109, has noted how at the time of the Association's foundation "Lowland Scotland was home to so many flourishing bands".

<sup>630</sup> The Stirling Journal and Advertiser (26 April 1895), p.4.



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D.T.: There used to be bands all over the place, years ago. I don't know the different names but Clydebank were the tops in those days.

S.E.: And did they march and wear uniforms?

D.T.: Aye, they played in all the parks. They usually, more or less played in all the park domes. I think they had a contract with the City of Glasgow, the City of Edinburgh, Rutherglen, any places. You know, all the parks.<sup>631</sup>

More is known about The Glasgow English Concertina Band which flourished at the same period. David Galloway, a former player in the band, has been a valuable source of information regarding its activities.<sup>632</sup> Born in Springburn in north Glasgow in 1915, he started playing as a youth on a cheap, wooden-ended English concertina after hearing a player in the music hall:

D.G.: I just, eh, I just, eh, heard somebody playing it and I thought it was great, you know. A man in the halls, you know... It was in the theatre I heard them. I thought it was great, you know. He played "Old Comrades", that's my march.<sup>633</sup>

He also recalled the influence of Walter Dale the Glasgow music hall artist discussed in Chapter 8.0 and fondly remembered his performance of "Blaze Away":

D.G.: When I heard that march the man came out wi'. The concertina, I thought it was great.<sup>634</sup>

He was later given a metal-ended Wheatstone English model by his father which he used in the band. David worked in the British Locomotive Company works at Springburn and came into contact with the band through colleagues who invited him to audition.<sup>635</sup>

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<sup>631</sup> Danny Toner: Eydman 85.02.A2.

<sup>632</sup> Interviewed at his home in Shettleston, Glasgow in March 1986. (Eydman 86.01.A1-27).

<sup>633</sup> David Galloway: Eydman 86.01.A7. "Alte Kameraden" by the German military band leader Carl Tieke 1911. Tieke was also noted for his march "Der Graff Zeppelin".

<sup>634</sup> David Galloway: Eydman 86.01.A7. "Blaze Away" was recorded on a 78 rpm disc by the concertina duet Messrs. Mitchell and Shepherd.

<sup>635</sup> A father and son called Macken.

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D.G.: Well, I worked beside two men that started the band... They took me to the band hall in George Street and then I'd to play a tune, you know.<sup>636</sup>

David was around 20 years old when he joined the band as “second cornet” but was not the youngest member, there being several teenage players. He later worked at the Yarrow shipbuilding yard on the Clyde and recalls that other band players worked there also. At the time of interview he still played occasionally at home and at a local evangelical church.

The band met in premises in George Street before obtaining its own “big hut” in Sword Street, Denniston in the East End of the city. There were 24 players drawn from all over Glasgow. Concertinas by Wheatstone and Co. were preferred and according to David Galloway:

Yes. Yes, they'd uniforms. It was silver and red arrows. Arrows. They had big arrows on them. I've no' got a photograph, you know. They were getting new uniforms. I seen some of them, you know, and they were getting them just before it broke up, you know. They sent to London for them. I think it was eh... Beavers they sent it to, you know. Eh, it was the jacket type, you know. Just the jackets, nice and the cap and a' that. The one we had were the zip fastener up them, you know.<sup>637</sup>

The band played the brass ensemble repertory of “marches and overtures” with music from Balfe's “The Bohemian Girl”, Hérold's “Zampa”, “Morning, Noon and Night” and “Poet and Peasant” as popular favourites. Band parts were ordered from London but occasionally the band master wrote out the tunes himself.

The band performed regularly in the city's parks and played for “socials”. Occasional tours were undertaken as far away as Whitley Bay, Berwick upon Tweed and Newcastle in North East England and Dundee in East Central Scotland. The band did not compete. It disbanded at the time of the 1939-45 war.

### **Decline**

The fortunes of the concertina band were ultimately dependent on those of the brass band movement which it mirrored, on changes in popular musical taste and on the

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<sup>636</sup> David Galloway: Eydmann 86.01.A6.

<sup>637</sup> David Galloway: Eydmann 86.01.A15. There is a photograph of the band in the collection of Steve Sutcliffe, Glasgow.

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fortunes of the concertina itself. As a relatively recent, minor adjunct to the brass band world it was particularly vulnerable to social and musical change. A downturn in the fortunes of the brass band was noted as early as 1918.<sup>638</sup> By the 1930s, the brass band and its associated infrastructure had lost its powerful position in popular musical culture but it was able to respond to change to such a degree that it retained a role. The concertina band, however, remained conservative and became increasingly marginalised. The brass band repertory was expanded through the contributions of a small number of contemporary composers but the concertina bands did not benefit from this. War had a devastating effect on both brass and concertina bands, although the broader appeal of the former allowed post-war re-establishment which never occurred with the concertina ensembles.

Status was important too. The concertina band, for which there was no pedigree, was always something of a curiosity outwith the areas in which it flourished.

At a time when popular music was opening up to a variety of influences from home and abroad, adherence to a repertory rooted in the Victorian era and the textural limitations of a band comprised solely of concertinas, had drastic consequences. The concertina band, with its unwieldy instruments, seated players and musical limitations could not match the imagery, sentimental appeal and functional versatility of the brass band (or pipe band in Scotland), particularly in public and ceremonial performances.

As a result, the majority of the bands collapsed during the inter-war period. A few survived into the 1950s<sup>639</sup> or continued as “clubs”. The Northumberland and Durham Concertina Club continued playing until 1977 when they lost the use of the rooms in the public house in which they practiced.<sup>640</sup> With the revival of interest in the instrument under the auspices of the International Concertina Association (discussed in Chapter 11.2), there was some attempt to re-establish bands and form new ones but these met with no lasting success.<sup>641</sup>

## **Discussion**

Concertina banding was just one of several areas which offered the working-class amateur access to collective performance and the “art” music repertory. The bands’ public performances diffused interest in the instrument and its music across a wide geographical area and helped modernise attitudes to music, including formal

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<sup>638</sup> Russell, *Popular Music...*, p.76.

<sup>639</sup> The early newsletters of the International Concertina Association (1952-53) refer to surviving bands at Mexborough, Bootle, Northumberland and Durham and South Shields.

<sup>640</sup> Personal communication from John Gall, Beamish, 1993.

<sup>641</sup> *NICA* (2 March 1953), p.2, noted that the Manchester band was revived in 1953 but it was lamented that its membership was drawn from the 40-65 years old age group only. In the first edition of *NICA* (August 1952) a prospective member, George W. Douglas, wrote from Scotland: “I welcome this new Association, in that, my wish for a concertina band in Edinburgh may shortly materialise”.

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organisation, the centrality of sight reading, harmony and part playing. Along with choirs and educational institutions, bands were a major force in the transformation of proletarian traditions of music making by which different, and in many ways alien musical values, “elite and middle-class in origin were promulgated and gained ascendancy”.<sup>642</sup>

Although part of a larger process of musical modernisation, band music was relatively self contained and less ambitious than the “artistic” styles of concertina playing discussed elsewhere in this dissertation. Joe Haynes, an outstanding Bradford concertina player, for example, left a local band after only one rehearsal because there was too much “one finger stuff”.<sup>643</sup> But, as in the brass band, membership offered a kind of musical apprenticeship and many outstanding performers grew out of this background. Harry Dunn of Salford (1906-1986), for example, was the principal soloist of Manchester Concertina Band at the age of 14, at the same time as his father was the principal Baritone concertina player. Through the band, he had expert tuition in solo cadenzas from a bandmaster and cornet soloist from a local brass band.<sup>644</sup> Tom Jukes (1904-1986) of Spennymoor, was a member of the South Shields Concertina Band, playing “second violin” parts, who became an influential soloist and member of the International Concertina Association during the mid-twentieth century.<sup>645</sup> Walter Cheetham, co-founder of the Heywood Band, was also a noted player on the Manx Pleasure steamers and music hall.<sup>646</sup> The music hall concertinist, Tommy Elliot, grew up in the concertina band environment, his father having been conductor of the South Shields Concertina band for a time.

Bands offered concertina manufacturers and retailers great opportunities for promoting their products and contributed greatly to the twentieth-century adoption of the English concertina as an instrument of the working classes. The great advantage to the musician adopting the concertina within the band environment was that the instrument could also be used in a variety of settings outwith the band hall and concert platform.

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<sup>642</sup> Gammon and Gammon, “From ‘Repeat and Twiddle...’”, p.125.

<sup>643</sup> Russell, *Popular Music...*, p.195.

<sup>644</sup> Senior, R.C. “Obituary: Harry Dunn 1906-1986” *NICA* 339 (September 1986), p.7.

<sup>645</sup> See Chapter 11.

<sup>646</sup> *NICA* 7 (July/August 1955).

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# The Concertina as an Instrument of Sacred Music

## Introduction

In the discussion of the early history of modern free-reed instruments presented in Chapter 2.0, I noted how a recognition of the potential of the free-reed for use in “pseudo-organs” suited to the musical demands of emerging religious institutions was an important stimulus to invention and innovation. Durable, inexpensive, portable organs of the harmonium type have played an important role in religious activity since the first decades of the nineteenth century and have been used in foreign and home missions, open air services, small churches and elsewhere where a conventional organ was either impractical or inappropriate. Although never overtly promoted for this function by their inventors and earliest manufacturers, the hand-held bellows-blown free reed instruments also found a place in some sacred settings, with the concertina enjoying particular popularity as explored below.

In this chapter, I examine the principal areas of concertina use in sacred music, covering in turn, its place in church services; its large scale adoption by evangelistic musicians in Scotland; its use by the Salvation Army and its role in foreign missions.

## The Concertina in Church

It is also used in churches, to support the voices in place of an organ or harmonium.<sup>647</sup>

There are a number of references to the use of the concertina in churches in England during the first century of the instrument’s existence. Plunkett, for example, noted that the Anglo-German Concertina was played in Oakington Church up until the Second World War<sup>648</sup> and the Stephen Chambers Collection holds an early concertina which was played in the church band of Stoke Mandeville Old Church to accompany psalms and hymns.<sup>649</sup> F.J. Collins recalled that in his parish in Cornwall “there were

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<sup>647</sup> Cocks’ Tutor for the Concertina (London, n.d.) p.3.

<sup>648</sup> Plunkett, Mervyn “A Note on the Accordion, Melodeon and Concertina” Ethnic Vol.1, No.4 (1959) p.8.

<sup>649</sup> Galpin Society, Made for Music, p.168.

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[concertina] players who would play in the church service with the organ and also with a brass band”<sup>650</sup> and Caleb Walker (b.1907), a player from Cheshire, recalled that he learned from his grandfather who played at the local chapel.<sup>651</sup>

However, these examples must be seen as residual, for by the late nineteenth century, church bands had already given way to the barrel organ, harmonium and organ, in the face of a increased emphasis on what were regarded as the more “artistic” aspects of church music and the growth of a specifically religious body of music free from any secular influence. Through this modernisation, parish churches experienced the introduction of trained choirs, salaried conductors and organists. The Victorian period also saw a new emphasis on congregational singing and the establishment of an authorised repertory through the publication of “standard” hymnals.

Contemporary attitudes to the use of the concertina in church are exemplified two accounts in *The Musical Times*:<sup>652</sup> About five or six years ago I happened to attend a Sunday morning service some few miles from Hereford, and, while not expecting very great things, I was hardly prepared to hear the strains of a concertina, and performed upon by the officiating clergyman! I assure you such was the case. The responses were monotoned throughout, and the canticles and hymns were sung by a young girl who, judging from appearances, was connected with the household of the clergyman. She sang everything alone, without even the assistance of the concertina; the clergyman merely playing over the different things, and then leaving the vocalist to herself. And when I say “herself” I mean it. Not a soul else in the church took any audible interest in the singing or the responses, and such an extraordinary service, I never before witnessed. I hope you will not think I was ungallant in not having done my best at least at making a duet of it, but the scene was so far removed from anything I could possibly have imagined that all idea of a stranger taking part in the service vanished and yet it was torture to hear Dr. Dykes’ beautiful setting of “Holy, Holy, Holy” (which was one of the hymns) rendered in such a style. (December 1878).

At a service for invalids held at a Tunbridge Wells church a few weeks ago the vicar accompanied “When I Survey” on a concertina, although a three manual organ, electrically blown, was available. Doubtless he had his reasons, but we suggest that future experiments of this kind should not be tried on a congregation of invalids. It seems like taking a mean advantage! (1921).

In Scotland, the religious tradition which favoured a diet of unaccompanied psalms and paraphrases was more enduring than it had been in England. However, the close of the nineteenth century saw the introduction of hymns and the use of the harmonium

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<sup>650</sup> “The Concertina in Cornwall...”, p.10.

<sup>651</sup> Schofield, Derek “Concertina Caleb” *English Dance and Song* Vol.46, No.2, Summer 1984) pp.2-6.

<sup>652</sup> Both quotations are from Scholes, *The Mirror...*, p.814.

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and organ as part of a general standardisation of sacred music which drew the Scottish churches closer to British ecclesiastical life.<sup>653</sup> The lack of a church band tradition, the absorption of an already formed, modernised, repertory and the late acceptance of religious instrumental music, meant that the concertina never had a place within the established churches of Scotland. It did, however, enjoy adoption into the musical activities of other religious groups which were free from the traditions and conventions of the formal institutions.<sup>654</sup>

### **The Evangelistic Tradition**

The essence of the evangelical tradition is to be found in the music and song associated with the Sunday schools, mission stations and evangelising associations which were set up in the poorer areas of the larger cities by middle-class congregations.

Choral singing, with its regular rehearsals, performances and festivals, was an important form of religious “rational recreation” which provided a medium for the singing of hymns and other sacred music where this was denied in the formal religious setting. Also promoted was the middle-class ideal of home based recreation, including music and song, as a relaxed form of Sunday observance and a respectable alternative to the perceived dangers of the music hall, street or public house.

Until 1850, evangelical agencies were predominantly educational and reforming in nature but thereafter temperance ideology,<sup>655</sup> combined with a degree of revivalism, heightened the redemptive aims of organisations and turned them more towards conversion. This had further musical consequences through the influence of the Salvation Army and successive waves of visiting American evangelists.

American revivalism met with considerable success in Scotland where it built upon earlier evangelistic foundations and contributed to the shift in working-class Presbyterianism away from an older emphasis on prolonged and serious contemplation of sin towards the sureness of salvation and the joyousness of the conversion experience. Visiting evangelists introduced the distinctive revival service: a short sermon, joyous hymns, and the call to the “anxious” to come forward. This appeal for decisions, which was also adopted by temperance organisations in the form of the pledge, would normally be followed by an invitation hymn.

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<sup>653</sup> Brown, Calum G. *The Social History of Religion in Scotland since 1730*. (London, 1987).

<sup>654</sup> This and the following section draws on my paper *He'll dry a' yer tears: 100 Years of Music and Song in the Gospel and Mission* presented to the conference *Scottish Traditional Music*, Centre for Scottish Cultural Studies, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, 11 May 1991.

<sup>655</sup> See King, Elspeth *Scotland Sober and Free* (Glasgow, 1979) and “Whisky's Awa” in Kay, Billy (ed.) *Odyssey: The Second Collection* (Edinburgh, 1982) pp.88-99.

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The musical effect of modern urban evangelism gained pace after 1870 with the visits of the American evangelists Moody and Sankey. The gospel preaching of Moody offered a popular alternative to the hell-fire and damnation sermons of the time and the songs of Sankey were immensely influential in both the sacred and secular spheres. Like the Salvation Army, Sankey made full use of existing popular music: heart songs, civil war marches, music of Scottish and Irish origin, the music of the open air camp meetings etc. and, from 1873, he brought guest Negro spiritual singers. These included the Fisk Jubilee Singers,<sup>656</sup> one of the first major introductions of popular American music into Great Britain.<sup>657</sup> Sankey, and subsequent visiting singing evangelists, helped establish the idea of the “sacred solo”, the gospel song concert style and a new preacher/singer combination; this brought a “star” system into modern religious music which has survived to the present day. In addition to introducing and popularising new forms of religious musical expression, the Americans were also a power for musical change in the established churches, leading them to sanction instrumental music and hymns also.

By the early years of the present century, these threads had come together in the gospel and mission halls to form a collective body of musical activity with its own canon which, unlike the music of the established churches, allowed the adoption of the concertina.

### **The Concertina in Urban Evangelism in Scotland**

By the 1880s, the middle-class mission to the unchurched working classes was losing patronage, bourgeois lay assistance and proletarian acceptance. Evangelism was increasingly left to the care of full-time missionaries who were often working-class products of earlier religious revivalism. Although this proletarian evangelism was highly fragmented and loosely organized, a number of substantial independent institutions developed, such as the United Evangelistic Associations of Glasgow and Dundee, which ran a vast range of activities in large purpose-built premises. However, such activity was more commonly the preserve of independent temperance societies and small missions scattered throughout urban areas and operating from huts, hired halls or in former commercial premises on the ground floors of tenements. Many such organisations offered not only teetotal religion but also “respectable” leisure in the way of games, outings, lectures, musical entertainment and other secular activities.

By the 1920s, many had become self-supporting, semi- permanent congregations under professional, trained evangelists offering a kind of “underground”, unregulated Protestantism. Such institutions continued the musical traditions of nineteenth-

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<sup>656</sup> *The Scotsman* (4 March 1884). The singers were present when Moody formally opened Carruber’s Close Mission, the largest evangelical hall in Edinburgh.

<sup>657</sup> The minstrel troupe was the other principal early American import.

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century evangelism and built on it through the work of local composers,<sup>658</sup> mobile preacher/musicians,<sup>659</sup> small scale music publishing, gramophone recordings and festivals of religious song. In these halls, music was informal and intimate. Organs and harmoniums were found in only the largest and singing was commonly led by the preachers themselves.<sup>660</sup>

Fragments of this network still survive in urban Scotland<sup>661</sup> and my work in the field with musicians associated with these institutions has pointed to the concertina as the principal musical instrument used in their activities.

My informant Peter McCabe has no doubts as to the popularity of the concertina in evangelical work:

It was the most popular instrument in Glasgow. It's popular, it's world-wide but it was most popular in Glasgow. Whenever you went to any [mission] hall the concertina was there. The concertina was a sacred instrument and [there was] wonderful music off it.<sup>662</sup>

Brought up in inner Glasgow, Peter now lives in Easterhouse, a large peripheral housing scheme developed during the 1960s. He bought his first English concertina as a youth during the early 1930s and has used it ever since in the mission halls throughout Central Scotland and in what he calls "evangelical social work". To Peter, the concertina and sacred music are inseparable:

A Christian is one who comes and who invites the Lord into his own heart and he changes him and the concertina. Maybe they played it when they were'na converted but see when they got converted, the instrument got converted as well... They began to play sacred music because they were changed themselves and that makes a difference.<sup>663</sup>

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<sup>658</sup> For the story of a working class evangelical worker and composer in Glasgow see Sykes, Mrs Seth and Seth A.G. Sykes *A Great Little Man* (Glasgow, 1958).

<sup>659</sup> Lesmahagow Parish Historical Association *Clydesdale in Old Photographs* (Stroud, 1991) p.102, includes a photograph of a concertina-playing evangelist, G.H. Greenhough, outside his "Scottish Gospel Mission Van" at New Lanark in the early years of the century.

<sup>660</sup> I regret that I did not have the opportunity to carry out field study of such services. The whole area of urban evangelism offers great opportunities for study by others.

<sup>661</sup> This area of protestantism is given little attention in much of the writing relating to contemporary religion in Scotland. My informant Peter McCabe publishes a small newsletter called *The Christian Band of Helping Hands* in connection with his evangelical work which lists over 50 institutions, mainly in West Central Scotland.

<sup>662</sup> Peter McCabe: Eydmann 84.02.B11. The concertina was also adopted into evangelistic work elsewhere in Europe: Kjellström, *Dragspel*, p.75, includes a photograph of "Lapp- Lisa", Anna-Lisa öst, a noted Swedish evangelist and concertina player of the early years of this century.

<sup>663</sup> Peter McCabe: Eydmann 84.02.B12.



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He does not read music but stresses that the spontaneity and flexibility of playing from memory are crucial in his work. Peter learned by first mastering the scales and some basic chords, using the finger chart in a popular tutor<sup>664</sup> and he is proud that he has taught many other beginners, drawing out the same chart by hand for each. Peter suggests that the relative ease with which beginners can play chords on the English concertina and the uncomplicated harmony and structure of the music of the evangelical tradition account for the instrument's adoption for use in the gospel hall and mission. He also speaks of the advantages of portability offered by the instrument:

I discovered it was handy to carry about. 'likes of the accordion was different. You could get the concertina, carry it and you could take it out anywhere and play it.<sup>665</sup>

His repertory is almost wholly sacred in origin but also includes some Scottish music of a solemn or sentimental character and other remnants of the Victorian bourgeois tradition. As noted in Chapter 5.0, the boundaries between the sacred and secular music of the middle-classes in the nineteenth century were particularly blurred in terms of imagery, language, sentiment and musical structure. Much of the popular repertory could therefore serve both sacred and secular roles at the same time.

Peter uses the concertina to accompany his own singing which is delivered in a straightforward and personal manner using his own dialect. In the song, "Love Divine" (Tape Item 9.1), the concertina is played in unison with the voice but with the occasional addition of chords to add emphasis to the end of lines and certain sections. His passionate yet informal delivery seems ideally suited to "conversion" work and suggests the style of Ira Sankey as described by J.S. Curwen:

A singing-master would find faults in every measure that he sings. His style is more recitative than singing; he sacrifices time unnecessarily to impulse and feeling. The effect is often jerky, intermittent, disconnected. It is speaking with a sustained voice. But his earnestness is so apparent that it covers a multitude of faults; indeed, his transparent naturalness and his fervour so fix attention upon what he is singing that we do not think of the faults... Every word throbs with feeling, and in yearning, pleading phrases, the large, tender heart of the man is especially conspicuous.<sup>666</sup>

The combined sound of voice and concertina is more than adequate to fill a small hall.

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<sup>664</sup> Roylance's Tutor for the English Concertina (London. n.d.).

<sup>665</sup> Peter McCabe: Eydmann 84.02.A4.

<sup>666</sup> Moffat, Rev. Prof. James Handbook to the Church Hymnary (London, 1927) pp.487-8.

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Peter also uses the instrument to lead congregational singing, using a full chordal style as in Example 9.1, the popular “The Old Rugged Cross”. In the informal setting of the mission hall, playing “correctly” and with textbook harmony is much less important than successfully leading the singing. This has allowed Peter and other players who lack formal musical education to develop their accompaniments over time by trial and error, selecting that which sounds right and is easy to finger. In his playing, he changes to each new chord gradually and unevenly, building it up slowly and often at the expense of a regular rhythm, as his fingers find their new locations. The resultant overlapping sound gives the music a solemn, harmonium like character.

As the photograph (Figure 9.1) shows, Peter plays standing up. This is desirable in mission work where he might be responsible for leading all aspects of a meeting: preaching, prayer and singing. It also allows him, through gestures with the concertina, to conduct others in a way which would be denied the organist or pianist.

Since his retiral from the print industry, Peter visits people too ill or disabled to attend gospel meetings. He finds the concertina ideal in this on account of its modest size and volume and he is quick to point out the special qualities of a former companion who undertook similar work in the past:

Now Lawrence was a great man... he could play it so softly when people were actually on what they call a “death bed”. They would send for him and he played the concertina so soft they would always ask for him to come and play. He had a habit... a way of his own. Nobody could do it the way he could do it. Everyone has their own way.<sup>667</sup>

When interviewed in 1984, Peter saw himself as one of the last players active in a dying tradition which he worked to keep alive by organising gatherings of surviving players and keeping in touch with older, often infirm, players.

One such player was David Haxton (1900-1991). David’s life was closely tied to the mission and gospel hall traditions of the East End of the city. He became an engineer but maintained many close links with the major evangelical institutions; his brother was the Superintendent of one of the largest halls in the city and his wife was the daughter of the Superintendent of another. Many of my informants, including several from outwith the sphere of sacred music, have described David as one of the most outstanding concertinists in Scotland in the inter-war period.

When I recorded David (Figure 9.2) during the early 1980s, he was suffering from advanced deafness and had some difficulty in holding his heavy, yet favoured, 64 keyed English instrument. Nevertheless, he welcomed the opportunity to play, particularly when other mission hall musicians were present. Despite his old age, he

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<sup>667</sup> Peter McCabe: Eydmann 84.02.B6.

tempo  $\text{♩} = \pm 76$   
slower

The musical score consists of eight staves. The first staff is the melody, starting with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (B-flat), and a 3/4 time signature. The tempo is marked as  $\text{♩} = \pm 76$  and the performance instruction is 'slower'. The accompaniment is spread across the remaining seven staves, with some parts marked 'slower'. The score concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

**Example 9.1**     The Old Rugged Cross.

Source: Composed G. Bennard (1913). As played by Peter McCabe, transcribed by Stuart Eydmann from tape Eydmann 86.07.A7.





Figure 9.1 Peter McCabe 1984.  
Source: Author's Collection.

Figure 9.2 David Haxton 1985.  
Source: Author's Collection.

Figure 9.3 Jimmy Lindsay 1985.  
Source: Author's Collection.

### *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

displayed outstandingly precise and dexterous fingering, combined with a careful handling of the bellows.

David's approach to music making was quite different from that of his friend Peter McCabe. During the 1920s, he attended evening classes at "The Athenaeum", now the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, in order to develop his knowledge of musical theory, harmony and sight reading and this was reflected in his repertory and style. Fully familiar with the gospel music canon, his musical taste also embraced many other forms including much from the Victorian concertina publications, popular music from the brass band and music hall traditions, Scottish dance music and a wide range of music for other instruments, especially piano music re-scored by himself for the concertina. David was a good sight reader and in his 20s and 30s had given recitals with another player, Sandy McGibbon (who later emigrated to the United States) and he would tackle the most complex arrangements. His approach was therefore more concerned with "precision and snap"<sup>668</sup> in music than Peter McCabe's functional, yet personal, settings. His own arrangements displayed his knowledge of harmonic theory, as illustrated in Example 9.2, a Sunday School Christmas song, "No Room for the Baby".

David was quick to stress that the use of the concertina in mission and gospel work in the first half of this century was just one facet of a wider popularity enjoyed by the instrument and he was sure that it was the Salvation Army which was most influential in exploiting the potential of the instrument in the religious field. He admitted to having been affected by the high standard of concertina playing within the Salvation Army and acknowledged a debt to the organisation for much of his repertory, including a large number of band marches. On the other hand, he expressed a fond admiration for the music of the great players of the music hall and variety theatre, such as Alexander Prince and Walter Dale, from whom he learned not only a range of popular music, but also a sense of musical fun for which the concertina is highly suited. He was pleased by the rediscovery of the concertina within post-war folk revival but somewhat amused by the self-conscious and almost exclusive interest in traditional dance music and simple song accompaniment which contrasted with his own complex and demanding arrangements of music from a wide variety of sources.

Between the wars, David was an active member of "The Tent Hall Orchestra" (Figure 9.4), a band of five concertinas and two violins which performed at the principal meetings at Glasgow's largest mission hall. The orchestra was often expanded to include over 12 concertinas for Saturday night services which could attract up to 2000 people (Figure 9.5). He was responsible for teaching a large number of other players of sacred music.

David died in December 1991. His son carries on the family tradition by using the concertina in prison mission work.

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<sup>668</sup> Gammon and Gammon, "From 'Repeat and Twiddle...'"



Handwritten musical score for "No Room for the Baby". The score is in 3/4 time and has a tempo of 80. It consists of eight staves of music. The first staff is the melody, starting with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). It includes dynamic markings like *p.* and *mp.*, and tempo markings *slower* and *tempo ♩ = 80*. The second staff is a vocal line with lyrics. The third staff is a piano accompaniment line. The fourth staff is a bass line. The fifth staff is a piano accompaniment line. The sixth staff is a vocal line with lyrics. The seventh staff is a piano accompaniment line. The eighth staff is a piano accompaniment line. The score ends with a double bar line and repeat signs.

**Example 9.2** No Room for the Baby.

Source: Sunday school song from the playing of David Haxton,  
transcribed by Stuart Eydmann from the tape Eydmann  
86.07.A6.





Figure 9.4 Tent Hall Orchestra c1935.  
Source: Peter McCabe.

Figure 9.5 Tent Hall Congregation c1935.  
Source: Peter McCabe.

Figure 9.6 Evangelistic March, Glasgow c1960.  
Source: Peter McCabe.

### *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

Jimmy Lindsay (Figure 9.3) was a close friend and musical companion of David Haxton in his youth, a relationship which he was able to rekindle on his return to Scotland after a long period of emigration to North America. Although he played only sacred music on concertina, he also performed a wide range of popular secular music on violin. Jimmy supplied many reminiscences of music in mission hall life and offered vivid descriptions of how the concertina was used in meetings, services and rallies. Here, for instance, he tells of the musical accompaniment to public marches:

Well, we used tag march along. Goin' from the Bethany Hall ye marched right along London Road tag Bridgeton Cross. See, every once a year at New Year time a' the different evangelistic associations (there was about five of so different big halls in Glasgow), and they would all come down to the Tent Hall and, eh, they'd eh' be two or three thousand people on the march and they wid maybe, maybe 12 or 14 concertinas and they'd be the Lambhill Silver... Band and they would be leading the march. They were in the front and whenever they played for a wee while and stopped, whenever they stopped, then a' the concertinas would start and we used tae march right through the city right up tag the B.T.I.,<sup>669</sup> that used tae be in Bothwell Street, and they dispersed there. And, eh, there was a conference on in the B.T.I.. But, eh, well there used tae be marches through the city, you know, wi' two or three thousand people and eh, the bands, 'know, 12 or 13 or 14 concertinas leading it.<sup>670</sup>

A photograph of one such march is given in Figure 9.6. The march for 2 January 1936 was announced:

Christian Workers from North, South, East and West of the City. The MARCH along Argyle Street will be led by the Hallelujah Band, Motherwell; Grove Street Institute; Lambhill [brass bands]; and concertina bands.<sup>671</sup>

Jimmy had a vast repertory of evangelical songs and marches which he played from memory, although a little pocket book of titles was used as an aide memoire. He expressed a particular liking for the hymns and songs composed by local evangelists including John Moore, Gardner Hunter and Duncan McNeil. The latter writer was a Baptist minister known as "The Scottish Skylark" who sang accompanied by his sons on piano and concertina. A major part of McNeil's appeal was his use of the vernacular language of Central Scotland in such compositions as, "Jesus kens it a",

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<sup>669</sup> The Bible Training Institute, a centre of evangelical activity.

<sup>670</sup> Jimmy Lindsay: Eydmann 86.03.A4.

<sup>671</sup> Tent Hall Christmas and New Year Services (1935/36) Handbill in possession of Peter McCabe, Glasgow.

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“The Best Freen o’ a’”, “Tak a’ yer cares to Jesus”, “There’s nane like Jesus” and “In spite o’ them a’”. McNeil made a number of successful gramophone records.<sup>672</sup>

David Galloway was also an evangelical player but moved in different circles. Aged 70 years when I interviewed him at his home in Shettleston, Glasgow, in March 1986, he was still a regular performer on the concertina at the Zion Hall Pentecostal Church, Shettleston Cross, where he would play along with the organ and piano. David, who had been a member of a the Glasgow English Concertina Band during the 1930s, played only from music and his favourite source of was the book Redemption Songs.<sup>673</sup> The form of service followed in his church encouraged the adhoc communal pooling of musical talents in praise. He also played the piano accordion but preferred concertina for religious work.

The concertina was also used by evangelical musicians in Edinburgh, particularly those associated with the Carruber’s Close Mission in the High Street. It was also found in smaller towns. Jimmy Dickson grew up and still lives in Galashiels, where he is active in the local Baptist Church. He took up the concertina in 1944 because “it just appealed to me as an instrument that was very handy, very portable and I rather liked the tone of it as well”.<sup>674</sup> He was self- taught but drew upon the experiences of playing the melodeon as a child and active service in the town silver band as a youth. He performs from memory but learns tunes from the large evangelical song collections of Moody and Sankey and others. Jimmy’s main use of the concertina has been in Sunday School work where:

They thought it was a wonderful instrument altogether. I don’t say that they thought it [i.e. I] was a wonderful concertina player but they certainly were taken on with this instrument that could be so easily carried and brought almost out of nowhere and, eh, as a lead to the singing of choruses... They thought it was marvellous.<sup>675</sup>

He has also used it at annual boy’s camps held in the remote Yarrow valley. At these he led popular campfire songs as well as evangelical choruses and I have encountered a young folk revival concertina player in Glasgow who acknowledges a debt to Jimmy’s playing at one of these events as his first introduction to the instrument. Typical of Jimmy’s repertory is the chorus, “Wide, Wide is the Ocean”, a song common to several of my evangelical informants. His version is given in Tape Item 9.2.

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<sup>672</sup> His use of the concertina could be seen as another conscious attempt to present a vernacular and therefore accessible angle to his work. Another such “star” was William McEwan of Bridgeton, Glasgow who recorded for Columbia.

<sup>673</sup> (London, n.d.).

<sup>674</sup> Jimmy Dickson: Eydmann 86.08.A1.

<sup>675</sup> Jimmy Dickson: Eydmann 86.08.A5.

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Although he has always felt somewhat isolated, having no contact with other concertina players, he does recall visits to Glasgow for sacred music festivals when he would hear David Haxton and others play at the Tent Hall. Jimmy prefers playing in the flat keys which he finds more “melodious”, and suggests that he may have developed this preference through playing in the town band. While he makes full use of chords in his playing, he states that he is not conscious of selecting his harmony according to any rules but over the years has come to fingers the notes automatically, his hand seeking patterns which “seem logical”.

Victor Kersley was almost 77 years old when I interviewed him at his home in Hawick in the Scottish Borders, in July 1986. His earliest recollection of the concertina was his father’s playing at temperance meetings he attended as a boy. Although Victor’s father died when he was very young, his interest in the instrument was rekindled later:

It was only on hearing someone leading a congregation with a concertina who was an excellent player and, you know, he could get the thing going, that I took the interest in it and went home and picked up this concertina and started to go from there. I taught myself on it.<sup>676</sup>

During the late 40s and 50s, he was associated with a group called “The Border Quartet” which specialised in singing sacred songs. Visits to perform in different parts of Scotland brought him into contact with other musicians and made him aware of other evangelical concertina players.

His family home always offered accommodation for visiting evangelists, many of whom were concertinists, and therefore family evenings of sacred music were inevitable. However, apart from occasional performances at home with his sister, who is a pianist active in the Salvation Army, he now plays for his own entertainment only and has no contact with other concertina players. His repertory comprises “more or less any church music” and includes a large element of music from the Moody and Sankey and Redemption song books. Songs from the former he finds:

Really easy to play, for on most of Sankey’s hymns (there is) very often a sustained bass note over a few bars, you know, which simplifies things greatly.<sup>677</sup>

Victor also plays secular music from a personal library of concertina music. In the period just after the last war, he was an active member of the International Concertina Association and visited their meetings and the homes of individual members in London. One of his visits is recorded in the Newsletter of the Association:

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<sup>676</sup> Victor Kersley: Eydmann 86.04.A3.

<sup>677</sup> Victor Kersley: Eydmann 86.04.A18.



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He plays a good deal of gospel music, reading the hymn scores in treble and bass, and playing them in open harmony as written. This... calls for some extraordinary dexterity of fingering, but the effect is excellent, and he gives some lovely renderings. The tone of the instrument is very good and Mr. Kersley has a fine range of expression and balance of tone.<sup>678</sup>

Like David Haxton, Victor draws attention to the influence of the principal users of the concertina for evangelical purposes, the Salvation Army.

### **The Concertina and the Salvation Army**

At the graveside, in the sickroom, aboard ship, in the homes of the rich and poor, in meetings large and small, in difficult corps where bandsmen were few and of course, in the open air meetings, the concertina has made its contribution and helped spreading the truth.<sup>679</sup>

The Salvation Army was formed in 1878 from the Christian Mission, which William Booth had founded over a decade earlier to undertake evangelical work in the East End of London. From its earliest days, music was employed in the Army's activities as a means of spreading its message, seeking attention in open air campaigns and as a form of religious expression in itself. Contemporary popular song formed the basis of the tunes of much of the repertory and instrumental music was relatively informal, using the skills available. Each member was obliged to develop some musical ability which could be drawn upon in "the fight" and in only a short time music making became highly integrated into much of the Army's work.

Musical instruments, including those of the free-reed type, were employed in the "aggressive" outdoor work of the army's early work. Bramwell Booth played the flutina, an early accordion, in this early mission work,<sup>680</sup> and, having recognised the value of instrumental music during its formative period, Army leaders made a call in "The War Cry" on 27 March 1880:

Whereas, during the great Welsh and Cornish Councils, and before that time at Plymouth, Nottingham, and elsewhere, we have proved the great utility of musical instruments in attracting crowds to our open-air and indoor meetings, we do here express our desire that as many of our officers and soldiers generally, male and female, as have the ability for so doing, shall learn to play on some instrument. And as in many

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<sup>678</sup> "South of the Border" *NICA* 8 (September/October 1955) p.3.

<sup>679</sup> Munday, Col. Thomas "The Army's Second Official Organ" *The Musician of the Salvation Army* (11 November 1961) p.765.

<sup>680</sup> Collier, J. *The General Next to God* (London, 1965) p.69.

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instances the obtaining of an instrument is a difficulty, we shall be glad if any friends who may have such instruments lying idle will consecrate them to this service, and send them to Headquarters. This includes violins, bass viols, concertinas, cornets, or any brass instruments, drums or anything else that will make a pleasant sound for the Lord.

The General's appeal was heeded immediately and all manner of instruments were brought together in adhoc ensembles. Bands of single instrument types, such as the Fry brass players of Salisbury or the Haddow family of Highland pipers of Bellshill, Lanarkshire, were not uncommon but most early ensembles consisted of whatever instruments and performers were available. Before long, however, the Army bands became more organised and, although string, flute, mandolin and guitar bands were not unknown, there developed a preference for the use of the brass family, the concertina and the tambourine, in Army campaigning and praise. By the turn of the century, music was central to all Army activities but was becoming highly formalised and institutionalised with consequences for repertory, standards of performance, musical training and application.

The first Salvation Army music was concerned with attracting and holding a crowd and with the accompaniment of song. The earliest songs were firmly within the "evangelical tradition", simple, rousing affairs drawn from a number of sources, but it was a particular feature of the organisation that a large proportion used popular, music hall and traditional tunes put to sacred texts, in what has been termed "divine parody".<sup>681</sup> Instrumental solos "which might detract from the Gospel message"<sup>682</sup> were not considered appropriate until after 1885. The concertina was well suited to the needs of this early phase. The majority of the founder's family took up the instrument and used it in their "speaking, singing and praying brigades" and Herbert Booth published an instruction book which was "crude but ingenious, merely giving black and white dots in diagram form with the added words for this chord 'push', for that chord 'pull'".<sup>683</sup> The concertina's portability made it ideal for outdoor work and its associations with popular musical forms helped break down barriers. Before long, references to the adoption of the instrument were numerous. In 1882, it is recorded that the Army's 17th. anniversary was celebrated at The Alexandra Palace, London, with "the martial blast of many trumpets and thundering of many drums and cymbals and the music of concertinas and fiddles".<sup>684</sup> In 1887, a Captain Thomas Kyle of the Army was summoned to appear before the magistrates of Torquay for playing in the streets an instrument "not strictly known to the musical profession and called a concertina"<sup>685</sup> and one player recalled his use of the instrument in the early years of this century:

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<sup>681</sup> Scott, *The Singing Bourgeois*.

<sup>682</sup> Collier, *The General...*, p.68.

<sup>683</sup> Burgess, Archie "100 Years of Concertinas" *The War Cry* (8 October 1932).

<sup>684</sup> Boon, Brindley *Play the Music Play! The Story of Salvation Army Bands* (London, 1966) p.195.

<sup>685</sup> Wiggins, A. R. *History of the Salvation Army* Vol.4 (London, 1964) p.265 and Boon, *Play the*

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Well, a concertina, a cornet and a drum -that was the complement of the three man band at Bodmin more than 50 years ago. How proudly we marched up Fore Street to our hall with our small following of faithful soldiers!<sup>686</sup>

While photographs<sup>687</sup> and oral history confirm that the cheaper Anglo-German forms of concertina were in common use in the early period, the English form became more common by the 1920s with a recognition of its versatility and as a reflection of its wider secular following. With the institutionalisation of Salvation Army music came a rationalisation of repertory which embraced many new compositions and songs of a more refined and elevating nature, although many of the early popular forms survived. The developing repertory was matched by new demands on instrumentalists. Formal training, musical festivals and competitions were introduced to spread the use of the concertina in the Army and to set high standards of performance. Lessons for the concertina were published in the Army journal “The Warrior”<sup>688</sup> and classes were held for trainee officers at the Army college. The repertory became prescribed and came to embrace not only arrangements of Salvation Army songs but also a growing canon of music composed within the Army for its own use, including marches from its flourishing brass band wing.

Many Army players turned to the duet forms of the concertina as these allowed easier playing in parts, particularly of brass band music.<sup>689</sup> The form most commonly used was the Crane Duet system which was also given the appropriately salvationist title Triumph Duet. Developed in 1896 by a Mr. Butterworth, a piano tuner from Cheshire,<sup>690</sup> this involved five rows of buttons on each manual with the expected separation into bass and treble manuals and a degree of overlap (Figure 9.7).<sup>691</sup> Although this form was promoted by the Army through sales from its own retail concern from around 1912, and through the publication of a tutor,<sup>692</sup> oral sources suggest that it was never as popular as the English type which remained the preferred form for everyday work within the mission station.

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Music..., p.184.

<sup>686</sup> Hugo Price “Concertina Cameos” The Musician (17 May 1975) pp.314-5.

<sup>687</sup> There is a photograph of the early Dunfermline Corps with brass instruments and Anglo-German concertinas in the collection of Dunfermline Public Library. This was reproduced in Bygone Dunfermline (Dunfermline Press, 22 November 1991) p.xvii. A photograph of the Leith Corps c.1910 in the writer’s collection shows a similar instrumentation.

<sup>688</sup> According to W. Bramwell Thornett in “Concertina Cameos” The Musician (21 June 1978).

<sup>689</sup> it is interesting to note that J.H. Mccann published an arrangement of “Onward Christian Soldiers” in his 1888 tutor for the duet concertina.

<sup>690</sup> Patent 21730.

<sup>691</sup> See also Dunkel, Bandonion..., pp.94, 173 and Concertina and Squeezebox Vol.3, Nos.1 and 2 (Winter/Spring 1985) p.25.

<sup>692</sup> The Salvation Army Tutor for the Triumph Concertina (London, 1938). The army also published Bristow, Lieut. Col., The Salvation Army Tutor for the Concertina (London, 1935).

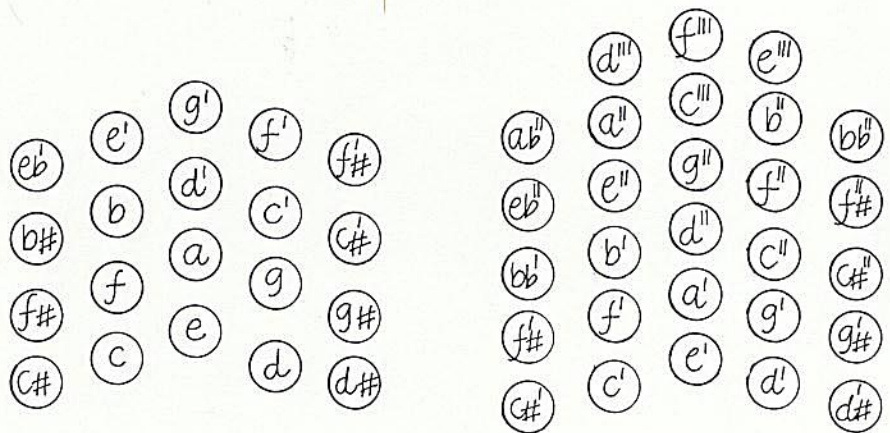


Figure 9.7 Crane Duet Concertina Layout

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The popularity of the concertina in the Salvation Army declined after World War Two. While this reflected national trends, there were also internal reasons, including a conscious drive by the Army to modernise its image and to capture the attentions of the young through the use of guitars, electronic instruments and contemporary musical forms. Many older officers have continued to play the concertina but it is now rarely seen in active campaign work and its use limited to internal Army functions where it is viewed with some nostalgia. Although a full and detailed history of music in the Salvation Army is still awaited, valuable information can be gleaned from Army publications and the oral testimony of officers. Both allow an examination of the factors behind the adoption and abandonment of the concertina within the organisation's activities.

Victor Smith, who resides in an Edinburgh retirement home, was born into a Salvationist family around 1910. His father played the Anglo-German concertina "as a hobby" but failed to master a second hand English model which he passed on to his son. Victor is wholly self taught on the concertina but was already a player of the cornet when he first took it up. He did not take the instrument seriously at first but discovered its potential during his first commission when posted to a small rural corps.

During the 1950s, Victor was "Territorial Youth Campaigner" and his work, which took him all over Scotland, involved not only preaching and prayer but also puppetry, film strip performances and chorus singing in the open air at beach resorts or in Salvation Army halls. He has described a typical visit to the Army Hall in Lerwick, Shetland, where, having advertised his visit at the school gates, he found that the response was so great that he had to hire a larger mission hall in the town to play to full houses for a week. In Greenock he had to provide two performances each night to meet the demand. Victor retired from "campaigning work" in 1962 and worked for nine years in Maryhill, Glasgow, where he was closely involved in children's mission work.<sup>693</sup> While there, he purchased a concertina which was once the personal instrument of A. Ross who, as will be discussed in Chapter 10, had operated a concertina school in that part of the city during the 1930s. The concertina was put to good use:

In those days I was more or less conducting children's missions and the concertina was an absolute boon for leading children's services...  
In those days I used to do school assemblies and the master or the

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<sup>693</sup> There is a photograph of the Army's Lieutenant-Commissioner A.E. Mingay campaigning in the open-air in the Calton area of Glasgow around that time in *The Musician of the Salvation Army* (6 May 1967) p.325. An account of the Salvation Army's social work in urban Scotland in the mid twentieth century, Gammie, A. *In Glasgow's Underground* (London, c.1945) p.64, states: "Groups -small and large -in the army uniform, preaching the Gospel in their own simple way and giving their personal testimony, are familiar everywhere. The singing is always a feature, whether accompanied by a full band, a blazing cornet or a concertina".



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chaplain would invite me to go and, of course, the concertina was absolutely ideal for that type of ministry.<sup>694</sup>

Victor stresses the importance of the novelty which the instrument had acquired by the 1960s:

Yes. Oh yes. I think really it's the novelty of the concertina. You can go, I've been to places, when you go to a children's service and the children see the concertina, probably never seen before, and they think what is this? And when you start to play it for them and they sing a chorus or two it's marvellous to them really.<sup>695</sup>

He has a vast repertory of song tunes which he has found important in Salvation Army work where different airs can be interchanged with song texts, depending on mood or preference:

I can now choose any hymn. I can play any hymn you wish to suggest... When you're a master of the concertina you don't have to use any music... you've got all the tunes. You can have any tune you like in the Salvation Army repertory and I can play that tune for you with no bother whatever.<sup>696</sup>

A particular favourite is the psalm tune "Stracathro" (Tape Item 9.3).

Victor finds that the English concertina offers portability combined with the flexibility required to allow the selection of pitch appropriate to his congregation:

Of course, on many occasions you are the band. The beauty of the concertina is that you can play it in whatever key you want. Now, for instance, if I go and do an old people's home, now I know those old folk can't reach the top notes. With the concertina I can drop the tune into a key that is more suitable to the elderly folk no trouble whatever.<sup>697</sup>

In retirement, Victor remains attached to his instrument, a tool of his trade which offers security, even when not used: The concertina would really be like a right hand. I never ever now... I may go to a service where I may never use the concertina in that service but I like to know its there if I want it because normally there now you've got the band and you've got a pianist or an organist and you probably would never touch

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<sup>694</sup> Victor Smith: Eydmann 85.04.A5.

<sup>695</sup> Victor Smith: Eydmann 85.04.A2.

<sup>696</sup> Victor Smith: Eydmann 85.04.B8.

<sup>697</sup> Victor Smith: Eydmann 85.04.B1.

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the concertina throughout that service but we have been together so long that I hardly ever go to any service that I'm conducting without a concertina.<sup>698</sup>

Alex Sampson was 64 years old when I interviewed him at his house in Rosyth, Dunfermline, in 1988. He had spent his life within the Salvation Army and had just retired after 12 years as Sergeant Major in the local corps. He expressed pride in a long family history of Salvation Army music in Fife. His father and grandfather were both players as was his aunt Susan ("Sunshine Susie Sampson", fl. c.1910), who was a well known Captain who used the Anglo-German concertina in her Sunday school meetings. Alex gained his first musical experience playing in the brass band of the local armaments factory during the war but is a self taught concertina player. He learned by ear and has accumulated a large repertory of song tunes. He notes that as he learned songs and accompaniment together, he regards melody and concertina accompaniment as inseparable.

He has a great awareness of Salvation Army musical history, including an understanding of Army appropriation of popular and traditional tunes, and demonstrated this through "Bless his House, He sets me free!", a song which uses Alfred Lee's tune of 1867 for the music hall song "Champagne Charlie". He is particularly interested in Scottish airs put to Salvationist use. For example, "Invarary" becomes "Forth to rescue the Dying" and "Roamin' in the Gloamin'" is used for "Onward, ever onward with a spirit true and free".<sup>699</sup> Alex has discussed the mixture of nationalistic and sacred sentiments which such songs can bring, particularly when playing abroad, and the benefits of familiar tunes in attracting crowds on Scottish streets.

Alex attended Salvation Army College, London, from 1946-8 and was given his first posting to Brechin immediately afterwards. He did not take concertina lessons at college but soon took up the instrument:

S.E.: How did you get into the concertina?

A.S.: Well, as a Salvation Army officer... They started me as a lieutenant and when you're a lieutenant officer you don't go to a big corner because you haven't got the experience so you always start away. You get sent to a Salvation Army corps and there's not a band there and there may not be any persons musical. You have to conduct services: open air services, indoor services, have people singing the praises and keep them on the tune and without a musical instrument it's virtually impossible... So I decided I would need to try and get some

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<sup>698</sup> Victor Smith: Eydmann 85.04.B13.

<sup>699</sup> Other adopted tunes include "The Rowan Tree", "The Bluebells of Scotland", "Ye Banks and Braes" and "Annie Laurie". See Boon, Play the Music..., p.120.

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means of support then with the music. Now, the concertina was just the ideal thing. It's simple to play, some people just play chords and that would be just enough to get by, keeping the people in tune.<sup>700</sup>

After Brechin, he spent time in a number of other Scottish locations and made good use of the concertina:

I must confess that it's the only instrument that I can pick up and if I hear a chorus I'll be able to play. If I know the tune at all I'll be able to play. I just seem to know which key to hit initially to get what I'm after, but that's the instrument.

Its very serviceable, the beauty of it. You can see how the Salvation Army adopted it.<sup>701</sup>

Alex accepts, but laments, the changes in Salvation Army music in the mid-twentieth century and regards the adoption of modern popular instruments and styles as an unfortunate development:

A guitar is for people who are already part of the concern, more a sort of dampening down of their beliefs. I don't mean a dampening down of their beliefs but possibly a more sophisticated way of expressing their faith, whereas the more strident notes of the cornet and the concertina are meant to attract a crowd and hold a big congregation and out door people. The guitar is when you've got the old mikes up there and the young boy or girl can come along and croon a nice soothing thing to someone or other. It's a solo thing.<sup>702</sup>

He sold his concertina in the early 1970s but soon regretted this as he was stimulated to take it up again under the influence of the folk revival.

Alex's wife, Mary, from Dysart, near Kirkcaldy in Fife, trained at Salvation Army college and served in Carrickfergus, Omagh, Strabane, Belfast and elsewhere in the North of Ireland before returning to Scotland. Although not a concertina player now, she had once played "enough to get by" and used the instrument to support her own voice as a solo singer. She offered valuable information regarding Salvation Army teaching methods:

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<sup>700</sup> Alex Sampson: Eydmann 88.01.A3.

<sup>701</sup> Alex Sampson: Eydmann 88.01.A6.

<sup>702</sup> Victor Smith: Eydmann 88.02.A1.

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When you're going into the Salvation Army college one of the things on your list was a concertina... and at that time, in the 1940s a concertina was really essential and I got learning on it at the college. But it was really, it was great because you could sing a solo, playing chords.

I bought it in Kirkcaldy. In fact very few of us did not have a concertina. It was the done thing. I had a friend in Dunfermline that was at the college with me and she had one as well, 'mean we all had them. And they sort of trained us and if you couldn't play, eh, maybe the whole thing you could play chords which was enough to keep you on the tune for playing outside so that in these far off days it really was a great asset.

Well, they gave us, we had big charts with the layout of the concertina and where all the eh, chords were, that sort of thing... It used to make some noise I can tell you. We were put right down the bottom floor of the college... They would get us all playing the different chords.<sup>703</sup>

The Salvation Army produced a number of outstanding players of the duet concertina. W. Bramwell Thornett, who was born in Dundee in 1905, was regarded as one of the best. His parents, who had been stationed in Glasgow just prior to that time, were both players of the Anglo-German concertinas but Bramwell preferred the Crane Duet system because "it is suited to chord work". Resident in Felixstowe, Suffolk, in the mid-1980s, he counted himself as one of the "very few players remaining, in or out of the Army I fear".<sup>704</sup> He credited the introduction of the Crane system into Army use to Brigadier Archie Burgess, an "artistic soloist in his time".<sup>705</sup> In addition to formal religious performance, he was always in great demand as a soloist at secular events such as keep-fit classes, disabled persons meetings, old people's groups and children's parties, where he played music from "Acker Bilk to Beethoven", including novelty numbers such as the imitations of bells and bagpipes. He always preferred to perform with a pianist or, when an accompanist was unobtainable, with backing tapes of piano or additional concertina parts prepared by himself.

Bramwell lamented the abandonment of the concertina by the Army and in an article<sup>706</sup> published in 1974, around the same time as folk musicians were beginning to rediscover the instrument, he called for a revival of "part playing" on the "classical concertina". His recommended repertory included popular and light "classics" with

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<sup>703</sup> Mary Sampson: Eydmann 88.01.A16.

<sup>704</sup> Personal communication with the writer, circa 1986.

<sup>705</sup> For a memory of this influential Army concertinist see Wiggins, Lieut-Commissioner Arch. R., "Makers of Army music and song: Brigadier Archie Burgess" *The Musician* (28 December 1968) p.872.

<sup>706</sup> Thornett, W. Bramwell "Rediscovering the Salvation Army's Second Official Organ" *The Musician* (20 July 1974) p.368.

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some mid-nineteenth century concertina music added for impressive solo performance:

Canzonetta from Concerto in D	Tchaikowsky
To the Spring	Grieg
Sheep may safely graze	Bach
On Wings of Song	Mendelssohn
Violin Sonatas	Haydn
Liebeslied	Kreisler
Romanze op40	Beethoven
Melodie d'Amour	Engelmann
Serenata	Braga
Jesu, joy of man's desiring "for devotional meetings"	Bach
Czardas	Monti
Light Cavalry	Suppé
"for contrast, revealing the more brilliant style of playing the concertina"	
Simple marches	Various
"but requiring restraint and artistry"	
Concertina Arrangements	George Case

The Salvation Army journals contain a large amount of material relating to other outstanding players such as Brigadier W.G. Friend who, aged 81 years in 1973, had originally commenced playing the Anglo-German concertina in 1913:

Simply to accompany congregational singing, especially where there was no band. Furthermore, I knew it would save me from straining my voice, and this has really worked as now, at eighty-one years of age, I can still sing reasonably well!<sup>707</sup>

On taking up the duet system he re-scored band music to suit, recalling how the concertina once allowed him to effortlessly lead a 10 minute "chorus session" with 2,600 singers.

Lieut-Colonel Ernest Ripley purchased his first 35 key Triumph concertina for £35 in 1930 and learned to play through the course published in the Army journals and at

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<sup>707</sup> Brigadier W. G. Friend "The Concertina is a Rewarding Instrument" The Musician (6 October 1973) p.634.



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training college. A few years later he acquired a 56 key instrument which he used at beach rallies from his base at Blackpool Citadel:

It is equally at home whether it is witnessing in hospital ward, at open-air gatherings, in prisons, on the beach, in the hall or in cottage meetings... I have often visited small corps where there is no band or pianist -how glad I am that I have such an instrument.<sup>708</sup>

The integration of the concertina into Army life, and its intensity of adoption in the late nineteenth century and early years of this century, led to its use in bands. The first recorded Salvation Army concertina bands were at Battersea in 1882 and Bristol Citadel in 1884, although it can be assumed that these were informal, adhoc affairs typical of the burst of enthusiasm which accompanied the foundation of the Army. By the first years of the present century, more organised ensembles were being formed. The first issue of the Army music journal, The Bandsman and Songster, published in April 1907, carried an article<sup>709</sup> noting that their formation was being actively encouraged by the Army authorities and suggesting that new groups should be formed and existing bands reorganised on “musical lines” as in the secular bands currently enjoying favour. The writer recalled how:

It has been my privilege and pleasure to listen to a properly arranged Concertina Band of some twenty six instruments. Playing classical music, the Band was largely composed of colliers and working men who might be regarded as not having particularly fine standards. The effect was splendid. With such a combination I could see that almost anything could be accomplished in the way of indoor music... Such music could not fail to produce an excellent effect in holiness meetings, prayer meetings, and even on the march itself, where, with the addition of a light bass and a side-drum, the effect would indeed be stirring.

He suggested a band of sixteen English concertinas:

4 Trebles in C  
1 Soprano in F  
3 Tenors in F  
5 Baritones in C  
1 Bass in F  
2 basses in C

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<sup>708</sup> Ernest Ripley “Concertina Cameos” The Musician (19 April 1975) p.251.

<sup>709</sup> Hay, James “About Concertina Bands” The Bandsman and Songster (6 April 1907) p.5.

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although twenty players was thought preferable. The description of the instruments suggests that they would be specially tuned to allow reading from brass band scores. It was suggested that one advantage of such bands would be that “these instruments are, on the whole, easier to learn than either brass or stringed instruments” and that:

Women are not debarred, either from physical or other considerations; indeed, some will do much better than men. A Women’s Band would be a special attraction.

Alex Sampson makes a similar point:

As opposed to the brass it gave the women folk a chance because some bandmasters were chauvinistic and they would not let women in their band... So the women hit back by having a concertina band.<sup>710</sup>

Brigadier W.G. Friend recalled setting up such a band:

When stationed at the Durham District Headquarters I had a concertina band of some twelve players. I had to think again how to arrange the music so I got some early [brass band] journals and deputed the parts in a simplified way as follows:

1st. and 2nd. cornet  
1st. and 2nd. baritone  
Solo euphonium  
Bass

My task was to get each player to play his own part only -they were all so used to putting their fingers on all the keys! However, after a few practices success was achieved.<sup>711</sup>

As with Salvation Army brass bands, the concertina ensembles used only arrangements of music officially sanctioned and published by the Army authorities.

By 1930, around 50 formally organised Salvation Army bands had been formed,<sup>712</sup> including those at Doncaster, Plymouth Congress Hall, Weston-Super-Mare, Sheffield Citadel, Grimsby, Coventry City, Hull Icehouse, Scarborough, Loughborough Junction, Belfast Citadel and Attercliffe.<sup>713</sup>

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<sup>710</sup> Alex Sampson: Eydmann 88.02.A8.

<sup>711</sup> “The Concertina...”, p.634.

<sup>712</sup> Woodcock, R., letter to the editor *The Musician of the Salvation Army* (2 September 1972) p.546.

<sup>713</sup> The Army Journals contain much relating to concertina bands including early photographs. See, for

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The only band I know to have been active in Scotland was that formed at Dumfries in late 1916.<sup>714</sup> According to local tradition it was established by women members due to the absence of large numbers of male brass players serving in the Great War. For a considerable period, it was under the leadership of Sergeant Secretary Mrs. Margaret Main who assumed her post “at a time when women leaders of musical sections were almost unknown in the Army” and it is noted that “to equip herself for the task she had to master every instrument and make herself familiar with full scores”.<sup>715</sup> The band was still active in the late 1960s with fourteen players, some of whom were founder members<sup>716</sup> but it went out of active service when flooding at the corps hall damaged the instruments. These have now been repaired and the band is now resuming activity on a limited scale.<sup>717</sup> Most other bands disappeared during the inter-war period although two, at Plymouth and Doncaster, still exist.

The Salvation Army did not limit its activities to the British Isles but became a major force in foreign missions. This, and the activities of other organisations, inevitably helped introduce the concertina to other cultures.

### **The Concertina in the Foreign Missions**

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the rise of foreign missions was a major stimulus to commercial production of free-reed instruments. This encouraged the use of not only those of the organ type but also the hand held versions. However, it is difficult to discuss this area of concertina adoption in any great depth on account of the lack of primary evidence.

The English Cylopædia of c.1854 recorded that the accordion was in use by missionaries associated with the Roman Catholic Church<sup>718</sup> and I have already noted that from an early time concertinas were made with reeds of special alloys which would allow them to tolerate the conditions of the tropics. Scholes<sup>719</sup> claims that David Livingstone, Scots explorer and missionary, carried such a concertina with him on his campaigns.

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example, [The Musician of the Salvation Army](#) (15 April 1972) p.231, (17 August 1974) p.444, (20 September 1975) p.579 and (7 August 1976) p.502.

<sup>714</sup> “Scotland’s Sole Concertina Band” [The Musician of the Salvation Army](#) (March 1967) p.401. It has also been suggested that there was a band at Ayr but I can find no evidence for this.

<sup>715</sup> “Mrs Margaret Main” [Musician of the Salvation Army](#) (15 January 1972) p.45.

<sup>716</sup> Two photographs of the band, one taken shortly after formation and another contemporary were published in [The Bandsman of the Salvation Army](#) (March 1967) p.401. Figure 9.8 is an undated postcard photograph of the band.

<sup>717</sup> In late 1991 the ensemble consisted of four players from the same family (father, mother and two daughters) playing with “enthusiasm rather than precision”. Information from Steven Sutcliffe, Glasgow.

<sup>718</sup> “Accordion” in Charles Knight (ed.) [The English Cyclopædia](#) Vol. 1, (London, 1854).

<sup>719</sup> [TOCTM](#), p.117.



Figure 9.8 Salvation Army Band, Dumfries c1920.  
Source: Author's collection.

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David J. Beattie<sup>720</sup> relates how one, R.W. Porteous, used the instrument in his work with the China Inland Mission early this century and that this proved invaluable in entertaining and leading praise with fellow prisoners after being captured by brigands. A similar story is told by Victor Kersley of Hawick who recalls how he obtained his most treasured concertina which once belonged to a family friend:

He was sent to China as a missionary with the Salvation Army and, eh, at the time of the war with Malaysia he was sent to Singapore and was only there for a relatively short period until the fall of Singapore and he was a prisoner with the Japs at Changi prison, a notorious place in Singapore, for four years... During that time the concertina, his concertina which he had made specially to go to China, was hidden in Singapore. So, on his release he returned home, of course, with his concertina which had not suffered to any extent at all. It was remarkable... On his death I got the concertina from his widow.<sup>721</sup>

I have examined this instrument which appears to have lacquered reeds to prevent oxidation and gauze behind the grilles to keep out insects.

As an international organisation with a strong interest in foreign missions, the Salvation Army made great use of the concertina. Army journals have frequently reported players throughout the world and make occasional reference to the use of the instrument as a principal teaching tool at missionary stations in places such as Nairobi and Mombassa.<sup>722</sup>

The Army's use of the concertina in foreign missions helped spread the instrument's popularity in both sacred and secular music. Kjellström, for example, illustrates a Salvationist concertina player on the streets of a Swedish town in 1975<sup>723</sup> and, during the course of writing this dissertation, I have encountered the English concertina in use within a Salvation Army family in rural Piemonte, North Italy.

### **Decline and Abandonment**

The use of the concertina in the mission halls suffered a number of blows in the post 1945 period. Many missions became institutionalised and took on the trappings and practices of the modern church, including organs, typical repertory, choirs etc. Jimmy

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<sup>720</sup> Beattie, David J. *The Romance of Sacred Song* (London, 1954) p.119.

<sup>721</sup> Victor Kersley: Eydmann 86.04.A11.

<sup>722</sup> There is a photograph of blind pupils with concertinas in Nairobi in *The Musician of the Salvation Army* (28 March 1970) p.195 and the same journal of 29 January 1972, p.67 carried an urgent call for a concertina for use in the Salvation Army Training College in the same city. The journal of 2 March 1968, p.156 carried a photograph of a band of blind pupils with concertinas at Mombassa.

<sup>723</sup> *Dragspel*, p.70.



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Lindsay recalls how the Tent Hall in Glasgow could not resist a benefactor's offer of an organ to "improve" the congregation's music, even though it was to render its many concertina players redundant and reduce participation and spontaneity.<sup>724</sup> The general decline in evangelistic work was hastened by comprehensive urban redevelopment in many of the inner city areas where it had flourished. In the words of David Haxton:

You understand, Stuart? These places are finished... That work  
doesna go on now.<sup>725</sup>

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<sup>724</sup> Jimmy Lindsay: Eydmann 86.02.A11.

<sup>725</sup> David Haxton: Eydmann 84.03.A20.

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## Working Class Adoption of the English Concertina in Scotland 1900-1945

### Introduction

By the start of the twentieth century, Lowland Scotland had largely ceased to be a peasant society and was a modern, industrialised country. The population was mostly housed in urban communities and many of those living in rural areas had a reasonable experience of the wider world through family links, employment and military service. In the cities and larger towns, society comprised a varied cultural and ethnic mix of residents of mainly Lowland, Highland (often Gaelic speaking) and Irish origin. The multi-storey tenement flat remained the principal urban housing form and the living conditions of the working class were generally poor. In 1911, for example 50% of Scottish dwellings had only one or two rooms.<sup>726</sup>

As I have remarked in earlier chapters, there was an increasing tendency for popular music to become focused at a national and international level through the developing entertainment industry and the influence of the music hall, the churches, modern dance music, bands and choral organisations. There was also a considerable amount of pressure for “improvement”, through evangelistic and temperance organisations, adult education, the labour movement and the influence of the middle-classes, who had already adopted more refined, “rational” and home-based recreation as the norm. However, while older cultural forms survived mainly in the rural and island areas or among sub- groups such as the travelling people, there remained lively “folk traditions” of dance and song in the industrial areas too, as has been recognised by A.L. Lloyd.<sup>727</sup>

The First World War brought major changes in the economy and industrial organisation which had effects on everyday life, cultural attitudes and practices. By 1914, the economic life of the country had become linked to the fortunes of a small number of staple industries (iron and steel, coal, shipbuilding, heavy engineering and

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<sup>726</sup> Harvie, Christopher *No Gods and Precious Few Heroes: Scotland 1914-1980* (London, 1981) p.70. In England and Wales the figure was less than 8%. By 1931 the Scottish figure had fallen to only 44% and, according to Dickson, A. and Treble J.H. (eds.) *People and Society in Scotland: Vol. III 1914-1990* (Edinburgh, 1992) p.6, to 32% in 1951.

<sup>727</sup> Lloyd, A.L. *Folk Song in England* (London, 1967). The whole area of traditional music and song in urban Scotland has been sadly ignored in favour of the rural areas and still awaits a definitive study.

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textiles) operating in increasingly competitive world and domestic markets. A boom associated with the aftermath of war was followed by economic problems and unfavourable trade conditions. Contraction in the basic industries resulted in long term structural unemployment which was felt most deeply in the early 1930s and in those parts of the Central belt most dependent on such activities. Conflict occurred in urban centres with rent strikes and other local, radical political action. Emigration from Scotland became a common form of escape, from the 1920s onwards.

As the influence of the church waned, its role in the organisation of personal free-time declined and evangelicalism and its musical expressions became residual and marginalised, though with some pockets of survival and revival, particularly in areas undergoing economic hardship. Despite increased commercialisation, the desire for leisure to be linked to self-improvement remained strong, although “the mantle of evangelicalism and temperance passed to secular socialism”<sup>728</sup> and earlier organised rational recreation gave way to new forms such as cycling, athletics, sports, sightseeing, hill climbing, and hostelling.

No part of Scotland escaped the influence of the increasingly dominant forms of American originated music, song and dance being mediated through radio, cinema, gramophone and the dance hall. Fashionable dance venues were very popular in the towns, although lower status dancing, which retained a strong scottish element, continued to flourish at social evenings and weddings in both urban and rural areas.

Against this framework I consider different aspects of the use of the concertina by working-class people in the first half of the present century by drawing on the oral testimony and musical evidence of musicians active during the period. Several of my informants, all of whom are male, have already been introduced in my thematic chapters on music hall, sacred music and bands, but here I concentrate on secular, non-professional and less institutionalised musical activities, although there are many overlapping areas. I consider the level of popularity of the instrument, how musicians came to adopt the concertina and how they learned to play. Aspects of concertina retail, repair and maintenance are examined. I also discuss the instrument’s special place in areas of semi-professional music making and look at aspects of repertory and style. The use of the concertina in the accompaniment of social dance is discussed in detail before consideration of the rise of the modern accordion and saxophone, instruments which came to assume many of the roles enjoyed by the concertina. In conclusion, I look at the changing status of the instrument and discuss reasons for its decline in popularity around the time of the Second World War.

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<sup>728</sup> Fraser, W. Hamish “Developments in Leisure” in Fraser, W. Hamish and R.J. Morris (eds) People and Society in Scotland: Vol. II 1830-1914 (Edinburgh, 1990) p.259.

## Popularity

By 1914, the use of the Anglo-German concertina had largely died out in Scotland and the duet forms had become the sole preserve of a small number of Salvation Army players and music hall artists. The English concertina, by then abandoned by the middle classes, was still popular among working-class musicians although it is impossible to make authoritative statements about intensity of use without access to reliable data on sales and ownership. Nevertheless, field work confirms that the English concertina was highly fashionable, particularly in the urban areas of Scotland, during the first half of this century, with the melodeon or German accordion holding ground as the principal free-reed instrument in the more conservative rural communities. Popularity was its height in the years immediately after the Great War, especially in the Glasgow conurbation, where several spheres of concertina use (amateur secular, sacred, music hall etc...) interrelated. David Haxton claims that use of the concertina in the city was “as great as any in Britain”<sup>729</sup> and points to evidence to support his view:

D.H.: Glasgow was a great place for the concertina.

S.E.: Do you think, more than anywhere else?

D.H.: I think so, for I remember some of Wheatstone’s correspondence at that time. Somebody bought an instrument and then they wanted to change it, they wanted it altered. Wheatstone said they would supply another instrument but said “You should have no bother selling that in Glasgow”. He did sell it right enough. There was a high demand in Glasgow.<sup>730</sup>

Both David Haxton and Peter McCabe remember:

P.M.: It was very popular, you could see all over the streets of Glasgow, you’d see people with the wee box.<sup>731</sup>

D.H.: In these days, round about 1912-14, the First World War days, young people would march the streets playing the concertina at night as they do today with the guitar. After the war production and demand accelerated. 1920-35 was supposedly the peak for manufacture. The little boxes were very evident in the streets of Glasgow:

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<sup>729</sup> David Haxton: Eydmann 84.01.B2.

<sup>730</sup> David Haxton: Eydmann 84.04.A6.

<sup>731</sup> Peter McCabe: Eydmann 84.01.B2.



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people going for tuition, others playing in dance bands, hurches, missions, Salvation Army.<sup>732</sup>

These references suggest that portability was a major reason for the concertina's popularity in city areas where tenement living and an almost universal reliance on foot or public transport, favoured small instruments. Wheatstone and Co. stressed this advantage of the concertina in their literature:

Wheatstone's slogan. Do you know Wheatstone's slogan? It was in all their adverts: "Play an instrument you can carry".<sup>733</sup>

Endorsement came from Peter McCabe when asked:

S.E.: Why were you attracted to the concertina?

P.M.: Because I discovered it was handy to carry about. Likes of the accordion was different; you could get the concertina, carry it and you could take it out anywhere and play it.<sup>734</sup>

### **Learning to Play**

Several of my informants came to the concertina through the playing of relatives and most learned initially in an informal manner and without reference to written music. As a child, Peter Campbell of Tomintoul (a rural player) would listen to his father play: "I'd watch him every night. It was a ritual. He used to sit and play it, you know, and if he was playing that instrument I was there".<sup>735</sup> He claims that at the age of eight or nine he "just literally lifted it up and played it", taking the instrument out while his father, who would have disapproved of him touching it, was not around.

David Haxton was shown the basics of concertina technique by his older brother who was already an accomplished player: "My brother (I really wasn't interested till the end of the war, '18 or '20). He showed me the rudiments and that was all. I never had tuition. Self taught".<sup>736</sup>

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<sup>732</sup> David Haxton: Eydmann 84.04.A1.

<sup>733</sup> Ibid.

<sup>734</sup> Peter McCabe; Eydmann 84.02.B4.

<sup>735</sup> Peter Campbell: Eydmann 82.01.A3.

<sup>736</sup> David Haxton: Eydmann 84.04.A3.

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Alexander McLaren was born in Fauldhouse, West Lothian, in 1910 and later moved to another mining community, Larkhall in Lanarkshire. His father, who came from Blantyre,<sup>737</sup> played concertina, as did his uncle and older brother who was a friend of the music hall player Alexander Prince. McLaren was also self taught, learning by ear from the playing of his father and brother who were both sight readers. When asked who taught him, he replied: “Naebody. I just learned it off them. My brother couldna understand how I could play without music.”<sup>738</sup>

Peter McCabe went to a teacher for his first instruction: “Well the thing is, I got the rudiments, how to, but I just carried on myself.”<sup>739</sup> He also progressed as an “ear player”, an approach which, as discussed in the previous chapter, he found crucial to spontaneous performance:

They’ve got to get the book out. Its most essential to go by music -it’s the real thing. But the thing is, is it? The one that scores most is the one that can turn that. If you’re in a house and somebody says “Dark Lochnagar”... well they’ve got to run away and look for it, get out the music, see.<sup>740</sup>

Like Peter, Victor Kersley of Hawick used the keyboard layout from a published tutor as a basis for teaching himself.<sup>741</sup>

Danny Toner of Govan grew up in family in which his father (a music hall performer), brother, uncle and cousin were all concertina players. His role model was his cousin Dan Green, who he remembers as a great performer of Scots and Irish dance music and a player in the Clydebanks Concertina Band. However, it was his invalid uncle, also named Dan, who “organised everything” and influenced his musical education and choices. He settled on the concertina after trying a number of other instruments:

S.E.:            You said you started off on the violin?

D.T.:            I started off with the violin, aye. I tried the violin. My Uncle Dan got me onto the violin, eh, he said: “I’m goin’ to get Dan onto the violin” so I stuck into the violin. Now I’m about nine year old then, nine goin’ on for ten, but, eh, I got fed up wi’ it for one note wisna’

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<sup>737</sup> There was a lively musical community in this mining area of Lanarkshire in the early years of this century. See Morton, Robin *Come Day, Go Day, God Send Sunday* (London, 1973) pp.67-74. The influential melodeon players, Peter and Daniel Wyper, lived nearby.

<sup>738</sup> Alexander McLaren: Eydmann 86.05.A11.

<sup>739</sup> Peter McCabe: Eydmann 84.02.A2.

<sup>740</sup> Peter McCabe: Eydmann 84.02.A4.

<sup>741</sup> Dallas’ Shilling Tutor for the English Concertina (London, n.d.).

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enough. I wanted harmony, you see. So he said: "See Dan, forget about the violin." ...my Uncle Dan packed me up and he got me on the dulcimore<sup>742</sup>.

S.E.: Why the dulcimore, was he playing it as well?

D.T.: Aye, he made dulcimores. He was a good player. He learned me. It took me about three years and I was able to play all the different hornpipes. I played a' the Irish hornpipes, Scots hornpipes, you know.

S.E.: Was there a lot of dulcimore players about?

D.T.: There was a lot then. See the dulcimore is what you call a "bastard instrument". My Uncle Dan said that and he said: "That's correct", see. Its no' an instrument they'd music for in those days, see. So he used to make one every three month. £7 for his dulcimore.<sup>743</sup> The dulcimer did not suit him either, so it was suggested that he learn concertina or piano:

D.T.: So I'm away from it then so he said: "We don't have a piana. We'll put Dan at the concertina." So he got the concertina music an' I stuck into the concertina music and I was doing pretty good. So I bashed in, but we couldna buy a piano then.<sup>744</sup>

He was taught "second hand" by his older cousin who was attending formal lessons and, although they practiced formal exercises published for the concertina, they pursued the wider popular repertory from published piano music:

D.T.: .My Uncle Dan got me interested and my cousin was going to a teacher years ago (he was six years older than me) sothat he learned me.

S.E.: He was going to a concertina teacher?

D.T.: Aye, a Mr. Caldwell frae Anderston. He was great player, you know. And he was a full [i.e. high] class teacher and the funny thing about it was when they were teaching you, it was always, for scales it was always the

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<sup>742</sup> Hammered dulcimer.

<sup>743</sup> Danny Toner: Eydmann 85.02.A4.

<sup>744</sup> Danny Toner: Eydmann 85.02.A4.

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concertina music for scales. All the music we learned from was all the treble of the piano music. But I had to do all the scales, I studied it for four years. Four years I studied music with the good supervision of my cousin, you know.

But I spoiled it. He was always mad at me and when he was teaching me he was getting fed up with me. He says: “See you Dan, you’re no stickin wi’ the music and its goin’ to be later on, you’re on your diatonics now, you’re comin’ on but you’re spoilin’ it. You’re playin’ by ear and its no’ goin’ to pay off later on -you should stick in just now!”

And he got mad with me one day and he says: “You’re only wastin’ my time and you’re wastin’ you’re own time so I’m packin’ you up”

So my teacher actually packed me up ‘cause I wisna stickin’ in!

So I played by ear then but I’m sorry I never did what he told me ‘cause if I’d stuck in... I’d been doin’ a lot better today.<sup>745</sup>

Danny gave up music around the age of 19 but took up the concertina again later.

Several of my informants played other instruments too and had gained a foundation in music elsewhere before turning to the concertina. Peter Campbell of Tomintoul said of his father:

He had so much pride in this instrument. And don’t forget he played the trombone and the piano accordion when it came into vogue... several instruments, like myself, but the concertina was his prize, his pride and joy.<sup>746</sup>

Like many other working-class musicians in the early twentieth century, Peter obtained his formal musical training through membership of the local silver band and piping during military service.<sup>747</sup> Similarly, James Dickson, discussed in Chapter 9.0, played cornet in the Galashiels Town band since he was 13. He remembers this as a strict musical background: “the poor man’s school of music”.<sup>748</sup>

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<sup>745</sup> Danny Toner: Eydmann 85.02.A3.

<sup>746</sup> Peter Campbell: Eydmann 83.01.A3.

<sup>747</sup> Personal communication with the writer, 28 June 1984.

<sup>748</sup> James Dickson: Eydmann 86.08.A4.

## *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

Players living in the cities were able to pursue a more formal education from “professors” of the concertina. Willie Smith was taught by Walter Dale, the noted music hall player discussed in Chapter 7.0, and by George Simpson of Tollcross, a professional teacher (Figure 10.1). Archibald Ross, discussed below as a maker and retailer of concertinas, ran a concertina teaching enterprise in Glasgow. Throughout the 1930s, he operated “musical parlours” in the city’s Maryhill Road and at Saracen Street, Posillpark. According to David Haxton: “He was a good teacher. He had a good [i.e. large] clientele for tuition but he wisnae a player, mind ye. Ross wisna a player -a good salesman”.<sup>749</sup> He ran his “English Concertina Teaching Saloons” at the Maryhill shop and his advertising showed group photographs of concertina players of all ages with statements stressing the earning potential of the instrument:

**We can earn from £3 to £7 per week, besides the everlasting source of constant pleasure we get from the English Concertina.**

**WHY NOT become a player of this wonderful instrument. So easy to learn under the personal and private guidance of Principal A.M. Ross.**

**What of your future? NOW is the time to lay in store a thorough knowledge of the English Concertina which can be converted into £ s. d. when the need arises.**

and

**We want you to provide for the future as well as the present... So call and enrol for a thorough teaching on the king of musical instruments.**<sup>750</sup>

Both cash and “easy payments” were accepted.

Ross was associated with the Christian Brethren sect and may have drawn much of his custom from evangelistic musicians in the city. The only professional teacher I have traced operating outwith Glasgow during the 20s and 30s taught in Leith, Edinburgh, shortly after the war.<sup>751</sup>

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<sup>749</sup> David Haxton: Eydmann 84.03.A9.

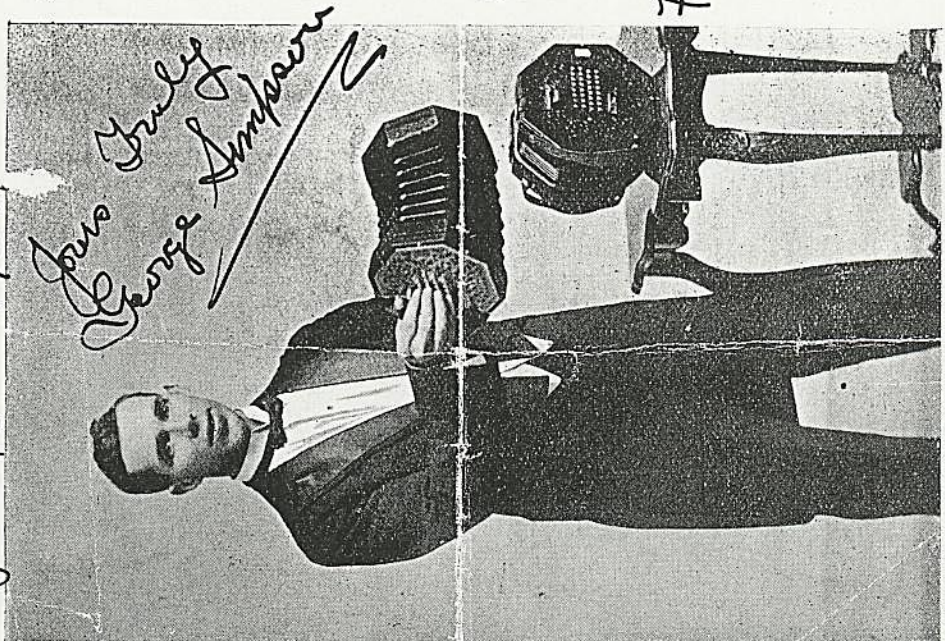
<sup>750</sup> Advertisement on 78rpm record sleeve in Eydmann collection.

<sup>751</sup> “Alex Ronald, 322 Easter Road, teacher of English Concertina and Aeola”: [Edinburgh Post Office](#)



14 DEERPARK GARDENS,  
TOLLCROSS, GLASGOW.

Jan 18<sup>th</sup> 1927.



*Geo Simpson*  
*George Simpson*

This Week,  
 Next Week,

Mrs Alice Wackell  
 A Special Junior Trundle Bed  
 56 Keys Nickel Ends Large Model  
 Leather Bellows 6 Fold Back Straps  
 Bow Value Etc to Cost  
 By Wheatstone 7/6 J 27.10  
 LONDON DEPOSIT 7.10

seven pounds 10/-  
 Feb 7<sup>th</sup> received Twenty Pounds  
 J. 27.10  
 27.10  
 27.10  
 27.10



Settled 1927 George Simpson  
 Feb 7<sup>th</sup> 1927  
 George Simpson

Figure 10.1 George Simpson, Handbill.  
Source: Author's Collection.

## *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

Several of my urban informants attended part-time music theory classes -an illustration of the concertina's continuing role as an instrument of personal advancement and rational recreation. Both David Haxton and Richard Walker of Glasgow attended the Athenaeum, now the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, studying piano and harmony with a view to improving their concertina playing.

Other musicians I have interviewed, such as David Steele of Musselburgh, took up the instrument in isolation without access to a wider network of teachers or other players, teaching themselves and developing their playing to suit their own needs.

In conclusion, it can be said that among my informants, there was no pattern to learning the English concertina as the instrument lent itself equally well to self education and formal tuition and allowed the player to pursue advanced levels of attainment if desired.

### **Acquiring a Concertina**

At the start of the twentieth century, there were only a few concertina manufacturers and all were London based. George Jones ceased production in the first decade and Jeffries continued only until the 1920s, leaving Wheatstone and Co., H. Crabb and Son. and Lachenal as the only makers.

Immediately before the First World War, Wheatstone and Co. were offering 34 models of English concertina ranging in price from £3.0s.30d. to £25., including versions of their concert model, the Aeola, at £18.10d. to £24.<sup>752</sup> This range was still on offer through to the late 1930s when the cheaper, more basic models were dropped from their lists. By the 1930s, prices had risen somewhat, the range running from £9 to £32. In Scotland, concertinas were sold in music stores and the manufacturers dealt directly by post. Only Glasgow supported specialist retailers, most of whom were located in the east end of the city centre close to the principal mission halls and an area where a large number of my informants lived at the time (see Figure 10.2). Campbell and Co. and Chisholm Hunter of Trongate and Dunlop of Candleriggs were the principal retailers in the city, with the latter acting as the main agent for Wheatstone and Co.

My informants speak of saving hard to buy new instruments. Danny Toner recalls his father working overtime for 2 years in his job as a bolt and rivet maker to earn the 30

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Directory (1920-21). Mr. Barnes (b. 1909), an informant of the "Leith Lives" oral history project, recalled a professional concertina teacher working in the area at the time. The teacher was later murdered crossing Leith Links, a local public park (Tape G 9A, 5 December 1984).

<sup>752</sup> Price List of C. Wheatstone and Co.'s Concertinas and Aeolas (London, c.1910). Xerox copy in Eydmann collection.



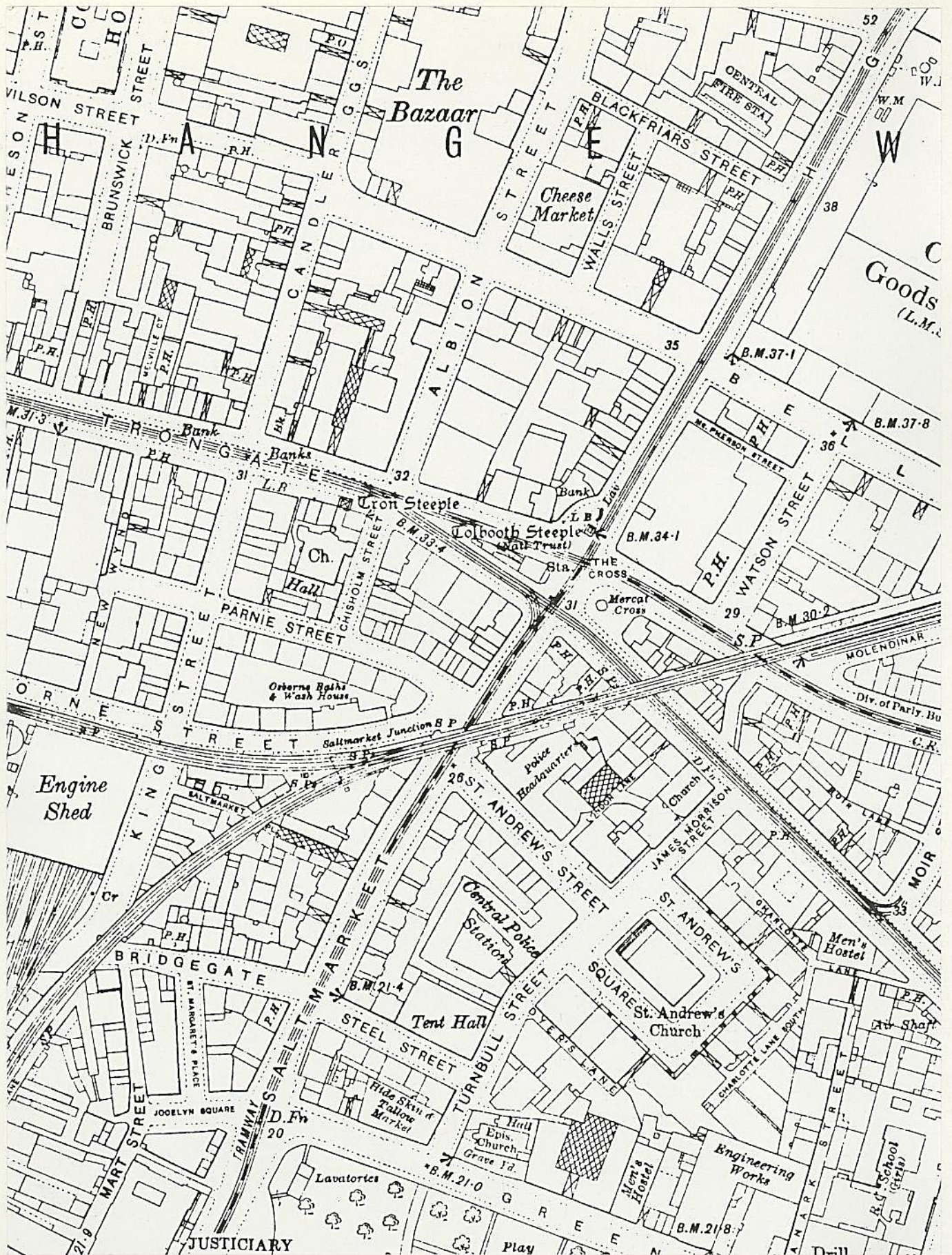


Figure 10.2 Glasgow Cross showing Tent Hall, Trongate and Candleriggs, c.1930.

Source: Ordnance Survey/ National Library of Scotland.



## *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

guineas for his instrument<sup>753</sup> and Peter McCabe relates how he bought his first concertina from Dunlop in the early 1930s after gathering funds:

I bought my first concertina with my pocket money for a year. Saved up. It was 7s. 6d., that was 3 half crowns, I saved that up for a year to buy my first concertina which was £25.<sup>754</sup>

He noted that it was also possible to pay in instalments: “You could get it and pay up, you know... you would pay so much, maybe 7, 5 bob a week”.<sup>755</sup>

There was a flourishing secondhand market and this is how David Haxton acquired his first instrument around 1918 for £6.<sup>756</sup> Pawn shops were a major source of instruments of all kinds:

They were always in pawn shops ‘cause some guys bought a concertina and they couldna learn them. They’re a hard instrument to play as you know. They’re hellish to learn so what happened, a lot of them would pawn the concertinas and they always got a lot of money for them for a concertina was always very dear.<sup>757</sup>

A new English concertina was an expensive purchase for most when it is considered that, in 1934, 71% of the working population in Glasgow had an annual income of less than £208 a year.<sup>758</sup>

Alexander MacLaren would either visit the shops around Glasgow Cross or track down sales heard about by word of mouth when seeking a new instrument. Teachers often acted as agents for the London manufacturers (as in the receipt reproduced in Figure 10.1) or dealt in second hand concertinas.

Archibald McIntyre Ross, already discussed as a teacher of concertina, sold concertinas by the London manufacturers from his music shops on the north side of Glasgow. He also offered concertinas assembled from parts acquired from Lachenal of London. His instruments, identifiable by their brown bellows, were deemed inferior:

He couldna make them. He only assembled them. He got folks down in London to make parts for him. Crabb did a bit. Crabb would supply so many and supply the reeds and somebody else would make the

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<sup>753</sup> Danny Toner: Eydmann 85.02.A9.

<sup>754</sup> Peter McCabe: Eydmann 04.02.A4. His arithmetic is incorrect.

<sup>755</sup> Peter McCabe: Eydmann 04.01.B1.

<sup>756</sup> David Haxton: Eydmann 84.04.A3.

<sup>757</sup> Danny Toner: Eydmann 85.02.A8.

<sup>758</sup> Harvie, *No Gods...*, p.85. The Scottish figure was 74.8% and the English 73.5%.

### *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

bellows and somebody else the buttons buying them from all different parts. He assembled them himself. Oh! terrible concertinas.<sup>759</sup>

Poor construction, poor frames, poor reeds, poor studs, no action wi' them.<sup>760</sup>

Informants would spend much time debating the comparative merits of individual concertina manufacturers but generally agreed that the instruments of Wheatstone and Co. were the best. Peter Campbell described the concertina of Lachenal as “just a copy” of Wheatstone’s instruments with “not quite the same tone”<sup>761</sup> while Harry MacIntyre of Glasgow (now of Galashiels) recalled his aspiration to owning a top quality Wheatstone model:

Another gentleman who was a wee bit older than me and he had been playin’ the concertina before he was called up for the army and when he came back he bought a brand new Aeola Wheatstone 56 key that went down to C, low C. And that was always my ambition to be able to own an Aeola, which I did. That was the one I sold last, but eh, it was a different kettle of fish than the wee push and shove Lachenal.<sup>762</sup>

Size of concertina was another point of discussion. The 56keyed instruments were particularly popular, although some players preferred the larger 64 keyed versions to allow the performance of a fuller sound in imitation of the music hall virtuosi. The smaller and lighter 48 key models were preferred for fast dance music. Alexander McLaren always used a large concertina and said of my 48 key treble instrument: “That’s too wee son, that’s too wee”.<sup>763</sup> Like others, he had a view on the suitability of different concertina end plate materials for particular musical functions. Comparing the merits of wood (mellow tone) with metal (bright tone) he stated:

Oh, [the metal ended] Lachenal’s the best tone. [the wooden ended] Wheatstone’s a’ right but the Lachenal’s the best tone, son. Oh, that’s right. The metal end’s for the dancers, you know.<sup>764</sup>

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<sup>759</sup> David Haxton: Eydmann 84.01.B1.

<sup>760</sup> David Haxton: Eydmann 84.04.A1.

<sup>761</sup> Peter Campbell: Eydmann 83.01.A1.

<sup>762</sup> Harry MacIntyre: Eydmann 86.10.A4.

<sup>763</sup> Alexander McLaren: Eydmann 86.05.A6.

<sup>764</sup> Alexander McLaren: Eydmann 86.05.A6.



## **Instrument Maintenance and Repair**

Musical instruments require specialist attention to keep them in good repair and in a playable condition. While many allow a degree of maintenance by the player, it is a common feature of the modern factory made instruments (piano, keyed woodwinds, brass and free-reeds) that they demand the services of a technician for anything but the simplest work. Such skills are generally only available as part of an infrastructure supported by demand. My research would suggest that, as with the provision of retail outlets and teaching facilities, Glasgow was the only centre in Scotland which was able to support a specialist technical back-up, although a certain amount of work was done by those servicing the needs of players of the melodeon and accordion.

Several of my informants preferred to send their instruments directly to the concertina manufacturers in London where they felt sure of more sensitive workmanship.<sup>765</sup> I have only interviewed one player who undertook major re-tuning himself, although several attempted the resetting or tuning of individual reeds when required.<sup>766</sup> Danny Toner's uncle did basic repairs but the instruments were sent to London for more important work, such as selective re-tuning of individual notes:

My Uncle Dan was very brilliant and he looked after the concertinas, done them up, took them apart. If I'd had a spring broke inside there, that's a hard job, spring. He fixed it, see. But it was no problem then before the war. You could send a letter to Wheatstone. They were the makers. Then they would send a letter back: "O.K. Send it." They were very honest. I sent that concertina to Wheatstone. I got it all done. I changed [to the] New Philharmonic [pitch], they put [in] the big key. See, there are two Bb, you've got two Bb in a block. Now, they gave me this one lower than that. What is it, two tones [octaves] lower? I got that done... bellows polished, nickel plated, all new straps -did it all up and the whole lot came to £5. It was a lot of money then in 1938. That was two weeks wages.<sup>767</sup>

Here he refers to the re-tuning of one of the duplicated notes which occur on the English concertina to provide an additional note, a low Bb outwith the standard range.

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<sup>765</sup> In the 1980s many older players were unaware of the new repairers who had arisen to service the concertina players of the folk revival discussed in the next chapter. Peter McCabe sent his instruments from Glasgow to Wigan for maintenance.

<sup>766</sup> Several retailers, such as Ross, kept stocks of reeds and other spare parts often salvaged from old instruments.

<sup>767</sup> Danny Toner: Eydmann 85.02.B3. New Philharmonic Pitch, which is now obsolete, was higher than current Concert Pitch (A=440). Alexander MacLaren also remembers how his uncle had certain reeds re-tuned to suit his style of playing. The lowest G sharp on the right hand manual of the 48 button model, which duplicates the Ab on the left hand, is often re-tuned to provide an additional lower note, usually F natural. Victor Kersley of Hawick had his low G sharp replaced by F also.

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The need for specialist tuning and repair, the presence, or otherwise, of a supporting infrastructure and the cost implications of maintenance work had important consequences for adoption and abandonment. Musicians without access to, or knowledge of, specialists and those unable to afford repairs, eventually abandoned their instruments once they had reached an unplayable condition. Similarly, the establishment of an internationally agreed standard pitch in 1939 rendered many concertinas unplayable with other fixed pitch instruments such as the piano and contributed to their abandonment in the subsequent decades.

### **Earnin' a Few Bob**

The opportunities for casual and semi-professional musical employment in the inter-war period were considerable, for live music was still the norm in most public and social situations. The Glasgow Branch of the Musician's Union categorised the variety of places of engagement in order to determine basic rates:

- Ships.
- Summer Variety Shows.
- Dances: a. Hotels, University, City Hall, Class
- Dance Halls and Ballrooms.
- b. Lesser Ballrooms, Halls and Masonic.
- c. Smaller Halls.
- Bazaars and Flower Shows.
- Fine Art Galleries.
- Cinema Trade Shows.
- Glasgow parks (including dances).
- Charity Performances.
- Garden Parties.
- Receptions.
- Concerts, Choral and Orchestral.
- Amateur Opera.
- Mannequin Parades.
- Cafes, Tea Rooms and Trading Establishments.
- Cinematographic Theatres.
- Theatres and Music halls.
- B.B.C. Light Orchestra.<sup>768</sup>

The concertina found a place in all but a few of these locations and to the list we can add a further network of occasional and informal events and functions, a “black economy” of casual musical employment which included small local dances, concerts

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<sup>768</sup> Musician's Union Directory Glasgow Branch (1938). Copy in National Library of Scotland.

### *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

and public houses. Private parties were a major source of casual work for semi-professional musicians at the time. These varied from children's parties through to family celebrations and works' socials and made considerable demands on the player's repertory, flexibility and ability to play from memory and by ear. During the 1920s, Harry MacIntyre played at parties for 5s on Friday evenings<sup>769</sup> and stresses that "a concertina could keep it going".<sup>770</sup>

Other means of earning money were through the amateur nights held in music halls, "filler spots" at cinemas and talent competitions. Phillips, in his biography of the accordionist Jimmy Shand, describes such a night in the 1920s:

In fact there was a rough-and-ready way of having your talent gauged readily available in those days. Go-as-you please contests were held in cinemas, theatres, halls, schools all over Fife. Prizes, which usually didn't exceed ten shillings, went to the contestants who got the most applause. Jimmy admits a fair amount of success at such affairs. His most vivid memory of such, however, is about an older busker who shuffled around towns and villages dragging the most agonising yelps from a battered concertina, and who once appeared on the same "bill" at Green's Playhouse, Leven.

The concertina's wavering screeches brought a great and sustained volume of ribald cheers, hand clapping, foot stamping from the audience, inciting the player to even more disastrous flourishes, thus seeing himself ahead of the field. On the basis of audience reaction in theory he should have been an easy winner... He took some dragging off.<sup>771</sup>

There was also open air busking which, despite regulation since the mid-nineteenth century, still formed an important element of urban street life. Earlier chapters have already discussed the concertina's role as an instrument of street music. Jean Hay of Edinburgh recalled:

Another character was the old man with the long white beard who played the concertina outside the Caley [Caledonian] Hotel in Lothian Road. In a beautiful quiet voice he sang songs like "Bonny Strathyre" and "The Rowan Tree".<sup>772</sup>

while the Glasgow writer Cliff Handley tells us how:

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<sup>769</sup> Harry MacIntyre: Eydmann 86.10.A4.

<sup>770</sup> Harry MacIntyre: Eydmann 86.10.A14.

<sup>771</sup> Phillips, Ian *Jimmy Shand* (Dundee, 1976) p.22.

<sup>772</sup> *Kiss Me While My Lips Are Tacky* People's Story Reminiscence Groups/WEA (Edinburgh, 1988) p.25.

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One thin man was a regular turn on Saturday afternoons, with an English concertina and a tune called “Butterflies in the Rain”. He played it fast and he never played anything else.<sup>773</sup>

In Chapter 7.0 I discussed the place of the concertina in the bands which played on the Clyde Steamers. David Haxton relates how one such band also played on the Glasgow streets:

The grand harp was really popular in these days with the concertina and fiddle. Sauchiehall Street on a Monday night, great crowds round them.<sup>774</sup>

He also recalled how:

The street buskers, they could play... You got ex-army men and a’ the rest of it after the 1st World War. They all came off with the clarinets, cornets and violins and all that kind of thing.<sup>775</sup>

During the hungry 1930s, that was a great time. Between the 20s and 30s wonderful groups went about the streets and the back courts. Men back from the war, army musicians, trumpeters, saxophones, trombonists linking up with good concertina players, piana, big harps. They had to earn some bread.<sup>776</sup>

His recollection that many of the street bands of the 1920s were made up from unemployed ex-servicemen is backed by published sources<sup>777</sup> which also suggest that ensembles of such musicians operated well into the 1930s.

The back courts of city tenements formed natural amphitheatres for buskers.<sup>778</sup> Danny Toner remembers:

You got a lot of back court playin’ the concertina with guys dancing wi’ a wee board... and the concertina goin’ like hell, there. You know, fast stuff. It’s a wee band on its own.<sup>779</sup>

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<sup>773</sup> Handley, Cliff *Dancing in the Streets* (Glasgow, 1979) p.73.

<sup>774</sup> David Haxton: Eydmann 86.03.A8.

<sup>775</sup> Ibid.

<sup>776</sup> David Haxton: Eydmann 84.04.A15.

<sup>777</sup> Green, Mike (ed.) *Nostalgia: Bygone Days and Memories from Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1992).

<sup>778</sup> This aspect of Scottish urban life is discussed in a number of popular history and more academic studies. For examples of the former see Faley, Jean: *Up Oor Close* (Glasgow, 1991) and Damer, Sean: *Glasgow Going for a Song* (London, 1990).

<sup>779</sup> Danny Toner: Eydmann 85.02.B6. Step and tap dancing was performed on a wooden board.

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Contrary to the evidence of other informants, Willie Smith suggests that the English concertina was quite rare in the streets, the melodeon being much more common.<sup>780</sup> However, as a professional player of the concertina, he could be saying this in an attempt to emphasise the respectability of his instrument.

Again we hear of blind concertina players working the streets:

Johnny Welsh, he played walking round the streets in the east end of Glasgow. He played from music, he played from the braille. Taylor played at the football match, at the entrances. He helped at the missions and he played at the football matches. He had to make his living with the concertina.<sup>781</sup>

An example of an itinerant concertina player in the country areas during the early years of the century was Roger Quinn, “The Tramp Poet”. Born in Dumfries in 1850, he worked for a time as a clerk before pursuing a career as a poet. He stayed in a model lodging house in Glasgow during the winter and walked the roads of the Scottish Borders during the summer, playing both flute and English concertina. His poems were published<sup>782</sup> before his death in July 1925.

The concertina was often pressed into service during periods of industrial strife and economic hardship:

Now, another skilled violin player was Jimmy Miller, from Carriden, teamed with Alex Grant (concertina), from Silver Villa opposite McNay’s Pottery. During the 1921 strike, the soup kitchens were all the go, that is when already mentioned, the men went to the mudheaps about Blackness for coal... Well, concerts were arranged up at the golf course and singers and musicians were scheduled to play their part and the “bunnets” went round the crowded audience, for collection for benefit of the soup kitchens. Alex and Jimmy rendered the sweetest music that could fall on human ear.<sup>783</sup>

Willie Smith became a “serious” concertina player in the 1920s:

The time of the [1926] miner’s strike I could earn money with that [concertina], you know. 5s or 7s or 10s it was a fortune, you know. It

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<sup>780</sup> Willie Smith: Eydmann 85.07.A17.

<sup>781</sup> David Haxton: Eydmann 84.03.A17. Elsewhere (Eydmann 84.04.A1) he recalls that Welsh could be seen “In all kinds of weather, a good player”.

<sup>782</sup> *Midnight in Yarrow and other Poems* (London, 1918). Poems were also published in *The Glasgow Herald*. See Young, Douglas (ed) *Scottish Verse 1851-1951* (Edinburgh, 1952) pp.88 and 321.

<sup>783</sup> Martin, Charles *Reminiscences: Bo’ness from 1900 to 1939: Places and Personalities* (Bo’ness, 1982) p.53.



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was a fortune during the miner's strike getting 5s, 7s and 6d for playing, maybe playin' 4, 5 hours for that.<sup>784</sup>

Similarly, Harry MacIntyre relied on his concertina to help his family get by:

I had no money at that time. We werna really well off at all. We were strugglin' to get our food without that [concertina]. That was taken right up to say, maybe, '28, '29, '30. Then I started to serve my time.<sup>785</sup>

David Haxton was able to earn money through teaching the concertina and dealing in instruments: I had unemployment too in these days in the hungry '30s, so instead of playing outdoors I could always earn cash by teaching. I was quite busy and, of course, supplied quite a number of new concertinas bought from Wheatstone and Lachenal.<sup>786</sup>

During military service in the late 1930s, while stationed in England, Danny Toner was able to earn money playing in pubs weekends. He was often accompanied by a step-dancer ("She's my Lady Love" was a favourite number) and they could often earn up to £3 in one night, much more than their 3s. per week wage.

### **Repertory and Style**

A great deal of music from the Victorian period was still represented in the popular music of the early twentieth century. Many sentimental songs, pseudo-folk songs (which had passed from the middle-class parlour into popular tradition), operatic extracts, minstrel songs and popular classics remained current and to these were added American and British military band pieces, ragtime,<sup>787</sup> jazz, music associated with emerging dance forms, film music and pieces from musicals and other stage shows. Music hall, brass bands, gramophone records and radio also had a major influence on the determination and maintenance of the concertina player's repertory.

That the "popular classics" of the Victorian period held their place well into the present century is confirmed by a programme presented by Adam MacGibbon, a concertinist from Glasgow but domiciled in the United States, at the Fredericksburg Music Club, Virginia, as late as February 1971:

Radetzky March  
Intermezzo Russe

J. Strauss  
Th. Franke

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<sup>784</sup> Willie Smith: Eydmann 85.07.A16. He played in his home area to the East of Glasgow.

<sup>785</sup> Harry MacIntyre: Eydmann 86.10.A4.

<sup>786</sup> David Haxton: Eydmann 84.04.A1.

<sup>787</sup> In "Melodies and Harmonies" *Concertina and Squeezebox* 14 and 15 (1987) pp.28-29, Frank Butler remembers London concertina players discovering ragtime: "It was brash and noisy but good fun".

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The Lost Chord	A. Sullivan
Four Chorales	J.S. Bach
Chant Sans Paroles	Tchaikovsky
Hungarian Dance No. 5	Brahms
March from Norma	Bellini
Soldier's Chorus from Faust	Gounod <sup>788</sup>

Wheatstone and Co. remained the principal publisher of concertina music throughout the first decades of the twentieth century and expanded their catalogues by adding arrangements of music hall and military band music. More representative of contemporary taste, among sight readers at least, were the six editions of English Concertina Music: A Collection of Popular Songs and Instrumental Music<sup>789</sup> published between 1905 and 1927. These were used by several of my informants and contained a wide cross section of popular music, including Victorian favourites, national airs, band marches and contemporary dances. Book 3 comprised:

Come back to Erin	Claribel
Bonnie Banks of Loch Lomond	Scottish
Gordon Highlander's Schottische	Felix Burns
Primrose Paths (Idylle)	Faulkener Brandon
Daddy Longlegs Polka	J. Warwick Moore
Sweet Auburn	Oscar Verne
Kansas Koon (Kake Kombine)	Felix Burns
Ever of Thee	Foley Hall
Danse Characteristique	Paul Ambrose
Queen of May Mazurka	Felix Burns
Beyond earth's Shadowland	Theo. Bonheur
Marche aux Flambeaux	Scotson Clark
Jessie's Dream	John Blockley
Marche des Troubadours	R. Roubier
A Song of Holiday	David D. Slater
Old Malabar Schottische	Felix Burns
Jenny's Bawbee	Scottish
The Hundred Pipers	Scottish
Good-Bye, Sweetheart	J.L. Hatton
Flowers of the Forest	J.L. Hatton

The music was clearly targeted at the serious amateur in that it demanded a reasonable level of sight reading and technical proficiency without being over demanding. This

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<sup>788</sup> Reproduced in Concertina Newsletter (5 May 1972). Adam MacGibbon played in a concertina duet with David Haxton in Glasgow during the early 1920s.

<sup>789</sup> 1s 6d. each volume. Published by J.H. Larway of London. Arranged by Faulkner Brandon.

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is illustrated by Example 10.1, an extract from the arrangement of “Jessie’s Dream”.<sup>790</sup> Example 10.2 is a contemporary version of the same piece for melodeon, the principal alternative free-reed instrument to the concertina before the rise of the modern accordion around 1930. Reflecting the limitations of the diatonic instrument, the melodeon setting is restricted to one of its “home keys” and is unable to include the two and three note chords of the concertina version.

Concertina arrangements of compositions by the military bandmaster Felix Burns were popular with many players (Alexander Prince recorded many of his tunes) and feature prominently in these collections. David Haxton, who played a number of Burns’ pieces, remembers their popularity in dance accompaniment:

S.E. : Felix Burns’ music, was that popular?

D.H.: Only amongst the third rate dance hall people (when I’m speaking about a dance hall I’m not [talking] in terms of a ballroom). Third rate dancing, working folks dance halls such as you would have in Edinburgh or Glasgow. Working people’s dance halls. Felix Burns was a very popular writer but it was orchestral writing. It wasn’t written for the concertina but they used all the tunes that were so popular.<sup>791</sup>

“The Gordon Highlanders” (Example 10.3), from Faulkner Brandon’s Book 3, is typical of the composer’s military band compositions and David Haxton can be heard paying Burns’ popular Cakewalk “Shufflin’ Samuel” on Tape Item 10.1.

Most of the players I encountered agreed that Scottish music had an important place in their repertoires. With the exception of Peter Campbell of Tomintoul in the Grampian mountains, who was mostly concerned with fiddle and bagpipe music, there was no consensus as to the limits of what could be described as “Scottish” and no one appeared to be concerned with issues of “tradition” or “authenticity”. When asked to play something Scottish, Danny Toner offered not only traditional dance music but also “My Heart Belongs to Loch Lomond”, a song made popular by Gracie Fields<sup>792</sup> and David Galloway turned to the sheet music for Hohner’s “Scottish Waltz Selection” when asked the same question. Nineteenth-century “Scotch” songs were highly popular; David Haxton played “Dark Lochnagar” and Peter McCabe had a favourite in “My Ain Folk”. Harry MacIntyre remembered both “Hame o’ Mine”<sup>793</sup> and “The Wells o’ Wearie” as “good party pieces”.

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<sup>790</sup> Book 3, p.18. Composed c.1857 as a narrative on the Relief of Lucknow, this piece remained in popular currency well into this century. The concertina version also brings in “The Campbells are Coming”, “Auld Lang Syne” and “God Save the Queen” as in the original.

<sup>791</sup> David Haxton: Eydmann 84.01.B1.

<sup>792</sup> Danny Toner: Eydmann 85.02.A1.

<sup>793</sup> Written by MacKenzie Murdoch, the noted Scottish violinist/fiddler. Murdoch toured with Harry

## JESSIE'S DREAM.

JOHN BLOCKLEY.

Moderato.

13. *p*

Distant March of Highlanders.

*pp*

*mf*

L.1029.

Example 10.1 Jessie's Dream (extract).

Source: Composed by John Blockley. Arrangement published in  
 Brandon, Faulkner English Concertina Music Book 3 (London,  
 c1914) p.18.



## TUNES FOR 19 KEYED MELODEON ONLY.

## JESSIE'S DREAM.

No 1.

Moderato.

(O) *p*

## SHE WORE A WREATH OF ROSES.

No 2.

Andante.

(I)

## OH, DEAR, WHAT CAN THE MATTER BE?

No 3.

Lively.

(I)

Melodeon Tutor.

## Example 10.2 Jessie's Dream.

Source: Composed by John Blockley. Arrangement for melodeon published in *Wyper's Melodeon Tutor* (Hamilton, n.d.) p.5.



## THE GORDON HIGHLANDERS.

Schottische.

FELIX BURNS.

3.

*mf*

*f*

*f*

*mf*

*f*

*f*

*mf*

*f*

*f*

*mf*

*f*

FINE

DC.

L. 1029.

## Example 10.3 The Gordon Highlanders.

Source: Composed by Felix Burns. Arrangement published in Brandon, Faulkner English Concertina Music Book 3 (London, c1914) p.2.

### *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

The traditional dance music in the repertoires of my urban informants was limited to a few well known dance tunes such as “The Deil Amang the Tailors”, “Dashing White Sergeant” and “The Soldier’s Joy”, thus suggesting a very utilitarian approach to dance accompaniment. Again there was no desire for “purity” and Scottish dance music was often played in medleys with tunes from the minstrel and other “foreign” traditions as in David Haxton’s quickstep version of “Yankee Doodle” (Example 10.4) which he played together with versions of “The Bluebells of Scotland” and “Caller Herrin”. His variation of the first strain played in sixths is worthy of note. The compositions of the stage fiddler, James Scott Skinner, already referred to in my chapter on music hall, were also popular, particularly with sight readers. David Haxton recalled how he would work through Skinner’s The Scottish Violinist (he called it “the pink book”) playing from sight, and David Steele of Musselburgh, who played only from written music, numbered Skinner’s airs among his favourites.

Novelty pieces had a special place in the music of amateur players and many had their own versions of “The Bells” or bagpipe imitations. David Haxton played banjo imitations on his miniature concertina by using very rapid bellows movements to suggest a plectrum hitting the strings.

Polyphony was an important element in the playing of most of my informants and single line playing was regarded as somewhat inadequate. I have already related Danny Toner’s desire to play harmony. Similarly, Victor Kersley noted how: My mother was anxious that I should, eh, play an instrument and she got me to have violin lessons, which I didn’t want very much because the violin was only one part and I was far more interested in, eh, chords and accompaniment and various parts rather than the single part.<sup>794</sup>

Victor expressed the view that the ease of playing chords on the concertina encouraged this:

I think in these days people found it very easy to play. You could play a common chord, you got 3 notes on one side and one note on the other and very often my experience was that they weren’t very musical but they could get a tune, a fair amount of volume and some accompaniment from a concertina although I wouldn’t say they always played the right chords... If you stick to common chords that’s so easy. It may be that there was something in that.<sup>795</sup>

Rich, chordal playing was found in the music of “ear players” as well as sight readers, as can be seen in Example 10.5, Peter McCabe’s version of “Mary of

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Lauder from 1897. Lauder made a successful commercial recording of the song in the 1920s: Baker, Darrell and Kiner, Larry F. The Harry Lauder Discography (London, 1990 p.71).

<sup>794</sup> Victor Kersley: Eydmann 86.04.A4.

<sup>795</sup> Victor Kersley: Eydmann 86.04.A7.



*played ABA'B*      *tempo ♩ = 104*

A

B

*slows second time*

A'

Example 10.4 Yankee Doodle.

Source: As played by David Haxton. Transcribed by Stuart Eydmann from tape 86.07.A1.

tempo ♩ = 60

slower

Example 10.5 Mary of Argyle.  
Source: As played by Peter McCabe, transcribed by Stuart Eydmann from tape Eydmann 84.02.A1.

## *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

Argyle”.<sup>796</sup> Peter uses chords (selected for ergonomic as much as musical reasons) to mark the ends of each line, a stylistic element developed in his sacred work to assist him lead communal singing. Again, the Highland musician Peter Campbell was an exception, his relatively unadorned style reflecting the monodic tradition of Scottish music. His approach to playing “The Dark Island”<sup>797</sup> (Example 10.6) exploits a different aesthetic which prefers the stark simplicity of the melody, part of the more conservative, rural tradition.

### **Popular Dance**

I have already touched on the subject of the English concertina as an instrument of dance accompaniment. The period under consideration here saw major changes in fashions in social dance and it is possible to chart the use of the concertina within these, using oral evidence.

Before the First World War, dance was a highly popular social activity. In Scotland, traditional dance and music remained important in both the rural and urban areas where “penny dances” were held in small halls and private houses at which “lads and lasses... paid their pennies to dance to the music of a wheezy concertina or a squeaky fiddle”.<sup>798</sup>

The make up of bands reflected the scale and status of the event and varied from formal dance orchestras through to ad- hoc groups which often combined “traditional” instruments with newer, more fashionable ones. Although it might be assumed that the concertina was more of an urban instrument, there is some evidence of its use for traditional dance in country areas in the early part of the century. Flett and Flett record a concertina player, Mr. Alexander Montgomery, playing for dancing in the Strathglass area around 1907<sup>799</sup> and there is a photograph of a dance band featuring piano, two violins and English concertina in the village of Kirkconnel in South West Scotland.<sup>800</sup> Peter Campbell’s family had a concertina-based dance band which played around the Tomintoul area:

P.C.:                    Yes. There was “Campbell’s Dancing Band” which consisted of my grandfather, my father and my uncle. They were, eh, he had two brothers that also played it. My father’s family were five sons and five daughters

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<sup>796</sup> C.f. Example 5.4.

<sup>797</sup> Composed by the button accordion player Iain MacLachlan of Benbecula and published by Essex Music Limited in 1963. This air has become a Scottish “classic”.

<sup>798</sup> From Urie, John *Reminiscences* quoted by King, Elspeth “Popular Culture in Glasgow” in R.A. Cage (ed.) *The Working Class in Glasgow 1750-1914* (London, 1987) p.162.

<sup>799</sup> Flett J.M. and T.M. *Traditional Dancing in Scotland* (London, 1964) p.294.

<sup>800</sup> Print, c.1920, supplied by Ian Kirkpatrick, Glasgow. Origin unknown.



*The Life and Times of the Concertina*

and three out of the five played the concertina, and at  
one time they had this concertina dance band.

Cooke.: Campbell's?

P.C.: Aye, father and two sons.

Cooke. : All playing concertina?

P.C.: Yes. No drums.

Cooke.: No fiddle?

P.C.: All concertina.

Cooke.: Good. What sort of dances then? It was the old Scottish  
dances, of course? Eightsomes?

P.C.: Eightsome reels, quadrilles.

Cooke.: Lancers?

P.C.: The Lancers, highland schottische, polkas, all these  
kind...<sup>801</sup>

Willie Smith played for dancing in the mining area of Mount Vernon to the East of  
Glasgow during the 1920s:

W.S.: In those days I just played what they called "wee gigs".  
You know, wee dances. I mean everybody danced in  
those days.

S.E.: Did you play for the dancing?

W.S.: All the time.

S.E.: Was that old time dancing?

W.S.: Old time dancing and new dances. I mean, it wasna the  
type of music that they're using today and the

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<sup>801</sup> Peter Campbell: Eydmann 83.01.A4. Interviewed by Peter Cooke.

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teeny<sup>802</sup> was a great wee instrument [for] smashin' out a' the stuff.<sup>803</sup>

As a matter of fact, I got married at that time. I was earning that [much] money. 12s and 6d for a night in those days.

S.E.: Was that in halls?

W.S.: No, dance bands. Wee dance bands. 4- piece dance bands.

S.E.: What would be in that, a piano?

W.S.: Piano, violin of course, English concertina, double bass and [or] drums. Plenty of melody, everybody loved melody.

S.E.: Did you play Scottish music as well?

W.S.: Oh aye! I played a' the Scottish music. Oh dear aye.<sup>804</sup>

Harry MacIntyre, from the East End of Glasgow also played for dancing at the time:

S.E.: What sort of places would you play in?

H.M.: It was just local things. It would just be a wee hall, maybe. The biggest one we ever had it was, something in those days, that was a "late-night" and we got 15s each for playing from 8 o'clock to 2 o'clock in the mornin'. Of course you got your tea in the interval but the average was maybe 10 bob, 12 bob.<sup>805</sup>

S.E.: So it was not unusual to see a concertina on the stage in a dance band?

H.M.: Oh no. No. You see the accordion hadn't come into its own then. It was a melodeon that led onto the accordion. The melodeon was the one that was quite

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<sup>802</sup> Concertina.

<sup>803</sup> Willie Smith: Eydmann 85.07.A1.

<sup>804</sup> Willie Smith: Eydmann 85.07.A11.

<sup>805</sup> Harry MacIntyre: Eydmann 86.10.04.

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common if ye went to a wee dance or a wee “jiggin” as it was called - just coppers to get in. It would be a melodeon or a dulcimer or a concertina but there would be no drum or no piano. If it was a “late-night” they would try and get a pianist and maybe a drummer of a kind and the pianist often couldna play, just he could vamp and he could keep goin’ wi’ the vamp and kept it goin’.

S.E.: The dulcimer was popular in Glasgow?

H.M.: Oh very popular. Aye, ‘cause I, even after I, when I was serving my trade I used to make the sticks for them ‘cause they broke, you know, and they were made wi’ teak.<sup>806</sup>

Willie Smith remembers the place of the dulcimer in the dance band before it was abandoned with the rise of more fashionable instruments:

W.S. The dulcimer? Yes that was right, it was played. That’s what a dance band was you know. There wasna even a drummer in those days.

Dulcimer, melodeon, Oh yes, because the dulcimer was the wee hammers, you know, he had the wee hammers in his hands, he made his own hammers. Well you would always get the 8 in a bar if it was the 4 in the bar movement; da-dy da-dy da-dy da-dy. The dulcimer, jumpin’ up and down, Oh aye, it was good stuff. I liked it but it was dyin’ when I went to it. The concertina knocked that out. Concertina, piano and violin. That put the dulcimer and the melodeon out. People went for the ‘posh band’; violin, concertina, piano and we introduced the drums. Oh well it was marvelous.

“Have ye got drums in yer band?” [They would say.]

“Aye”[He would reply.]

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<sup>806</sup> Willie Smith: Eydmann 86.10.15.

tempo ♩ = 66

slower

slower

slower

slower

etc..

Example 10.6 The Dark Island.

Source: Composed by Iain Maclachlan, 1963. As played by Pete Campbell, transcribed by Stuart Eydmann from field recording by Peter Cooke in School of Scottish Studies archive.

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“[Then] We’ll gie ye a job!”<sup>807</sup>

After 1910, new forms of dance became widely known in Britain. The popularity of American music and dance, such as the cakewalk, which had been known in Scottish music halls since the early years of the century, was boosted through ragtime revues and the introduction of dances such as the Boston, Bunny Hug and Tango.

The 1914-18 War was a time of widespread change in the social, economic and moral life of Britain and this had important effects upon dancing and its musical accompaniment. “Modern” dancing became a form of mass recreation in the cities of Scotland:

Almost more important, and like the cinema a “mixed” activity was “The Dancing”, which gripped Scotland in the 1920s and only died with the ballroom style in the 1960s. Young men in their “paraffin” - three-piece suits and slicked down hair -and girls would flock, up to six nights a week, to huge dance halls. Glasgow had 30; in some you could dance for six hours for sixpence. Liquor was banned and there wasn’t much sex around; the stress was on skill and style -a classy evening out for the poor and unemployed... The halls were in the main fiercely respectable.<sup>808</sup>

Dance music of a syncopated nature became the norm (at least in non-traditional dance) and the foxtrot and quickstep came into fashion. The English concertina was suitable for the playing of both traditional and new dance forms:

Oh it’s ideal for Irish jigs and the quadrilles as you say and military two-step, Boston two-step, all these things that were out at that time because you had to get the noise, you had to belt it out and the time, you had to keep perfect time.<sup>809</sup>

It could also handle the chromatic arrangements of modern dance with appropriate smoothness and dynamics and was particularly suited to those styles of Latin-American music which used the bandonion, a form of German concertina, in their native contexts. David Haxton:

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<sup>807</sup> Willie Smith: Eydmann 85.07.A14. By “the 8 in a bar if it was the 4 in the bar movement” he means

His reference to “posh bands” echoes that of Scan Tester “I didn’t play many posh dances”, the title of the biography of this notable player of the Anglo-German concertina.

<sup>808</sup> Harvie, *No Gods...*, p.121.

<sup>809</sup> Harry MacIntyre: Eydmann 86.10.A15.



### *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

In those days before the accordion actually got well known on the Continent, France and these places, in ballroom dancing the tango was a great dance. You've heard of the tango and the concertina was a famous instrument for giving tone to the tango and the bands that played for the tango, often you got a good concertina player who could bring in the tango effects from the reeds. It was famous for that.<sup>810</sup>

Harry MacIntyre emphasised the value of the volume of the concertina in the busy dance hall:

I had a small band myself. The piano, myself [English concertina], the piano and violin and we used to play for dances. In those days you had no microphones, you really had to belt it out but it was mostly eightsome reels, quadrilles and military two-step, old time waltz -that was before the quickstep and before the sax came on the scene.<sup>811</sup>

With the introduction of popular American dances and the emergence of more formal bands and arrangements, playing demanded a high degree of literacy, as Willie Smith recalled:

S.E.:           What about the music? Did you play from concertina music?

W.S.:           No, anything at all. Anything written in the treble clef, or if it as written in the bass clef you had to play it too.

If you went to a job they just gave you a book with maybe 200 tunes in it. You know, different tunes and they'd say play number 66 and 84 and you just got them out the package and you put them up and played them.<sup>812</sup>

During the 1920s it was normal to play from published band parts. Harry MacIntyre:

I remember deputising concertina and the concertina player who lived across the road from me and... he knew I played and he took ill on the Friday and his wife came over in an awful state.

“Would I play in his place?”

And eh, I could read the music you know and I said “Oh aye, I'd go and play in your place.”

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<sup>810</sup> David Haxton: Eydmann 84.01.B1.

<sup>811</sup> Harry MacIntyre: Eydmann 86.10.04.

<sup>812</sup> Willie Smith: Eydmann 85.07.A20.

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At that time they was eh, different music companies like Keith Prowse, Francis Day and Hunter; it was four of them. And you could send, you could join as a semi-professional if you like, pay a fee and they sent you new numbers as they came out and you would maybe get 4 numbers maybe, every month or two a month, something like that. You got them sent periodically and often we had numbers before anybody had them at all, before they became popular. And so it happened that this time the number that was out, [that] was all the rage was “Valencia”. It was a quickstep and I said “We’ll take this”. We went over and saw the fella and I said “I can play this one. That will be one I can play myself with confidence”... I could read the music and I got by and I played and that was my first “late-night” that I played with a decent concertina. So all you would get then, I think it was 10 bob we got at that time.<sup>813</sup>

Dances could be long and the musician required a large repertory to vary the evening. They also had to cope with rapid changes in the popularity of different tunes and dances.

Although the above evidence suggests that the dance band format was fluid, often adhoc depending on the local availability of musicians, it became more standardised in time. Harry MacIntyre remembers:

It was quite common that a concertina, sometimes trumpet, violin/trumpet, just for the noise to get ... plenty of noise, but it was quite common, the concertina.<sup>814</sup>

The pianist, I might tell you, wisna a pianist. All he could do was give you a vamp. He just kept (the) vamp going you know, but the violinist was a good violinist and then we had a trumpeter that came with us occasionally you know. That was noise too, just for the quadrilles and the eightsome reels.<sup>815</sup>

In time, the concertina fell out of fashion. Danny Toner spoke of how it lost its place in “real [i.e. modern] dance bands” but remained in the adhoc local bands. During the 1930s, the saxophone and accordion became the principal melody instruments in many bands at the expense of the concertina:

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<sup>813</sup> Harry MacIntyre: Eydmann 86.10.A7. The reminiscences of Smith and MacIntyre describe a culture of music and dance with many parallels to that of the Co. Durham English concertina player Gordon Cutty (born c.1900) who was recorded by Neil Wayne in the early 1970s. See Wayne, Neil “The Concertina Revival, Part 1” in *Folk News* (March 1974) pp.9-10 and the disc *A Grand Old Fashioned Dance* (Free Reed Records, 006), 1977.

<sup>814</sup> Harry MacIntyre: Eydmann 86.10.07.

<sup>815</sup> Harry MacIntyre: Eydmann 86.10.16.

## *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

What killed it was the accordion coming in, then the sax. The band format changed to sax and the violin of course and the trumpet and the drums. That became the band, then the cycle changed.<sup>816</sup>

As the American material began to spread within and from the cities, there was a conscious “revival” in Scottish dance in an attempt to rescue and preserve older forms. This was driven by an ideology which rejected foreign (and seemingly non-respectable) modern dance, while seeking to elevate native music and dance into a performance art. One writer of 1932 summed up the aims:

For years, reel and strathspey societies have been meeting through the winter - usually a great majority of fiddlers with one or two bass fiddlers - skirling away to their heart's content, but with result more pleasing to the music makers than to the discriminating listener. The arrangements of the old airs for more than one performer have been hitherto sadly lacking in musicianship; but the advent of the Scottish Country Dance Society is likely to put this class of music on a sounder basis, and the young musicians of the new generation will be able to experience this part of the groundwork of the national musical heritage presented in a better and more palatable form.<sup>817</sup>

The foundation of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society led to a standardisation of traditional dance forms, prescribed tempi and an officially endorsed repertory. Dance band form and repertory was also influenced by the B.B.C. (there were regular broadcasts of dance music on the Scottish Home Service) and by gramophone recordings, so that, by the 1940s, a standard Scottish country dance band centred on the accordion had emerged. By 1940, the concertina had no place in dance bands, no matter what market they catered for.

### **The Rise of the Modern Accordion**

Then yer accordions came on and started. The big piano accordion; it was bloody useless!<sup>818</sup>

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<sup>816</sup> Harry MacIntyre: Eydmann 86.10.15.

<sup>817</sup> Thomson, David Cleghorn (ed.) *Scotland in Quest of her Youth* (Edinburgh, 1932) pp.126-7.

<sup>818</sup> Alexander MacLaren: Eydmann 86.05.A11. This statement is intended as a derogation of the accordion.

### *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

Despite Alexander MacLaren's strong views on the dominance of the modern accordion during the 1930s, it was the fact that it was so useful which led to a rise in its popularity at the expense of other instruments, including the concertina.

Throughout the late nineteenth and the first decades of the present century, the English concertina co-existed with the melodeon, the instruments catering mainly for different sectors. As illustrated earlier, the melodeon (which attracted many players, including a number of outstanding players of traditional dance music) was limited to the performance of more basic music. Willie Smith:

You saw the melodeon. If you can remember the old 16 (is it 18?) key melodeons. I don't mean the accordion, I mean the old, what Dan Wyper, Peter Wyper played. They were great players. Wonderful players at their instrument but their instrument would not be tolerated today, 'cause they could not go into any keys. They were stuck in the sharp keys, what they call the sharp keys, Gs and Ds.<sup>819</sup>

The melodeon also lacked the benefit of the layers of associations with respectability and "rational recreation" enjoyed by the English concertina.

During the 1920s, however, more sophisticated button accordions with a fuller, richer sound and extended bass keyboards came onto the market in Scotland. Many such accordions, particularly those manufactured in Italy, were in bright colours and had decorative metal panels or patterns outlined in gems which conveyed a sense of decadent modernity. These ostentatious instruments attracted musicians away from the conservative concertina and melodeon and competed with the domestic piano as symbols of conspicuous consumption. The modern accordion was promoted vigorously. Forbes of Dundee, for instance, used a variety of methods to promote the accordion, including film advertisements in cinemas, appearances at agricultural shows, concerts by "world champions" and home demonstrations. The early 1930s also saw a rise in the popularity of the piano accordion which was already in use by soloists and adopted into many "big bands".

The new instruments gave the accordionist access to the full range of music previously enjoyed by the concertina but denied the player of the melodeon. Their volume was greater than other free-reed instruments, they had facilities for the couplings of reeds to give some variety of timbre and the left hand manual offered fixed chords as well as bass notes.

The piano accordion gave direct access to piano scores (for the right hand) and took on some of the piano's "rational recreation" associations. The British College of Accordionists was established during the 1930s to validate teachers and administer competitions and examinations across a national network. By the 1940s, the modern

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<sup>819</sup> Willie Smith: Eydmann 85.07.A17.

### *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

accordion had found its way into the standard dance band format associated with the Scottish Country Dance and manufacturers developed a distinct “Scottish” tuning (actually a “mistuning”) of the multiple reeds which gave the instrument its distinct sound. The dance band broadcasts of the B.B.C. Scottish Home Service further endorsed the accordion as an instrument of Scottish music. In the words of Alexander MacLaren:

My father was the best at that for dancing because he was clean fingered. Jigs, Irish Jigs, Kerr’s books o’ music, a’ the jigs and schottisches, spot on. That was just at the end o’ it. See, the radio and the accordion killed this [the concertina].<sup>820</sup>

Just as the concertina suited the cramped housing conditions and dependence on foot and public transport which was universal among the working classes well into the 1930s, the rise of the large accordion was coupled to improved housing conditions and the rise of private transport.

It is not surprising, therefore, to hear concertina players blaming the rise of the large modern accordion for a decline in the fortunes of their own instrument. Willie Smith:

It seemed to die a death. The big accordion got in... the accordion got in. The people were enamoured. The size of it and the big raucous sounds that could come out of it. You know, pulling it out and pushing it in. But you could never drown this [the concertina] ‘cause it has its own sound. If you had ten accordions one concertina would have been heard... against the ten of them, ‘cause of the sound that comes out of it, you know.<sup>821</sup>

and David Haxton:

It was a great instrument. You see, the accordion and a’ that, the accordion did a lot of harm, and the saxophone, especially the accordion. When the accordion came in it could give you such a wonderful box of reeds and it was so much easier learned than the concertina. With the stops on the accordion you could get octaves.<sup>822</sup>

During the 1930s, Lachenal and Co. recognised the threat from the new accordions when they produced their accordeophone, an “instrument combining the lightness of

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<sup>820</sup> Alexander MacLaren: Eydmann 86.06.A2. He refers to Kerr’s Collection of Merry Melodies for the Violin, issued in several parts in Glasgow c.1880. These large volumes, which are still in print, had a significant influence on popular and traditional music making in Scotland which is largely ignored by the standard works on the fiddle tradition.

<sup>821</sup> Willie Smith: Eydmann 85.07.A5.

<sup>822</sup> David Haxton: Eydmann 84.01.A9.



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the English concertina with the tone of a piano accordion".<sup>823</sup> The instrument had a standard English concertina keyboard but there were three sets of reeds tuned in the accordion fashion. This invention failed and the company collapsed a short time later.

The broader socio-economic context was that, during the period 1924-1935, there was a general drop in domestic music making which was reflected in changes in musical instrument purchase. Consumer expenditure on musical goods (instruments and sheet music) in Great Britain fell by one half while expenditure on all other household goods increased, including the sale of radios and gramophones which multiplied four times.<sup>824</sup> In a contracting market for musical instruments it was the most fashionable and versatile - in Scotland, the accordion and saxophone - which won the day.

### **Status and Decline**

By the middle of this century, the status of the concertina was at its lowest. The instrument's use in bands, music hall and evangelicalism, had largely disappeared and, with the exception of a few surviving pockets of use by older players, the instrument was largely abandoned. Writing in Glasgow in 1944, one writer could state:

Concertinas cost from £10, though a second-hand one can be bought for from £3. There is only a limited market for them, and they are chiefly used for accompanying country dancing and by the Salvation Army. The German Concertina... is much cheaper. A small one costs about 5s.<sup>825</sup>

The 1954 edition of The Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians summed up the contemporary view of "classical" musicians about the free-reed instruments:

...the accordion and concertina, instruments which produce quite the most unpleasant musical sound ever devised by the inventor's and instrument maker's ingenuity, so far as we can tell from instruments still in use.<sup>826</sup>

The decline in popularity of the concertina in the late 1930s was reflected in the fortunes of the principal manufacturers. Lachenal went out of business in the 1930s, Wheatstone and Co. continued only to have its activities redirected for the war effort in the 1940s, while the family concern of H. Crabb and Son. managed to survive on orders from abroad, particularly South Africa. There was an inevitable decline in the

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<sup>823</sup> Specification published in The Concertina Newsletter (6 July 1972) pp.7-8.

<sup>824</sup> Ehrlich, The Piano..., p.189.

<sup>825</sup> Scott, Mary Margareta What can I Play: A Book About Musical Instruments (London, 1944) p.51.

<sup>826</sup> Vol V, (1954), p.919.

### *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

supporting infrastructure in Scotland and the loss of retailers, tuners and repairers meant that instruments went without attention and were abandoned.

The final blows came with the disruption of the Second World War and its aftermath. The post-war period heralded new fashions and comprehensive urban redevelopment and planned decentralisation broke up the old communities<sup>827</sup> with drastic consequences for social institutions and their musical activities. The new attitudes of the post-1945 period, however, also contained the seeds of a revival of interest in the concertina as discussed in the following chapter.

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<sup>827</sup> Most of my Glasgow informants moved from inner city tenement housing to suburban estates in the 1950s or 60s.

## Twentieth Century Revivals

### Introduction

The foregoing chapters contain a recurring theme: adoption of the concertina followed in time by a decline in use or abandonment. Here, by contrast, I wish to concentrate on revivals of interest in the instrument during the present century. Firstly, I examine the limited use of the concertina by a small number of composers and “classical” performers; these were historically quite separate from those of the mid-nineteenth century musicians discussed earlier. I then concentrate on the endorsement and rehabilitation of the instrument within the English folk song and dance revival of the early decades of the century. Next I consider the consolidation and promotion of concertina playing under the influence of the International Concertina Association from the 1950s onwards. This is followed by an examination of the more recent “second folk music revival” and in particular the peak of “concertina consciousness” which occurred throughout the British Isles during the 1970s. This section includes consideration of the revival of the instrument in Scotland.

The period under consideration is rich in source material. The folk music revivals of the present century have recently attracted a critical literature<sup>828</sup> which, together with vast amounts of information contained in contemporary journals, articles and recordings, allows the course of concertina adoption to be charted and understood in some detail. The International Concertina Association has an extensive archive and has published a regular newsletter since the 1950s. These sources contain much material of interest and offer great potential for future study by others. In tackling the more recent period and in addressing the Scottish context, I have once more made use of oral evidence and musical examples recorded in the field.

Revival is recognised as a major concept by writers on ethnomusicology. Kartomi, for example, talks of “nativistic musical revival”<sup>829</sup> and Nettl<sup>830</sup> includes

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<sup>828</sup> E.g. Harker, Dave *One for the Money: Politics and Popular Song* (London, 1980) and *Fakesong: the Manufacture of British ‘Folksong’, 1700 to the Present Day* (Milton Keynes, 1985), MacNaughton, Adam “The Folk Music Revival in Scotland” in Cowan, Edward (ed.) *The People’s Past* (Edinburgh, 1980) pp.191-205, Munro, Ailie *The Folk Music Revival in Scotland* (London, 1984) and Boyes, Georgina *The Imagined Village: Culture, Ideology and the English Folk Revival*, (Manchester, 1993).

<sup>829</sup> Kartomi, Margaret “The Processes and Results of Musical Culture Contact: A Discussion of Terminology and Concepts” *Ethnomusicology* 25 (1981) p.237.

<sup>830</sup> Nettl, Bruno “Some Aspects of the History of World Music in the Twentieth Century: Questions, Problems and Concepts” *Ethnomusicology* 22 (January 1978) pp.131-134.

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“preservation”, “consolidation”, “reintroduction” and “exaggeration” as potentially key elements in musical change. As Bohlman<sup>831</sup> has explained, musical revival is invariably a large and complex process, of which the performance of music from an earlier period is only part. Musical instruments are highly implicated in such processes, as this chapter demonstrates.

### **The English Concertina on the Concert Platform**

Less than a year ago, had you buttonholed that ubiquitous individual of the long ears and short memory -”the man in the street” -and told him that a London West-End audience would ever listen spell-bound to a recital of high-class music on the concertina he would probably have recommended you to undergo a rest-cure.<sup>832</sup>

Although, by the late nineteenth century, the concertina virtuoso had abandoned the concert platform for the music hall, the early twentieth century saw the emergence of at least one notable “serious” player: Miss Christine Hawkes.

Miss Hawkes was trained as a concert pianist and took up the concertina solely as a hobby by studying Regondi’s “Concertina Exercises”. After a debut at Stratford-upon-Avon, she gave her first full recital at Steinway Hall, London, in November 1907 and attracted both curiosity and critical acclaim. This was followed by a second concert in January 1908 which led to her being “inundated with offers from musical agents and shoals of letters from people anxious to learn the concertina”.<sup>833</sup> The concert was reported thus:

“A Second Evening with the English Concertina” was the somewhat strange form of announcement with which Miss Christine Hawkes drew a large number of people to the Steinway Hall last night. But the entertainment itself was distinctly pleasant, because Miss Hawkes certainly makes the very best of her opportunities. The concertina is an instrument without a personality; that is to say, there is nothing in the whole of music which it can do better than any other instrument. At best it can but copy the tone of the clarinet and the phrasing of the violin; at worst it is a reproduction of the harmonium played in single notes with the “expression” stop used indiscriminately. Miss Hawkes generally keeps the instrument at its best, and only very occasionally did a spasmodic crescendo on a low note remind us of its worst possibilities. In smooth cantabile music -for example, the slow

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<sup>831</sup> Bohlman, Phillip V. *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World* (Bloomington, Indianapolis, 1988) pp.125-26, 130-31, 134.

<sup>832</sup> Fraser, Norman “The Cult of the English Concertina: A Chat with Miss Christine Hawkes” *Cassell’s Magazine* (July 1908) p.159.

<sup>833</sup> *Ibid.*

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movement of Wieniawski's Second Violin Concerto and Saint-Saens' "Le Cygne" -her playing was quite enjoyable and intelligence of phrasing and clear articulation of rapid passages were remarkable elsewhere when the tone was less pleasant.<sup>834</sup>

From the evidence available, it would appear that, in her revival of the instrument, Hawkes had rejected the Victorian concertina repertory in favour of that of established melodic instruments such as the violin and flute. In this she was close to the Russian school of English concertina playing mentioned in Chapter 4.0. Little is known of her further career other than the following few references.

The English composer Joseph Holbrooke (1878-1958) used the concertina in several of his pieces in the early twentieth century. His dramatic "The Bells" was premiered at the first Birmingham Music Festival in 1906, with Christine Hawkes as soloist. This employed a large orchestra, bells, percussion and chorus. The work comprises four parts, each exploiting bell sounds, with the concertina making an entrance in the second following an "animated figure from the woodwind, which, after attaining an explosive energy, calms down into an eloquent passage descriptive of the swinging and ringing of wedding bells".<sup>835</sup> As previous chapters have shown, the production of bell effects on the concertina was a common feature in amateur and music hall playing.

Holbrooke's opera "Dylan" (Op. 53), premiered in 1909 at the Queen's Hall, London, under Sir Thomas Beecham, used two English concertinas to provide chords and drone-like effects along with the woodwind. His operetta "Pierrot and Pierrette" (Op. 36) of the same year used two treble and one baritone concertinas.

The composer's interest in unorthodox orchestration may have resulted from his upbringing as his father was a music hall pianist and Holbrooke himself spent part of his early career working in the music halls and conducting spa orchestras. Holbrooke's adoption of the English concertina can also be explained by the fact that he was "a vigorous, even violent, controversialist in support of British music"<sup>836</sup> who was "prepared to acknowledge that the folklore ideal was a legitimate way of asserting British uniqueness in music".<sup>837</sup> He was, however, at odds with the specifically English musical revival in his adherence to the literary revivals of the Celtic countries.

Percy Grainger (1882-1961), who was more directly linked to British folk music through an involvement in the first folk song revival, also used the English concertina

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<sup>834</sup> The Times (17 January 1908) p.8.

<sup>835</sup> Cowe, George Joseph Holbrooke and his Work (London, 1920) p.158.

<sup>836</sup> Scholes, Percy Oxford Companion to Music (Oxford, 1938) (1977 edition) p.48. Holbrooke was, like Grainger, an advocate of the saxophone also.

<sup>837</sup> Stradling, Robert and Hughes, Meirion The English Musical Renaissance 1860-1940: Construction and Deconstruction (London, 1993) p.168.



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in a number of works. Grainger's "elastic" attitude to scoring, which allowed unusual combinations of instruments, was backed by his statement: "do not let us discard any instrument, or usage of it, without a fair trial".<sup>838</sup> In his "Shepherd's Hey", based on a Morris dance tune collected by Cecil Sharp, a baritone English concertina is given a solo in a band of 8 strings, flute, clarinet and horns. In "Bold William Taylor" of 1908, built on a setting of a song collected from a traditional singer in 1906, a solo voice is accompanied by 2 clarinets, 6 strings and an English concertina. "Scotch Strathspey and Reel" (British Folk Music Settings Nos. 28, 1901-11) has a baritone concertina along with guitars, strings, woodwind and male voices. A surviving concert programme confirms that Christine Hawkes played baritone concertina in the 1912 performance of the last mentioned.<sup>839</sup>

In the United States, Charles Ives (1874-1954) used an English concertina and chorus of accordions in a large orchestra in his "Orchestral Set No.2" of 1911-14. This piece is in three movements:

1. An Elegy to Our Fathers.<sup>840</sup>
2. The Rock Strewn Hills join the Peoples' Outdoor Meeting.
3. From Hanover Square North at the end of a tragic day (1915) the voice of the people again rose.

In this work, the composer's use of the free-reed instruments can be seen as suggesting primitivism, homeliness and nostalgia, while acknowledging a debt to American sacred music and amateur domestic music making.

Although her "classical" concertina playing was somewhat anachronistic, Hawkes managed to carry the idea of the English concertina as a "serious" instrument into the twentieth century. The limited endorsement by composers added to this and pointed the way to popular revivals later in the century.

### **The Concertina in the English Folk Music and Dance Revival 1900-1945**

It can be said that the folk song revival had its roots in the work of early collectors, editors and publishers working in Scotland and Ireland in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. However, it is the activities of certain key individuals in England in the second half of the last century which is normally taken to herald the revival proper. These are credited with having "first revealed to the musical world the

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<sup>838</sup> Quoted in Bird, John Percy Grainger (London, 1976) p.291.

<sup>839</sup> Grainger's "Folk Music Settings" was played at the Aeolian Hall, London on 28 May 1912: Bird, Percy Grainger, endpapers.

<sup>840</sup> The slow opening movement was originally entitled "An Elegy for Stephen Foster" after "the only American composer for whom Ives had unqualified enthusiasm": Bruce, Neely Ives and Nineteenth Century American Music (Chicago, 1977) p.30.

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fact that the English countryside was still vocal<sup>841</sup> and with paving the way for the establishment of the Folk Song Society in 1898 and its subsequent development. In identifying material for preservation, these collectors were highly selective, applying criteria which privileged that thought to be ancient, uncorrupted, rural, authentic and non-vulgar. In addition to simply recording and publishing their findings, they also sought to “re-propagate” them through choral, sacred, school and other “rational” musical institutions, as it was strongly felt that native folk song could be a valuable resource in musical education. Others, such as Percy Grainger, whose use of the concertina was discussed above, exploited the symbolic as well as the melodic potential of the material in their own artistic compositions.

Cecil Sharp, who was probably the most influential of the mediators of English folk song in the early twentieth century, was also responsible for the collection and promotion of traditional English folk dance in both its ritual and social forms. Harker has argued<sup>842</sup> that Sharp’s work was tied to an ideology which embraced the romantic notion of a “Merrie England” of times past. Folk song and dance were seen as tangible links with this past which offered great potential in the development of a new “national” musical culture to balance prevailing continental influence at the “art” level and to counter the Americanisation and commercialisation of popular taste. As with song collecting, only “authentic” dance practices were given attention, and as a result whole areas of popular dance and its music were ignored as modern, corrupt or foreign.

Sharp’s first encounter with “folk dance” was through the performance of a Morris team at Headington Quarry, Oxfordshire in 1899. The group was led by one William Kimber (1872-1961)<sup>843</sup> who was recognised by Sharp not only as a major source of information on dance and its music but also as a model of the tradition-bearer; a valuable missing link with the romantic past:

What Kimber had from his father and his father before him was the experience and technique of a skilled craft handed down, as if through a guild, from the Middle Ages, and stretching far back before that to the secret societies which practiced the medicine religions that conditioned life in England before Christendom.<sup>844</sup>

Kimber, who played for the dance on an Anglo-German concertina, was to become an emblem of the “second folk- revival”.<sup>845</sup> At first glance, however, his adoption by Sharp as a “source” musician is contradictory on a number of counts. Firstly, rather

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<sup>841</sup> Scholes, *The Mirror...*, p.782. See also Karpeles, Maud “England II: Folk Music” in *NGDMM* Vol. 6, pp.185-7.

<sup>842</sup> Harker, *Fakesong*, pp.172-197.

<sup>843</sup> Chaundy T.W. “William Kimber: A Portrait” *JEFDSS* Vol.VIII, No.4 (1959) pp.203-11. and “William Kimber Obituary (1872-1961)” *JEFDSS* Vol.IX, No.3 (1962).

<sup>844</sup> Kennedy, Douglas *English Folk Dancing Today and Yesterday* (London, 1964) p.44.

<sup>845</sup> *The Topic Catalogue of Recorded Folk Music* (London, 1978) p.28.

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than being of ancient pedigree, Kimber's Morris group had been revived only some months before Sharp's visit through the encouragement of a local antiquarian, the original side having disbanded over a decade earlier. Secondly, Kimber was a relatively young man (around 27 years when he met Sharp) and, thirdly, he played a modern instrument with urban connotations. These included several against which the revival was set, such as music hall and popular dance, and which hardly fitted the concertina for recognition as a "modern substitute for the one-handed pipe and tabor, the one man band familiar in Shakespeare's day".<sup>846</sup> Sharp's judgement was not, however, totally ill founded. The main source of Kimber's art was his father William Kimber Senior, the retired foreman of an original Morris side which had danced as far back as 1847 and who had frequently provided its musical accompaniment on fiddle or concertina (he also played penny whistle in the local drum and fife band).

William junior remained active throughout the first half of the present century and from recordings of his playing<sup>847</sup> we can hear his fluid facility in dance accompaniment and a mastery of the Anglo-German concertina's capability for giving a rhythmical "lift" to the music. We also find the use of the full repertory of techniques peculiar to the instrument, such as unison playing and playing in thirds, discussed in Chapter 6.0 where it was also noted that the use of the Anglo-German concertina and diatonic button accordion in traditional dance was compatible with, and may even have had stylistic links with, older country fiddling practice. Styles and methods of folk dance accompaniment have, in any event, always been subject to change. It is likely that the instrumental preferences for dance accompaniment were never standardised at any time or in any location. One survey<sup>848</sup> of illustrations of the May-day dance at Padstow, Cornwall, from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, for example, found a variety of seemingly ad hoc musical instrument combinations, with the melodeon appearing as often as the Anglo-German concertina.

Sharp gained much from his association with Kimber. From him he noted twenty dance tunes which were subsequently published, and he also learned the techniques of many dances which were to form the canon of the dance revival. It was the dance steps and basic melodies, however, which attracted Sharp and not the instrumentation and performance style and it was not until the "second folk revival" of the 1960s and 1970s that players came to recognise these aspects of Kimber's music as important.

In 1911, Sharp and others established the English Folk-Dance Society "with the objects of preserving and promoting the practice of English folk dances in their true traditional forms".<sup>849</sup> This saw the revival of dance tunes (collected in the field and gathered from eighteenth-century written sources) in parallel with that of traditional

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<sup>846</sup> Kennedy, *English Folk Dancing*, p.43.

<sup>847</sup> Kimber's playing was released on commercial recordings in 1935 and 1947-8. There are later discs from Topic (12T49), Folktracks (FSA983(T)) and The English Folk Dance and Song Society (LP1001).

<sup>848</sup> Hall, Reg and Mervyn Plunkett "May-Day, Padstow" *Ethnic* Vol.1, No.3 (Summer 1959) pp.16-17.

<sup>849</sup> *GDMM* Vol.III (1954) p.236.

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song; and the two spheres came together officially in the establishment of the English Folk Dance and Song Society in 1932. Those associated with the Folk-Dance Society travelled the country demonstrating folk dance and encouraging the establishment of dance groups and the reforming of Morris teams which had disbanded. The demonstrations were invariably accompanied by piano arrangements, the inclusion of traditional dancers and players such as Kimber being rare. In the new dance teams, the style of musical accompaniment as well as the dance techniques were often reconstructed or even reinvented. Douglas Kennedy, a former Director of the English Folk Dance and Song Society, described his own attempts to devise an appropriate musical accompaniment to English folk dance during the 1940s:

My wife and I joined forces with another couple living near us in Hampstead to establish a folk dance quartet and we practiced assiduously together. Our leader was the fiddler Nan Fleming-Williams, and she with her husband (guitar), my wife (concertina) and myself (side drum) all suggested and tested theories and any hints that might lead to an increase in 'life' in our playing.<sup>850</sup>

Around the same time, during a dance festival in Edinburgh, a player of the Anglo-German concertina who learned in the Morris traditions of Lancashire was approached by these London based musicians in search of the elusive secrets of dance accompaniment. He recalls:

Douglas Kennedy. He has his wife play an English. Well she come to me then and she says "How is it" she says "we've photographed your doings and all that and listened to you but when we play for it we can't sound like you?" So I says "The point is this: you've got to be born in Lancashire and you've got to have the Lancashire dialect."<sup>851</sup>

In other words, Fred Kilroy stressed that his music was part of a local oral tradition which required to be understood on its own terms if the revivalists were to make any progress in borrowing from it. Other related traditions were also studied:

Only isolated individuals survived to preserve what had been a widespread tradition so the Society had to build from scratch, thankful that there was always the traditional resources of Ireland and Scotland to guide it.<sup>852</sup>

The failure to build on native traditional musical practice and the new settings and functions (one of the first settings for revived dance was London girls' schools) meant that the dance lost much of its raw energy. Within the gentility of the revival there

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<sup>850</sup> Kennedy, *English Folk Dancing*, p.27.

<sup>851</sup> Fred Kilroy in Ward, Alan "Fred Kilroy: Lancashire Concertina Player, Part 2" *Traditional Music* 3 (1976) p.6.

<sup>852</sup> Kennedy, *English Folk Dancing*, p.103.

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was little room for the sound of the country fiddle, the melodeon and Anglo-German concertina. The more “refined” English concertina was more commonly used but the piano accordion, discussed in the previous chapter, took centre stage. The ascendancy of the accordion was marked by the publication of an edition of Sharp’s music arranged for the instrument in 1937.<sup>853</sup> Observers, writing in the 1950s, noted how players of the accordion struggled to recapture the spirit of the older double action free-reed instruments “by pumping the bellows and hitting the keys percussively”<sup>854</sup> while a more recent commentator has criticised the effect these instruments have had on dance accompaniment:

The heavy influence of piano settings of Morris and folk songs adopted by the EFDSS had a bearing on their choice and use of the piano accordion. They never seemed to bother about the instruments in the same way that they took pains to write details of the songs and dances in notation, ignoring the dance style of the music, which is a great shame... Piano accordions are very difficult to play gutsily, in fact the very nature of the instrument makes it easy to play slushy and schmaltzy, with too much heavy bass.<sup>855</sup>

By the late inter-war period, the concertina had become so marginalised in the revival that when The Rev. Kenneth Loveless, a pupil of William Kimber, joined the English Folk Dance and Song Society in 1936, the dancing at its London Headquarters was accompanied by “an orchestra” whose members “viewed the whole business with a horrified stare”<sup>856</sup> when he attempted to join them on his Anglo-German concertina. The situation was less critical in Morris dance outwith London where the Anglo-German concertina survived among working-class musicians and was brought into revived dance groups.<sup>857</sup>

Although by the time of the Second World War the initiative of “the first phase of the Folk-Song Revival had petered out into amiable irrelevance”,<sup>858</sup> a new impetus to research, revive and perform traditional song and dance came with “the second folk music revival”. As discussed later in this chapter, this had more fundamental consequences for the fate of the concertina.

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<sup>853</sup> Karpeles, Maud (ed.) *English Folk Dance Tunes Collected and Arranged by Cecil Sharp and Adapted for Piano Accordion* (London, 1937).

<sup>854</sup> Hall and Plunkett, “May-Day...”, p.17.

<sup>855</sup> John Kirkpatrick in Wayne, “The Concertina Revival, Part 2”, p.9.

<sup>856</sup> Loveless, Rev. Kenneth “The Story of an Anglo Concertina” *NICA* (1955) p.16.

<sup>857</sup> For example, see Haworth, Dorothea “The Manley Morris” *English Dance and Song* Vol.XXIV, No.4 (Winter 1972) pp.129-130, Schofield, Derek “Concertina Caleb” *English Dance and Song* Vol.46, No.2 (Summer 1984) pp.2-6 and Ward, “Fred Kilroy...” p.7.

<sup>858</sup> Harker, *Fakesong*, p.231.



## **Consolidation: The International Concertina Association**

By the end of the Second World War, the concertina band movement had largely died out and social and demographic change and the loss of earlier opportunities for musical contact left many concertinists isolated. The International Concertina Association was established in London during the early 1950s in response to this. The Association was founded with the aims:

1. To re-popularise the concertina.
2. To encourage ear-players to read music.
3. To lay down a proper musical foundation for the new generation of players.
4. To have close co-operation between concertina and accordion players.
5. To select district organisers for local work.
6. To form a Central London Concertina Orchestra.<sup>859</sup>

These show the enduring strength of the concertina's associations with "rational recreation" and confirm the dominance of the piano accordion. The make-up of the Association's first elected Committee is also illuminating. This included Harry Minting, a Director of C. Wheatstone and Co. (which would suggest a degree of business opportunism in a period of declining interest in the instrument but for the fact that he was also an active player), Desmond Hart, who was closely associated with the accordion world as a publisher and organiser, Alf Edwards, a leading professional concertinist, and Mrs. Kennedy of the English Folk Dance and Song Society.<sup>860</sup> Despite its title, the Association's activities were mainly centred upon London. However, by 1953 there were 175 members throughout Great Britain and meetings had been held in Birmingham and in Manchester where the concertina band, which had died out during the war, was revived. The Association's first annual festival was held in 1955 and by 1960 its membership had reached around 300, drawn mainly from players of the declining variety theatre,<sup>861</sup> sacred institutions, concertina bands and the ranks of amateur and semi-professional players. Their repertory drew on the published concertina music of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and popular music of the 1920s and 30s and, in reflection of its emphasis on high standards of sight reading, use of harmony and part playing, the Association helped set up a "concertina school" and taught music reading to members. Differing

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<sup>859</sup> NICA 2 (circa January 1953).

<sup>860</sup> Report on the 4th Annual General Meeting of the International Concertina Association (24 January 1953). Copy in National Library of Scotland.

<sup>861</sup> Including several discussed in Chapter 7.0. The Fayre Four were popular visitors to early festivals.

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standards were accommodated through a range of graded competitions held at the annual festivals. A carol service held at Holy Trinity Church, Hoxton, London in early 1955 was led by members playing:

1st. Trebles (one doubling Piccolo)	9
2nd. Trebles	6
Tenors	4
Baritones	2
Basses	2
“Experts” playing special parts with full harmony, obbligato and counter melodies	6

Around one third of the players were women, a fact which surprised a member from the North of England where, through the band tradition, the concertina had remained a man’s instrument.<sup>862</sup>

A small number of skilled players were central to the early success of the organisation. The multi-instrumentalist, Alf Edwards (d.1985), was a central figure in the early Association as an outstanding performer, teacher and arranger. He was responsible for the Association’s Concertina Orchestra and its reduced form, “The Kensington Group”, which gave performances throughout the 1960s and claimed a BBC television broadcast of a Handel “Concerto Grosso”<sup>863</sup> as a major achievement.

Alf Edwards was the leading recording “session” concertina player of the post-war period and could draw upon a vast personal experience. Ewan MacColl noted in the early 1960s that he:

Must be in his sixties at least. Knows and is known by almost every musician in the business. Played every kind of gig, thirties dance band, music hall, busked on beaches at seaside resorts, pit orchestras, the lot.<sup>864</sup>

He played in “big bands”, made regular radio broadcasts on concertina from 1928 onwards, appeared as a player in many films, performed solo (including an early Aldeburgh Festival at the invitation of Benjamin Britten<sup>865</sup>) and made several gramophone records.<sup>866</sup> C. Wheatstone and Company Ltd. published several of his

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<sup>862</sup> Letter to editor, *NICA* 2 (new series, February 1955). A photograph of this concert is reproduced in Monichon, *Petite Histoire...*

<sup>863</sup> 22 November 1963.

<sup>864</sup> MacColl, Ewan *Journeyman: An Autobiography* (London: 1990) p.324.

<sup>865</sup> Noted in Wills, Liz “A Concertina Revival” in *The Musician of the Salvation Army* (July 28 1973) p.473.

<sup>866</sup> *Ha’penny Breeze* (Columbia, number unknown), various 78 rpm records (Nixa, numbers unknown), *The Art of the Concertina* (Prestige Records, 13060).

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arrangements, including “Under Freedom’s Flag” by Felix Nowewieski and “The Lost Chord” by Sullivan, both of which were firmly within the Association’s canon. His tutor for the English concertina, also published by Wheatstone in 1960,<sup>867</sup> was to remain the only modern manual for some time. This book was in the spirit of the Victorian guides, comprising a systematic introduction to the concertina backed by exercises in different techniques. Edwards composed and arranged much music for the Association orchestra. One of his most enduring influences, however, resulted from his involvement in the folk music revival of the 1950s and 60s considered later in this chapter.

Frank Butler, who joined the Association in 1954, was also influential in consolidating concertina interest through his work as a teacher, enthusiast and prolific arranger and composer of music for the instrument. He produced many arrangements for the Association orchestra and a large number of his solos which were published in the Association newsletter or sent out in a duplicated form. These arrangements reveal the boundaries of the Association’s canon. The contents of his “Concertina Mini-Tunes”, a small collection published in September 1985, illustrates this well:

Jeannie with the Light Brown Hair	Stephen Foster
La Cinquantaine	
Londonderry Air	
I’ll take you home, Kathleen	
Bonnie Charlie’s now awa’	
Chorale	Haydn
Organ Grinder’s Song	Tchaikovsky
Waltz	Brahms
Harmonious Blacksmith	Handel
Lindy	Syd Langton
Aloha He	
Ribbon Dance	
Four Sea Shanties	
Four Traditional Dance Tunes	

Much of the music for Association festival competitions was selected and arranged by Butler and these pieces can be taken as an indication of the internal standards and expectations of the organisation. Like Alf Edwards, Butler had a role in the adoption of the concertina in the folk revival of the 1960s and 1970s, mainly on account of his skills as a teacher. This encouraged him to publish a tutor for the English concertina<sup>868</sup> in the mid 1970s which is still in print and to which he added supplementary exercises, studies and solos<sup>869</sup> around ten years later. His family links

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<sup>867</sup> Edwards, Alfred Wheatstone’s Instructions for the English Concertina (London, 1960).

<sup>868</sup> Butler, Frank The Concertina (Duffield 1974 and New York 1976).

<sup>869</sup> Butler, Frank Concertina Two (London, 1983).

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with important concertina personalities of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries guaranteed him a role as a major source of history relating to the instrument.<sup>870</sup>

Arthur Clements of Northampton (b. circa 1905), a noted soloist, was a keen competitor at Association festivals from its inception and became a player with the Kensington Group.<sup>871</sup> He played an English concertina of enlarged compass which he exploited to the full in his own arrangements and compositions. The programme of a recital given to Northampton Musical Appreciation Society in November 1986<sup>872</sup> illustrates his preferred repertory:

#### **Concertina solos by various arrangers.**

The Heavens are Telling	Haydn	Arr. Geo. Case
Nocturne	W. Vincent Wallace	Arr. Regondi
Ave Maria	Gounod	Arr. Stanley
Luci di Vienna		Arr. T. Prince
Till I Wake	A.W. Findem	Arr. Clements
Air with Variations	Schubert	Arr. F. Butler
The Long Day Closes	A. Sullivan	Arr. W. Pearce

#### **Music for other instruments arranged for concertina by Arthur Clements.**

Sonata No.4	A. Dvorak
Impromptu	Schubert
Sonatina in Bb	Tarne
Holy City	Stephen Adams
OSZ (Autumn)	Lisznyai Gabor

On account of the high regard in which Clements was held and the presence of other prominent members as arrangers, this selection can be taken as representative of the aspirations of the early members of the Association.

The Association helped rekindle interest in playing among musicians who had abandoned the instrument during the war years, brought together musicians from different spheres and helped keep older playing styles and repertory alive well into the

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<sup>870</sup> I am indebted to Frank Butler for lodging copies of the Association newsletters and other material with the National Library of Scotland following my interest expressed in correspondence with him. See also Richards, Alex "The Frank Butler Story" *Concertina Magazine* 9 (Winter 1984) pp.20-22.

<sup>871</sup> Butler, Frank "Melodies and Harmonies" *Concertina and Squeezebox* 18 and 19 (1989) pp.69-74.

<sup>872</sup> *NICA* 341 (November/December 1986) p.11.

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second half of this century. An examination of the Association newsletters shows that it was continually concerned at the lack of younger and provincial members. Musicians in these categories were, however, already adopting the concertina through the influence of a new phase of folk music revival.

As a London based organisation, the International Concertina Association had little direct influence in Scotland although membership lists show a small number of Scottish players during the 1950s and 60s. David Haxton, who was discussed in Chapter 9.0, noted how membership of the Association encouraged him to maintain an interest in the concertina through a period of isolation from other players, its newsletter and library supplying him with a regular source of music arranged for the instrument. Similarly, this community of interest compensated Victor Kersley of Hawick for the absence of other local concertina players and allowed him to correspond with, meet and share music with like minded musicians elsewhere in Great Britain.

### **The Concertina in “The Second Folk Music Revival” 1945-80**

In the period immediately following World War II, the British Isles experienced a “second folk music revival”. Evolving from the earlier phase and combined with the influence of revival in the United States, this phenomenon involved new directions and emphases. Although the earlier approach to the rediscovery and rehabilitation of the music of the past remained central, some performers adopted a more liberal attitude to repertory and style. On one hand, great emphasis was placed on “authentic” reproduction in performance, while on the other, there was a desire for the modernisation and reinterpretation of collected material. The creation of new songs and music in traditional styles was common and many artists introduced influences from other popular music forms and practices.

The second revival was heavily influenced by contemporary developments in North America. New “folk song” (skiffle, American protest song, negro spirituals, blues revival...) was heard alongside the music of native “source” singers. In this strand of the movement, greater emphasis was placed on the content of the songs than on their arrangement and although unaccompanied singing was common, the guitar, banjo and zither became popular supports to the voice. These trends were often in tension with the aesthetics of more “purist” revivalists.

The idea of traditional music as an important force in education remained strong but found new targets. One history of the revival notes that, during the 1950s, the aim was “to give the skiffle clubs a better understanding of British folk music”,<sup>873</sup> suggesting that such music was an alternative to prevailing foreign (i.e. American popular) or more “decadent” popular musics which offered a return to the assumed

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<sup>873</sup> The Topic Catalogue (London, 1978) p.2.



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simpler cultural values of an imagined past. National (i.e. English, Scottish, Irish etc...) and regional repertory and styles (e.g. Cornish, "Geordie", Lancashire etc...) received special attention, paralleling, perhaps, an emerging interest in local history. As many artists played to a national (and international) audience, regional texts were no longer tied to individual locations but became common currency.

As in the earlier phase, individuals were highly influential in setting the agenda and course of the revival at both national and regional levels. They have included influential "source" singers and musicians, key revival performers and entrepreneurs. In its early stages there was a strong political element with socialist intellectuals putting great effort into the revival with the idea that a broadly defined folk music might be an important tool in the rediscovery and reconstruction of working class roots and popular social history.

During the 1960s and 70s, the movement attracted a large following through its network of folk song clubs and festivals and was supported by specialist magazines, record companies, radio programmes and a hierarchy of professional, semi-professional and amateur performers. On a commercial level, traditional music and song offered opportunities in a music market eager for new and exotic sounds and musical directions.

### **English Folk Dance**

The concertina, recognised by, yet never central to, the music of the earlier folk dance revival in England, was to find a more enduring role in this post-war phase. Within the second revival, English ritual and Morris dance enjoyed renewed attention from young people, and the concertina was reconfirmed as an appropriate instrument for musical accompaniment. Critical of the earlier revival's concentration on historical repertory at the expense of appropriate style and spirit, musicians attempted to promote a more robust and vigorous approach to the performance of English dance music by drawing attention to surviving "country" musicians and taking inspiration from the "ceilidh" traditions in Scotland and Ireland. Older concertina players, such as William Kimber,<sup>874</sup> were rediscovered and their repertory and playing styles studied more sympathetically than before.<sup>875</sup>

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<sup>874</sup> Other "source" musicians included Anglo Players Caleb Walker and Scan Tester and the English concertina player Tom Prince. See Schofield, "Concertina Caleb", Smith, Vic "Scan Tester" Folk and Country (March 1972) pp.20-21, "Interview with Scan Tester" Traditional Music 4 (1976) pp.4-10, "Scan Tester in Perspective" Southern Rag 21 (July 1984) p.19, Stradling, Rod and Danny "Tester Talking" Folk Roots 31 (January 1986) pp.11-13, Hall, Reg I Never Played to Many Posh Dances... Scan Tester, Sussex Musician 1887-1972 (Essex, 1990) and "Tom Prince", obituaries in NICA 339 (September 1986) pp.8-10.

<sup>875</sup> For a discussion of the discovery of English traditional musicians, see Ward, Alan "Southern English Country Music" Traditional Music 4 (1976) pp.11-12.

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During the 1960s a series of “Anglo Meets” were held at Cecil Sharp House in London “which enabled up to two dozen players to swap tunes and styles loosely based on the Morris repertoire”<sup>876</sup> and publishers responded to increased interest in the instrument.<sup>877</sup>

Although the Anglo-German concertina became the most favoured model in English folk dance, C. Wheatstone and Co., by then under the ownership of Boosey and Hawkes, attempted to capitalise on the renewed interest by producing around 1955 their budget “May Fair” English concertina which was “specially designed for the Folk Dance Player”.<sup>878</sup> This product met with little success as older concertinas of superior quality were still readily available on the second-hand market.

Folk dance remained a major element in the revival but dance music became important for listening as well as for dancing, as discussed later.

### **Folk Song Accompaniment**

A useful means of charting the adoption of the concertina in the second revival is through a survey of the output of Topic Records of London, “the first British company to issue folk music discs”.<sup>879</sup> This firm had a strong influence on popular taste within the revival. Of the 248 long playing records issued between the late 1950s and 1978, around one quarter (68) included the sound of the concertina and this proportion is greatly increased when those discs which could have no place for the instrument (e.g. solo fiddle music) are discounted. On most records the concertina is used in the accompaniment of traditional song. Highly influential among the early releases from Topic was a batch of “theme” albums covering various aspects of traditional music and song of the British Isles. Typical of these is The Iron Muse published in the late 1950s and reissued in 1963.<sup>880</sup> Like others in the series, the disc was compiled, arranged and produced by A.L.Lloyd who, as Artistic Director of the company from 1957, “used this increasingly influential position... to select what was suitable from his perspective for club performers in Britain”.<sup>881</sup>

The content of the record reflected the interest in the extractive and manufacturing industries which Lloyd had already pursued in his influential book Come All Ye Bold Miners: Songs of the Coalfields<sup>882</sup> and other works. Although the method and ideology of Lloyd’s reconstruction of the industrial musical heritage is

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<sup>876</sup> Wayne, “The Concertina Revival, part 2., p.4.

<sup>877</sup> For example, Francis and Day’s Anglo-Chromatic Concertina Tutor (London, 1965), Blanford, D.E. Francis Day’s Pocket Book of Folk Songs for Anglo-Chromatic Concertina (London, 1966), Wetstone, J. How to Play the Anglo-Chromatic Concertina (London, n.d.), Ham, P.A.L. “The English Concertina in 10 Minutes” English Dance and Song (April 1965) p.78.

<sup>878</sup> Contemporary advertisement reproduced in Concertina Magazine (Summer 1983) p.3.

<sup>879</sup> Munro, The Folk Music Revival..., p.60.

<sup>880</sup> Topic 12T86.

<sup>881</sup> Harker, Fakesong, p.236.

<sup>882</sup> (London, 1952).

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controversial,<sup>883</sup> its influence was great. In keeping with his debt to Cecil Sharp and other pioneers, Lloyd was at first adamant that folk song should be unaccompanied.<sup>884</sup> However, he did come to accept instrumental accompaniment in the face of the influence of the dominant forms of youth music: skiffle, rock and roll and American “folk”.<sup>885</sup> In reluctantly accepting the instrumental “backing” of folk song, Lloyd was obliged to privilege treatment which was appropriate in ideological as well as musical terms and thus turned to the concertina, a British (i.e. non-American) instrument born in and of the industrial revolution and laden with traditional and working class associations.

The Iron Muse uses the concertina as song accompaniment on 12 out of 17 tracks. On all but one track it is played by Alf Edwards, the leading professional concertinist already discussed in connection with the International Concertina Association. Edwards brought accomplished, confident playing and entered into the spirit and character of each piece with little sign that he was playing directly from sheet music. His accompaniments include jaunty chordal playing against Matt McGinn’s “The Foreman O’Rourke” and a “barrel-organ whine”<sup>886</sup> to “Come a’ ye Tramps and Hawkers” but it is the lively heterophony of the fiddle, concertina and voice on “The Spinner’s Wedding” and “The Dundee Lassie” which typifies the accompaniment style on the record. Edwards subsequently appeared on many other records produced by Lloyd.

Lloyd’s reconstruction and rehabilitation of industrial song was shared by the revival singer Ewan MacColl with whom he cooperated since the late 1940s. Both toured England and Scotland in the 1950s with Alf Edwards as accompanist and all three worked together with Peggy Seeger and others between 1957 and 1964 on the compilation of “The Radio Ballads”, eight documentaries which used actuality material, music and song. MacColl recalls the musical preparations for these:

Peggy spent a fortnight making and writing out the musical arrangements and compiling tapes and scores for the musicians. Some of the scores had whole sections left in them for the musicians to improvise (which baffled Alf Edwards, the concertina wizard, for the first three or four radio-ballads, he afterwards became quite proficient at, as he put it, surviving without the dots).<sup>887</sup>

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<sup>883</sup> See Harker, Fakesong, Shepard, Leslie “A.L. Lloyd -A Personal View” in Russell, Ian (ed.) Singer, Song and Scholar (Sheffield, 1986) pp.125-132, Palmer, Roy “A.L. Lloyd and Industrial Song” *ibid.*, pp.133-146 and Gammon, Vic “A.L.Lloyd and History: A Reconsideration of Aspects of Folk Song in England and some of his Other Writing” *ibid.*, pp.147-164.

<sup>884</sup> Vaughan Williams, R and Lloyd, A.L. The Penguin Book of English Folksongs (Harmondsworth, 1959) p.9.

<sup>885</sup> Folk Song in England, p.397-8.

<sup>886</sup> Harker, One for the Money..., p.175.

<sup>887</sup> MacColl, Journeyman..., p.322.

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Lloyd and MacColl collaborated on several projects, including a number which featured their mutual interest in shanties and sea songs, Scottish and English ballads and industrial song. Edwards' involvement in these and on other records by MacColl helped spread and consolidate the combination of English concertina and voice as a "sound ideal" of the revival. I would suggest, for example, that the popular idea of the concertina as an instrument of sea shanty accompaniment received substantial reinforcement through these collaborations.

The Iron Muse also features a young revival singer, Lou Killen of Newcastle, accompanying himself on English concertina in the new industrial song "Farewell to the Monty".<sup>888</sup> In this (Tape Item 11.1), the concertina allows unobtrusive support of the open rhythm of the song through the use of drones and sustained chords in a manner which would not have been possible in accompaniment by the guitar or banjo, the principal alternatives adopted by the revival.

In a brief memoir, Killen describes how he worked out his accompaniments in isolation from other players by just feeling his way around the instrument, preserving what worked and abandoning that which did not sound right to his ear.<sup>889</sup> This recalls the method of the sacred music player Peter McCabe who was discussed in earlier chapters.

Other young singers adopted the concertina, including Peggy Seeger, Sandra Kerr and John Faulkner (Figure 11.1) who were associated with "The Critics Group" of London which explored aspects of repertory, song content, presentation and accompaniment in a workshop situation. Bob Blair (1938- ), from Kirkcaldy, Fife but now living in Glasgow, was a member of the group in the 1960s and credits Peggy Seeger with having spread the gospel of concertina playing in the revival:

B.B. Peggy's theories were quite clear on the use of the concertina... Peggy had quite, a quite strong theory of accompaniment, how songs should be accompanied, certainly how British songs should be accompanied as distinct to American and the concertina lends itself to the style of accompaniment quite remarkably as much as the fiddle but it was easier to learn to play than the fiddle I've got to say.

S.E. So you think Peggy Seeger had a major influence on how the concertina was used?

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<sup>888</sup> This song is discussed at length in Harker, One for the Money..., pp.177-180. Killen made other recordings for Topic and subsequently moved to the United States where he has contributed greatly to the recent revival of interest in the concertina.

<sup>889</sup> Killen, Louis "A Portrait of the 'tina Player as a Young Cat" in Concertina vol.1, No. 3 (Summer 1983) pp.8-11.

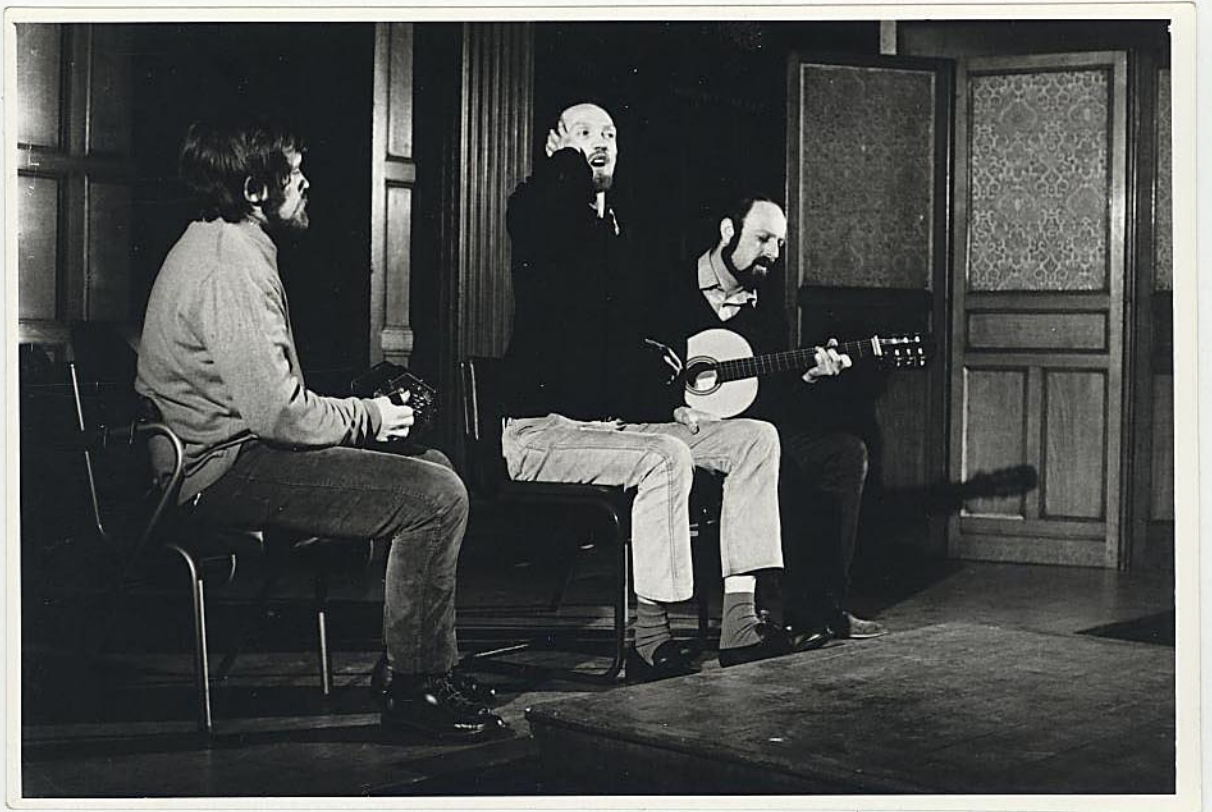


Figure 11.1 Ewan McColl accompanied by John Faulkener,  
London c1968.  
Source: Collection of Edward McGuire.



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B.B. Oh, without a doubt! Alf [Edwards] was the first guy [but] Alf was restricted. Alf always used music. Alf would not accompany Ewan or anybody without a bit o' music in front of them and that certainly didnae fit into Ewan's scheme o' things or the way he saw music performed.

As Peggy learned the concertina he stopped using Alf... Peggy's accompaniments... fit in with her theory of how songs should be accompanied: never interfering with the singer, adding to them, lifting the song occasionally, putting a wee tag in if necessary but never interfering with the song.<sup>890</sup>

Bob notes how Seeger held weekly concertina classes for members of the "Critics Group" and ran accompaniment "workshops" at folk song seminars throughout England and Scotland during the late 1960s and early 1970s at which she demonstrated the potential of the instrument.

The concertina also found a place in the folk song clubs for the same reasons of portability, volume and versatility that made it suited to the music hall and mission station. The cabaret atmosphere of the club shared many of the characteristics of the smaller music hall and, just as in the halls, the instrument could be used as a prop and for "conducting" communal singing. By the mid 1970s the use of the English concertina in traditional song accompaniment had become *de rigueur*.

#### **Instrumental Folk Music**

The folk music revival also involved a rediscovery of purely instrumental music played for listening. Turning again to the influential *The Iron Muse*, we find Lloyd opening and closing each side of the record with a short selection of eighteenth and nineteenth century dance tunes from Scotland and Northumberland which, in title at least, had associations with the mining and manufacturing industries ("The Bonnie Pit Laddie", "The Jolly Colliers", "The Weaver's March" etc...). The music was played by an ad hoc group of musicians under the title "The Celebrated Working Man's Band". Of the "miner's tunes" Lloyd says:

In the past the collier's tradition of folk dance was strong, and even today some of the finest sword dance teams in Europe are to be found among the miners of Tyneside and Yorkshire... The melodies here are of the kind that the North-eastern miners enjoyed in the pubs at pay Week, or at weddings, or on the dusty green of the pit villages of a Sunday evening... latterly, in the pit villages the dances were played by small groups comprising, say, fiddle, concertina (melodeon) or pipe

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<sup>890</sup> Bob Blair: Eydmann 94.01.A4.

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and cello or drum. Our modest band is formed on the model of such humble ensembles.<sup>891</sup>

Material presented in Chapter 10.0 confirms that Lloyd was, in fact, correct, for such bands had been highly active in the mining areas of Scotland and North East England right up to the end of the 1930s. He was, however, looking to the past, for although social dance was still thriving in the mining areas, its accompaniment had been modernised through the use of the accordion, drum kits, piano, saxophone and trumpet and the repertory reflected a wider canon of popular music. Furthermore, to revive this type of ensemble (i.e. ad hoc, informal, unrestrained, etc...) was to isolate and privilege just one aspect of what had been an eclectic “plebeian tradition” while ignoring the reality of other forms of music already highly integrated into industrial society through choirs, amateur orchestras, brass bands, etc..., all of which carried messages which conflicted with Lloyd’s ideology (i.e. messages of organisation, patronage, uniformity, formal education, control etc...). Again Lloyd’s formula was highly influential and a similar approach to repertory, instrumentation and presentation was emulated in a number of emerging groups such as The High Level Ranters in Newcastle-upon-Tyne and The Clutha in Glasgow.

Folk music groups formed the setting for a degree of experimentation and change within the revival and we find the concertina used in early attempts to combine traditional music and song with jazz and rock elements in the work of such bands as Pentangle and Steeleye Span in England and Horslips in Ireland. The revival also saw experiments in the use of traditional instruments in a more “orchestral” manner. The Irish group, the Chieftains, which was formed under the direction of Sean O’Riada, a composer well aware of the ensemble playing of other European cultures, consciously set out to form a new national music by bringing together traditional musicians from different parts of Ireland to play his arrangements.<sup>892</sup> The use of the Anglo- German concertina, played by Michael Tubridy of West Clare, in their concerts, broadcasts and recordings suggested novel ways of using the instrument in combination with others. This experimentation paralleled a major revival in the performance of Irish traditional music from the late 1960s onwards.

### **The New Virtuosi as “Go Betweens”**

In the lively “folk-scene” of the late 1960s and early 1970s, a number of artists gained sufficient status to work as soloists and “session” musicians, including a small

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<sup>891</sup> Lloyd, A.L., Liner notes to The Iron Muse. In a personal communication in 1992, Colin Ross, who played fiddle on the record, recalled how the selection of instrumental music was made by Lloyd who chose much of it on the strength of appropriate titles from The Northumbrian Minstrelsy of 1888. An examination of the collection (Volume 2, p.21) shows two of the tunes (“Keelman o’er the Land” and “Sma’ Coals and Little Money”) printed together, just as they are performed on the record. Although from North East England, Ross had no experience of these tunes in local circulation before he heard Alf Edwards play them from the written page.

<sup>892</sup> See, Harris, Bernard and Freyer, Grattan (eds.) The Achievement of Sean O Riada (Ballina, 1981) and Meek, Bill Paddy Moloney and the Chieftains (Dublin, 1987).

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number of concertina players. Of these, Alistair Anderson (English concertina) and John Kirkpatrick (Anglo-German concertina) were “canonised” by the revival, their status being due not only to their technical skill but also their influence on the subsequent popular use of their respective types of concertina. Space does not allow a detailed discussion of these musicians but their contrasting approaches, geographical origins and choice of instrument type would render them highly appropriate for more in depth comparison elsewhere. Anderson (1948- ) came to folk music in the 1960s under the influence of radio and gramophone records and became involved with his local folk song club at Newcastle-upon-Tyne where he met Lou Killen. By 1967 he had joined The High Level Ranters and was working as a “session” player for Topic on records in the fashion of The Iron Muse.

From his earliest venture into traditional music, Anderson developed a deep interest in the repertory and styles of Northumberland and played regularly with older musicians in the area, although there were few concertina players around. His early recordings also show an interest in the music of Ireland and Scotland, with a particular preference for the fiddle music of Shetland, which was “rediscovered” in the revival, and for the showy chromaticism of Skinner and other nineteenth-century fiddle composers which is so suited to the English concertina. In performance, he demonstrates an overriding concern with the melodic line and he uses only a limited degree of ornamentation. His solo performances include a number of “novelty” items and classical pieces and he has developed a dramatic swinging technique which is a memorable part of his “show”.

Anderson has been highly conscious of his own role in the promotion and development of the English concertina as an instrument of traditional music and has welcomed change:

Every instrument has its time of innovation. As far as I can see, when a new instrument arrives into a strong living tradition it is taken up by the musicians in the area and if it proves suitable they first start by copying the style of the other instruments currently in their musical environment. Soon, however, the instrument itself starts suggesting things to the individual playing it and so his style starts to develop into something dependent on the instrument and of course, his own feelings about the music. When there are several players in the area there tends to be a cross-fertilisation of ideas and although the individuals will all have slightly different styles, the tradition will develop as a whole, dependent on the musical environment, the instrument and the musicians themselves.<sup>893</sup>

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<sup>893</sup> Wayne, “The Concertina Revival, Part 1”, pp.8-9.

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He has actively sought to stimulate interest in the concertina through teaching and in 1974 produced an influential tutor book and gramophone record.<sup>894</sup> This publication offers further evidence of an approach which is notable for its encouragement of variation and personal interpretation in traditional music.

John Kirkpatrick (1947- ) came to the concertina through Morris dancing in London where he grew up. His first instruments were the melodeon and British Chromatic button accordion<sup>895</sup> but he took up the Anglo-German concertina in his late teens within the English Folk Dance and Song Association.<sup>896</sup> With a background in the folk dance revival rather than the Edwards-Lloyd-MacColl axis, it is not surprising that he chose the Anglo-German concertina which was more an instrument of dance accompaniment. He became a full time musician around 1970 and has made several gramophone records which include songs, Morris music, country dance tunes and, like Anderson's first solo records, some classical music.

He has worked hard to develop his own "English" [i.e. non Irish or Scottish] style and includes a full range of techniques to "enhance the rhythm and add lift and bounce and danciness"<sup>897</sup> to his playing; these include ornamentation, playing in thirds, sixths and octaves and the use of the left hand for playing chords, as in his accordion playing. Kirkpatrick is the principal "session" musician using Anglo-German concertina and has appeared on many gramophone records. He has also been involved in a number of musical experiments in the field of "folk-rock" and has collaborated with "early music", rock and punk musicians.

Both Anderson and Kirkpatrick have influenced the course of the adoption and use of their respective concertina types on an international scale. Of the two, Anderson has been particularly influential in Scotland for a number of reasons. He often plays north of the Border, Northumbrian music is very closely linked to that of the Scottish tradition and he has included a large amount of Scottish music, much of it from published collections, on his many gramophone records.

Ledang has proposed the use of the term "go-betweens" to describe musicians who act as active agents of musical revival by forming a link between the styles and repertory of "old-timers" and the "contemporaries" of the revival proper.<sup>898</sup> Given the influence of these two musicians and their work to reconstruct and develop repertory and styles of playing, both clearly fit Ledang's definition.

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<sup>894</sup> Anderson, Alistair *Concertina Workshop* (London, 1974), *Concertina Workshop* (Topic, 12FRS501) (1974).

<sup>895</sup> This is the accordion associated with the Scottish accordionist Jimmy Shand. Although popular in Scotland this type was rare in England at the time.

<sup>896</sup> Wayne, "The Concertina Revival, Part 2", p.9.

<sup>897</sup> Kirkpatrick, John "How to Play the Anglo, part 3" *NICA* 337 (May 1986).

<sup>898</sup> Ledang, Ola Kai "Revival and Innovation: The case of the Norwegian Seljefloyte" *YTM* 18 (1986) pp.145-155.

## **The Concertina in the Folk Music Revival in Scotland**

Scottish composers did not turn to their native traditions in the same manner that Holst, Grainger, Vaughan Williams and others had looked to English music and song. The “Scottish National Group” of composers, most of whom were born in the 1860s, were decidedly European in outlook and less concerned with traditional precedents in their expression of Scottishness. The composers of the inter-war “Scottish Renaissance” were also internationalist and more concerned with the country’s vernacular literature than its musical roots. The flowering of musical activity after 1945 saw an expansion in the number of orchestras, composers, companies and festivals but this too, up to the 1970s at least, was modernist and had little concern for indigenous traditions.

There was a revival of interest in Scottish fiddle music in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries led by James Scott Skinner, William Honeyman and others and a large number of folk song collectors were also active at the time. This work had little effect on composers of “art” music.

Those responsible for the revival of country dance in Scotland did not, in the main, turn to living musicians but to the vast wealth of written music in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century manuscripts and printed collections.<sup>899</sup> I have already discussed how dance bands became standardised under the influence of The Royal Scottish Country Dance Society, radio and gramophone records, and how, after 1930, the accordion (in both button and piano forms) had assumed a central role. By the 1950s, many bands were including modern popular music from a variety of sources within their repertory and accordionists also played “continental” material of European origin or character. Dance music also found a place in the “Scottish entertainment” which flourished during the 1950s and 60s in holiday resorts, variety theatres and on television (e.g. “The White Heather Club”).

The concertina had little or no place in these developments and by the late 1960s was heard only in the residual pockets discussed in earlier chapters.

The early period of the second folk music revival in Scotland paralleled that of England but with some interesting differences. There was a strong “protest” element in the Scottish revival, closely linked to nuclear disarmament campaigns, and also embracing elements of nationalist sentiment. The revival was not just a rediscovery of an earlier heritage of music and song but also a deliberate reaction against dominant forms of commercial entertainment, whether London/America originated or native “tartanry”.

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<sup>899</sup> E.g. Shand, Annie Old Scottish Music Collected and Adapted for Scottish Country Dances (Glasgow, 1932).



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Ailie Munro has noted the “powerful and seminal influence”<sup>900</sup> of MacColl in Scotland, a fact which is borne out by my informants who were active in the revival and my own experience as an interested teenager during the late 1960s. Much of the revived music and song in the influential performances, records and broadcasts by Lloyd, MacColl and “The Critics Group” was of Scottish origin and therefore young musicians in Scotland had no difficulty in accepting the authority of their style and accompaniment along with their repertory. It is not surprising, therefore, to find the concertina taken up by emerging singers such as Ian MacKintosh and Archie Fisher. In fact, so strong was the idea of the concertina as a folk song accompaniment that the well known singers Robin Hall and Jimmy MacGregor used an accordion with a “concertina sound” to capture the appropriate effect on a number of their recordings of sea songs.<sup>901</sup>

The concertina was used extensively by Roy Williamson of The Corrie Folk Trio (later the duo, The Corries) of Edinburgh whose audience reached well outwith the confines of the “folk scene” itself.<sup>902</sup> The instrument is heard on their 1968 album Kishmul’s Galley<sup>903</sup> in an instrumental selection and in song accompaniment and on the 1970 album Strings and Things<sup>904</sup> to accompany the song “Hieland Harry” and in a selection of fiddle tunes from Shetland. In the latter selection (Tape Item 11.2) the concertina is played along with the harmonica to give a full “reedy” sound suggesting the “ringing strings” (playing two strings simultaneously) of the Shetland fiddle tradition. The music is paced faster than in the tradition and can be viewed as something of an instrumental tour de force within The Corries’ programmes, which consisted mainly of song.

A number of ensembles arose in Scotland after the fashion of the band featured on The Iron Muse. The Clutha from Glasgow numbered two concertina players among its ranks and used the instrument in both song accompaniment and in instrumental selections.<sup>905</sup> Similarly, The Gaugers, a trio from Aberdeen, featured Peter Hall’s concertina along with fiddle, tin whistle and collective voices. Their music includes traditional music from all parts of Scotland and songs delivered in their local dialect.<sup>906</sup>

Hamish Bayne, a member of the Edinburgh folksong group, The McCalmans, during the late 1960s and early 1970s, used the concertina regularly in performance as did his friend Tom Ward of Leven, Fife, who discovered the instrument through the playing of Alf Edwards:

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<sup>900</sup> Munro, The Folk Music Revival..., p.96.

<sup>901</sup> Robin Hall, personal communication, 1983.

<sup>902</sup> There are two early photographs of Williamson with concertina in Williamson, Karen Flower of Scotland: Roy Williamson, My Father (Nairn, 1993) pp.47, 98.

<sup>903</sup> Fontana STL5465.

<sup>904</sup> EMI Columbia SCX 6442.

<sup>905</sup> The group made several records for Topic.

<sup>906</sup> The group released the record Beware the Aberdonian (Topic Records, 12TS284), around 1977.

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It eh, was roughly about 1968, 69 and what I'd been doing was that I was playing the guitar with a fella called Chuck Fleming [who] played the fiddle. I played the guitar, not very well, and did a bit of singing - as a duo played round the pubs and clubs and sort of things and eh, the more I played the guitar the more I realised that I was no guitarist, you know. Barely competent would be a pretty good description. So I really was looking for an instrument that was going to be versatile 'cause I was doing a bit of singing at the time so I was looking for an instrument that I could accompany myself with, that was portable. I didn't want a big instrument like a guitar, sort of anything like that, something you could play tunes on as well because playing with Chuck I was beginning to get quite a bit of interest in tunes, dance music and that sort of thing. So I thought about it for a while and I thought about instruments like fiddles and whistles and mandolins but, I mean there were people playing those and I felt what I also wanted was an instrument that was fairly rare in the very limited folk field and I thought about it.

I thought about pipes -they were fairly impractical and eh, at that time we used to listen to a chap called A.L. Lloyd and his records and he had people on it like [Martin] Carthy and [Dave] Swarbrick and he had this concertina player called Alf Edwards on it... He gave it a smashin' sound. It was very smart and it was very sympathetic to songs like sea shanties which we used to do and what have you and eh, I can't remember when, but a penny dropped at one time and I said that's the instrument I want because to me it was a very sweet sounding instrument, a smashin' sounding instrument. It was small, it was portable, immensely versatile and just really fitted the bill and eh, that's what I wanted and of course in Edinburgh at that time they just weren't to be had.<sup>907</sup>

Tom searched second hand dealers in the city for months before he managed to acquire an instrument lying in the basement of a local music shop. He taught himself using Alf Edwards' tutor which he found most satisfactory. Working in isolation from other concertina players he developed a lively, relatively unadorned style of playing dance music and, like so many Scottish musicians, he was attracted to the compositions of James Scott Skinner. His playing of Skinner's "Ward's Hornpipe" involves long passages in a single bellows movement (Example 11.1).

The 1970s saw a rise of interest in the performance of traditional dance music on the concertina for listening:

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<sup>907</sup> Tom Ward: Eydmann 85.06.A1.

long bellows "breath"

tempo ♩ 184

Ward's variations on bar \*

bar \* as written by Skinner

Ward plays the hornpipe with a distinct lilt. There is an emphasis on the first and third beats of each bar and the first of each group of four quavers is lengthened slightly; Ward's flowing style contrasts with Skinner's dotted version.

Example 11.1 Ward's Hornpipe.

Source: Composed by James Scott Skinner and published in The Scottish Violinist (Glasgow, n.d.) p.43. As played by Tom Ward, transcribed by Stuart Eydmann from tape Eydmann 85.06.A8.

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In the 1970s the most striking growth has been on the instrumental side. The guitar may still be the most common instrument but the native instruments (fiddle, pipes, concertina) have become familiar in all Scottish clubs.<sup>908</sup>

During the 1970s, a number of groups arose in Scotland presenting mainly instrumental music under the influence of The Chieftains. The Boys of the Lough was formed in 1971 to bring together music from the Scottish, Irish and Northumbrian traditions. Founder member Robin Morton from Northern Ireland had already used the concertina to accompany his own singing following inspiration from the playing of Lou Killen and Alf Edwards<sup>909</sup> and now combined it with flute and fiddle. His unadorned playing was featured on the group's first recording in a selection of music from Shetland.<sup>910</sup> On subsequent recordings and performances, the concertina was used to provide drone backing to pipe tunes and to provide a chordal accompaniment in slow airs played strongly on flute and fiddle.

Gordon Hotchkiss (1946- ) from West Lothian and now resident in Glasgow, took up the English concertina while a student in Edinburgh during the late 1960s in order to accompany his performance of "cornkisters" and "bothy ballads". He later developed an interest in the instrumental music of the bagpipe and fiddle traditions as a member of The Whistlebinkies traditional music group during the period 1972-1976. In his accompaniment of the song "Cam' ye o'er Frae France?" (Example 11.2) he uses simple, yet effective, triads, easily fingered on either side of the concertina. Playing along with bagpipes pitched in the key of Bb, Gordon was continually faced with the choice between reorganising the reeds inside his concertina so he could use it as a transposing instrument or learning the music a semitone higher than normally written.<sup>911</sup>

The revival of interest in the use of the concertina in instrumental music was reflected in the inclusion of competitions for concertina playing at festivals organised by the Traditional Music and Song Association of Scotland. This is a principal institution of the revival which seeks to:

Encourage and put before the public the traditional music and song of Scotland. Genuine Scots music and song is always in danger of being swamped by the commercial aspects of mass media.<sup>912</sup>

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<sup>908</sup> MacNaughton, "The Folksong Revival in Scotland", p.202.

<sup>909</sup> Wayne, "The Concertina Revival Part 2", pp.9-10.

<sup>910</sup> The Boys of the Lough (Trailer LER 2086).

<sup>911</sup> Bagpipe music is written "in A" but sounds a semitone higher. Normally, when not playing with the bagpipes, the fiddler, accordionist or concertina player will play in the key as written.

<sup>912</sup> Advertisement, in concert programme for The Boys of the Lough (1975).



tempo  $d = 104$

*flute, fiddle and voice*

*concertina*

Cam ye o'er frae France? Cam ye down by Lun-on?

Saw ye Geor-die whelps And his bon-my wo-man?

were ye at the place ca' d the Kitt-le Hous-ie?

saw ye Geor-die's graze Rid-ing on a goos-ie?

**Example 11.2** Cam ye o'er frae France.

Source: Traditional, as played by Gorden Hotchkiss with the Whistlebinkies. Transcribed by Stuart Eydmann from tape c.1975 in the collection of Edward McGuire.



### *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

In playing instrumental music, most revival players adopted a simple, melodic style which contrasts with that of the band, music hall and sacred traditions mentioned earlier. In some cases this may have been a deliberate form of “primitivism”, although such a style is not incompatible with the monodic tradition in Scottish music already discussed in the connection with the rural musician Peter Campbell in Chapter 9.0.

Norman Chalmers (194?- ) is an exception among the early champions of the concertina in the Scottish revival in that he did not originally adopt the concertina to accompany his own singing. During the 1970s he was very active as a player at festivals and “sessions” in pubs and a member of several folk groups. Family connections with the island of St. Kilda inspired his interest in Gaelic music, including the “west coast” style of button accordion playing, and his flowing style with crisp grace notes and little harmony reflects his interest in the bagpipe repertory and style (Example 11.3). In the example, Norman’s playing illustrates a trend in instrumental music in the revival in Scotland from the late 1970s onwards which saw a more thorough approach to the interpretation of fiddle and bagpipe music, with borrowings (e.g. ornamentation) from the related Irish tradition. His playing does not attempt to directly imitate the bagpipe sound so much as draw out its essential qualities.

The most striking aspect of the concertina revival in Scotland is the fact that few young players have had any direct contact with the older generations of musicians discussed in earlier chapters. There were exceptions to this. For Tom Ward, a chance encounter with a concertina player when he was a child kindled his interest:

Well, I first got interested in the concertina when at a Burns supper actually, in the village... where one of the performers actually played the concertina and he played, naturally at a Burns supper, he played some of the Burns airs, tunes for the songs. “Flow Gently, Sweet Afton” actually is one that I can remember and it really, it really got to me because I felt it was a lovely instrument. The harmonics and everything fitted together so beautifully and he used the old fashioned swinging technique which actually brings the instrument into its best, I think really in solo airs or anything like that.

I never met him, actually, again and I was really quite a young boy at the time but I never really forgot it and that really started the interest in the instrument really.<sup>913</sup>

Some others came from families which had some involvement in evangelistic activities. Geordie McIntyre of Glasgow, for example, had a number of evangelical singers in his family, including his uncle Neil McIntyre (“Scotland’s Blind Evangelist”) and grandfather Dugald McIntyre who played concertina. Despite

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<sup>913</sup> Tom Ward: Eydmann 85.08.A1.

tempo : ♩. = 126

hardly sounded

etc

typical bagpipe version

etc

 sounds nearer  but is often notated more simply as I have chosen to do.

**Example 11.3 The Skye Man's Jig.**

Source: Traditional, setting by Duncan Johnstone and published in Duncan Johnstone Collection of Jigs and Hornpipes Volume 2 (Glasgow, 1979) p.31. As played by Norman Chalmers, transcribed by Stuart Eydmann from gramophone record Jock Tamson's Bairns (Temple TP002, 1980).

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having rejected the religious message, such young players did retain certain aspects of musical behaviour associated with their home environment including, informal communal singing and the use of the concertina.

The revival players' acquisition of their instruments is also of interest here. With some, the concertina was handed down within their family and this kindled some obligation to play, to maintain a link with the past, even though there was no direct contact with older players. For others, the discovery of an old instrument in a saleroom or second-hand dealer's shop was led to its "rescue" -a physical act paralleling the "collection" of folk music and song which, of course, was central to the revival. The decision to play often came later.

### **"Concertina Consciousness" in the 1970s and 80s**

By the mid 1970s, the concertina was adopted not only as an instrument appropriate to the revival but also as its emblem. It was possible, for instance, for a record company to employ as the sleeve design of a gramophone record<sup>914</sup> a "honeycomb" made up of different concertina end-plates, despite the fact that the instrument was hardly used on the disc. The high degree of "concertina consciousness" could not have been reached, however, without the contribution of a small number of enterprising individuals who worked to promote, make, publicise and supply the concertina at the time. The most notable of these was, without doubt, Neil Wayne. Wayne became interested in the concertina while a student at Nottingham during the 1960s and began to collect old instruments and documentary evidence relating to their invention and manufacture. Around 1970, he published "The Concertina Newsletter" (later "Free Reed") which sought to spread information among enthusiasts.<sup>915</sup> Having established a network of contacts he went on to develop a retail business dealing in concertinas, and a specialist company, "Free Reed", was formed to issue records of revival players and field recordings of older musicians. Links were made with the International Concertina Association, and workshops and seminars were established at folk music festivals. Wayne's substantial archive of material relating to the concertina forms the basis of his private "Concertina Museum" near Derby.

Ledang has identified "accessibility" (i.e. availability) as a key prerequisite in the revival of any music instrument.<sup>916</sup> This was certainly a crucial factor in the case of the concertina. Despite increasing demand, concertina production in Great Britain during the 1970s was very limited. Only the companies of Wheatstone, which had been taken over by Boosey and Hawkes in the 1950s, and H. Crabb and Son were making instruments and their combined output could be counted in dozens per year.

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<sup>914</sup> "The First Folk Review Record" advertised in *Folk Review* Vol.5, No.1 (November 1975).

<sup>915</sup> The newsletter had a circulation of 900 in 1972 and 1500 in 1974 with over half of the subscribers members of folk clubs.

<sup>916</sup> "Revival and Innovation...", p.154.

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Much of their work was concerned with the overhaul and repair of existing instruments rather than the manufacture of new ones. In the early 1970s, a new English concertina could cost up to £250 and an Anglo-German model £150, with a waiting time of over 12 months.<sup>917</sup> Most prospective concertinists therefore depended on the second hand market where instruments could be acquired more quickly and cheaply. A number of specialist dealers operated to meet demand and prices rose accordingly. In a short time, however, new concertina makers emerged from within the ranks of the folk revival and a wider infrastructure of suppliers and repairers developed to meet demand.

Colin Dipper (1948- ) of Heytesbury, Wiltshire, commenced concertina manufacture around 1972 and had made over 100 instruments by 1984.<sup>918</sup> Steve Dickinson, who had become interested in the instrument through folk music in the early 1970s, purchased Wheatstone and Co. as a going concern from Boosey and Hawkes in 1974<sup>919</sup> and Hamish Bayne, the prominent Scottish folk singer and musician mentioned earlier, commenced production of his “Holmwood Concertina” some years later.<sup>920</sup> Each of the new makers operated as a small cottage industry making instruments to order. Their designs are based on the best instruments of the past and there is much emphasis on the highest quality materials and hand finishing.

Despite the healthy second-hand market and the rise of new manufacturers, the cost of a concertina remained a major influence on levels of adoption. By 1980, the revival of interest in the concertina had taken on an international dimension with demand for instruments coming also from Europe, Australia and North America where good concertinas could change hands for thousands of pounds. With the rise in value there was also an interest in the concertina from the antique trade and the instrument now features regularly in the sales catalogues of Sotheby’s and other auction houses. In response to increased demand, the Italian company Bastari and the German company Hohner began factory production of English concertinas and the retailer Hobgoblin introduced instruments built by hand in their Sussex workshops which were “designed to fill a specific gap in the market”.<sup>921</sup> These mid-priced instruments, which employed innovative internal layouts and non-traditional materials to reduce costs, met with some success with amateurs.

The increasing popularity of the concertina also led to new demands for learning facilities. Mention has already been made of the published tutors of Edwards and

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<sup>917</sup> Price list of H. Crabb and Son, London, c.1970.

<sup>918</sup> “Colin Dipper: An Interview” *Concertina and Squeezebox* Vol.2, No.4 (Autumn 1984) pp.14-21; “Colin Dipper Exposed” *Concertina and Squeezebox* 12 (1986) pp.26-31; “The Shantyman Concertina” *Concertina and Squeezebox* 21 (Autumn 1989) pp.11-15.

<sup>919</sup> Letter to the editor, *Journal of the Galpin Society* XLV (March 1992) p.200. See also “Dickinson Concertinas” *Concertina Magazine* (Autumn 1983) pp.2-4.

<sup>920</sup> “A Budding Concertina Masterbuilder in the British Midlands” *Concertina and Squeezebox* 18 and 19 (1989) pp.64- 68. My archive contains a recording of a seminar on concertina making led by Bayne in Edinburgh, 24 March 1989 (Eydman 89.01.A1-A27).

<sup>921</sup> Advertisement in *Concertina and Free Reed* Vol.1, No.2 (Spring 1983) p.15.

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Butler which were pressed into service and of Alistair Anderson's influential guide. Richard Carlin published a tutor, "The English Concertina", in New York in 1977 which was aimed at the folk revival player and a few years later new tutors for both English and Anglo-German concertinas were issued in Great Britain.<sup>922</sup> More recently, further playing guides have been published in the United States to meet growing demand there.<sup>923</sup>

Neil Wayne's "retiral" from the folk music world, with the demise of his business and the closure of "Free Reed" around 1980, marked the end of the peak of revived interest in the concertina in Great Britain. Subsequent waves of "concertina consciousness" passed through both North America and Australia where similar communities of interest and infrastructures emerged.

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<sup>922</sup> Watson, Roger Handbook for English Concertina (London, 1981) and Handbook for the Anglo Chromatic Concertina (London, 1981).

<sup>923</sup> For example, Quann, Fred A Handbook of the Concertina (Tampa, n.d.) and the video cassette Townley, John The Seaman's Concertina: A Beginning Guide to the Anglo Concertina in the Nautical Style (Mendocino, n.d.).



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## Current Developments

### **The Continuing Revival**

The International Concertina Association remains the principal institution dedicated to the concertina and membership is now dominated by players who first came to the instrument through the folk music revival of the 1960s and 70s but have since widened their musical interests. The Association continues to privilege musical literacy by publishing advice on music theory and promotes teaching through the organisation of “concertina weekends” and workshops. Supplements issued with the Association’s newsletters are a principal source of music arranged for the concertina (e.g. Example 12.1). However, despite an attachment to the “rational” aspects of concertina playing, there is also a strong element of humour and lightheartedness about its proceedings and a willingness to accommodate all musical styles and repertory.

Regional branches hold meetings throughout the country including “The West Country Concertina Players”, “The Yorkshire Concertina Club” and groups representing the North East, South East, Midlands and Nottingham. There is also a Scottish group which meets regularly in Kilmarnock, Ayrshire, an area which contained a large number of concertina players during the folk music revival of the 1970s. The small number of outstanding players who emerged through the folk revival have retained much of their status. Alistair Anderson continues his solo work but also performs with his group Syncopace which is a medium for his own compositions. He is also involved in the organisation Folkworks which is charged with promoting traditional music within the North-East of England through school visits, concerts and workshops.

Although I have no statistical evidence to support this view, I would suggest that there are now fewer professional concertina players on the “folk scene” and that the concertina has lost its special place within the folk music group. Many of the amateurs active during the 1960s and 70s have either abandoned musical performance or have moved their playing “indoors” and away from the pub and folk-club scene because of changing interests or the demands of career and family life. Nevertheless, the image of the concertina as an instrument at the core of the tradition remains a strong one, illustrated by the fact that in the late 1980s, the major retail chain, Virgin Records, was promoting its folk and traditional music sales through an advertisement

# MUSIC SUPPLEMENT

TAKE ME BACK TO BLIGHTY

- arranged for English concertina by  
Chris Todhunter. (Copyright 1993)

The musical score is written for an English concertina in 6/8 time. It consists of ten staves. The first staff shows the beginning of the piece with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody is primarily in the treble register. The bass line is written in a simplified style, often using chords and fingerings (1-7) to indicate the left hand's position. The piece includes a repeat section marked 'REPEAT AD LIB.' and a final section marked 'LAST TIME'.

This excellent arrangement for English concertina was contributed by Chris Todhunter, and is based on a tune from 'Feldman's Brass and Military Band Journal, 1914' (see last September's 'Music Supplement' for the original version). This arrangement is designed specifically to 'fall nicely under the fingers' of the English concertina, taking into account the system's limited bass range etc. It is, however, equally effective on duet and anglo systems.

Example 12.1 Take me back to Blighty.

Source: Music supplement issued with Concertina World 392  
(July/August 1993).

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which used a wood-cut illustration of the “source” musician William Kimber (Figure 12.1).

### **Concertina Playing in Scotland Today**

Earlier chapters have shown how post-Second World War use of the concertina in Scotland was very much a reflection of tendencies in Britain as a whole.

Despite endorsement by the Traditional Music and Song Association of Scotland through competitions in the early 1970s, the blossoming of interest in the concertina as an instrument of Scottish traditional music has not been maintained. As early as 1979, the programme of the annual traditional music festival at Kinross wrote of the concertina competition:

The support for this competition has been so poor in recent years, that the committee has decided that unless there are more than three entrants for the competition the cup will not be awarded and the competition will be cancelled.<sup>924</sup>

The competition at the festival at Newcastleton, Roxburghshire, was abandoned in the mid-1980s while that at Kirriemuir Festival does survive, although under threat due to lack of interest. Festivals now include competitions for “miscellaneous instruments” which do accommodate concertina players.

Since the mid-1980s, “The Scottish Concertina Project”, a loose association of enthusiasts, has helped organise workshops at folk festivals. A gathering in late 1993 in Glasgow, held in conjunction with the Traditional Music and Song Association and the Glasgow Traditional Arts Trust, attracted over 30 players, mainly musicians from the over 40 age group who were interested in folk song accompaniment and the performance of traditional dance music.

The concertina is now found in only a few traditional music groups (e.g. the Whistlebinkies, the Gaugers and Ceol Beag), its use having died out as bands have disbanded and fashions have changed. On one hand, a move towards the presentation of the “authentic” in traditional music has encouraged the popularity of more “Scottish” instruments, such as the fiddle, small-pipes and harp. On the other, the late 1980s and 90s have seen the rise of a more syncretic approach to traditional music which attempts to promote an image of progressive modernity through the use of modern electronic instruments along with “authentic” traditional ones and a synthesis of traditional music and modern rock accompaniment and arrangements.

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<sup>924</sup> Programme, September 7-9th 1979, p.7.





# VIRGIN ARE BIGGER ON TRADITION THAN YOU MAY THINK.

Contrary to our more popular image the chain of Virgin Record Stores has a wide selection of Traditional music, be it Folk, Blues, Song or Dance; but don't just take our word for it, come along and see for yourself.



OUT OF LONDON SHOPS ABERDEEN 172 Union Street - BIRMINGHAM 74 Bull Street - BRIGITON 5 Queens Road - BRISTOL 12/14 Merchant Street -  
CARDIFF 6/7 Duke Street - DURHAM Unit 9, Milburn Gate Centre, North Road - EDINBURGH 131 Princes Street & Unit 9, Cameron Toll, Shopping  
Centre - GLASGOW 28/32 Union Street - LEEDS 94-96 The Briggate - LIVERPOOL Units 4 & 7, Central Shopping Centre, Ranelagh Street -  
MANCHESTER Unit 11B, Arndale Centre, Market Street - MILTON KEYNES 59 Silbury Arcade, Secklow Gate West - NEWCASTLE 10/14 High Friars,  
Eldon Square - PETERBOROUGH 34 Queensgate Centre - PLYMOUTH 105 Armada Way - PORTSMOUTH Units 69-73, The Tricorn, Charlotte Street -  
SHEFFIELD 35 High Street - SOUTHAMPTON 16 Bargate Street & Plummers Department Store Above Bar - SUNDERLAND 29 Blandford Street -  
TORQUAY 9 Haldon Centre, Union Street - YORK 5 Feasegate - LONDON STORES MARBLE ARCH 19 Marble Arch - MEGASTORE 14/16 Oxford Street.

Figure 12.1 Virgin Records, Advertisement.  
Source: Folk Roots 26 (August 1985) p.9.



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One notable player to emerge in the recent period is Simon Thoumire of Edinburgh.<sup>925</sup> Born in 1970, his repertory embraces many strands of music present within the late folk revival including Irish, Scottish, Jazz and Blues. He first became interested in the instrument at the age of 12 through listening to his parents' folk music records and learned to play with the benefit of the Alistair Anderson tutor discussed in the previous chapter. He has played with the Edinburgh folk music group Seannachie but is better known for his solo performances and work with a trio bearing his name. He has also performed and recorded extensively with the guitarist Ian Carr of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, playing a wide selection of music "which sees no distinction between Scott Skinner and Scott Joplin. One medley romps through George Gershwin's "Fascinating Rhythm", Jim Sutherland's very-Scottish-sounding "Radical Road" and Dave Brubeck's "It's a Raggy Waltz".<sup>926</sup>

Simon was the 1989 winner of BBC radio's "Folk on Two Young Tradition Award" and later took the "Folk Roots Award" which recognises outstanding talent in the performance of traditional music. He has developed his own way of holding the concertina in which his fingers approach the buttons from an unusual angle but which, he claims, allows a greater dexterity. In playing slow music he uses a full organ-like chordal accompaniment (Tape Item 12.1). In faster music his style is eclectic and employs riffs and figures borrowed from jazz, dramatic syncopations, sudden full chords, melodic extensions, exaggerated bellows changes, percussive hitting of the buttons, rapidly executed triplets, "birls" and other forms of traditional ornamentation (Tape Item 12.1). His idiosyncratic arrangements suggest comparison with the playing of Irish fiddle player Tommy Potts:

Some basic ingredients like timbre and repertoire, are obviously traditional, while in other areas there are smartingly new ingredients. A high degree of innovation is evident and many aspects of the music which have been untouchable for the three centuries of its existence as a genre are directly challenged.<sup>927</sup>

Simon deliberately chooses traditional tunes with an inherent syncopation which he further exaggerates through bellows action and he constantly deviates from the "authorised versions", rarely playing exactly the same way twice.

In recent years, Scotland has witnessed a revival in traditional dance by young people within the cities.<sup>928</sup> Such dancing is free of many of the conventions of the Scottish

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<sup>925</sup> See Reid, Lindsay "Simon puts the squeeze on his talent" *Edinburgh Evening News* (25 September 1989) p.10, Adams, Rob "Take a good tune and add that mischievous tendency" *The Glasgow Herald* (8 January 1991) p.8.

<sup>926</sup> Ibid. Adams.

<sup>927</sup> O'Suilleabhain, Michael "'My Love is in America': melodic deviation and the programmatic in the fiddle playing of Tommy Potts" *An Fhìdil Ghealach* 1 (1980) p.17.

<sup>928</sup> For an introduction to this aspect of the revival see various articles in "Completely Ceilidh'ed" *The*

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country dance “movement” including the instrumentation and repertory used in its accompaniment. The accordion, which is *de rigueur* in established dance accompaniment, is often absent, while the concertina and fiddle are given a more prominent role as in The Cloud Howe Ceilidh Band of Glasgow (which combines two fiddles, English concertina, played by Steve Sutcliffe, and “jazz” guitar) or the Ceilidh Collective from Edinburgh. These new style bands do not follow the conventions of “Scottish Country Dance” ensembles but embrace a less conservative approach to instrumentation, repertory, style, decorum and performance practice. Ann Ward, who plays concertina in the Ceilidh Collective, played for folk dance while resident in England for a while and during the early 1980s was one of two concertinists in the all woman Scottish traditional music group Sprangeen. She sees the instrument as being highly appropriate to her band’s historical and musical approach to Scottish dance music:

Because a concertina blends in so well. In our band we try and do a lot of old fashioned Scottish tunes. In fact we’re doing some old fashioned Scottish dances and one called “The Black Dance” and all of the tunes are 18th Century tunes and if you had an accordion you wouldn’t be able to hear this so you can’t feel at best that you’re recreating an old sound... So if you’re wanting to recreate not just the Scottish sound [but] the old fashioned Scottish sound, then the concertina’s the instrument.<sup>929</sup>

For tunes like [the schottische] the concertina is absolutely amazing for you can get these “Scotch snaps”, diddle-dum, diddle-dum, so crisp. You can’t do it on a flute, you can do it on a whistle and of course you can do it on the fiddle for they can just go with their bow, flick, flick, flick but this [the concertina] is excellent for these tunes.<sup>930</sup>

Despite this latest area of use, the concertina remains on the outer fringe of dance music in Scotland. Although the concertina was originally revived as an alternative to the accordion, this latter instrument has itself been rehabilitated and now has a place with revival musicians, to the extent that the popularity of the concertina is kept in check.

### **Instrument Manufacture and Retail**

The number of concertina makers continues to grow slowly to meet demand (including new manufacturers in Germany and France) but overall output remains low. Retail is still mainly through a small number of specialist outlets and private

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Scotsman Weekend (18 December 1993) pp 4-10.

<sup>929</sup> Ann Ward: Eydmann 93.01.A3.

<sup>930</sup> *Ibid.*, A5.

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dealers. None of these are located in Scotland although a few music shops do deal in second-hand concertinas as they come up and foreign made English and Anglo-German instruments are widely available. Specialist dealers often set up temporary stalls at folk music festivals and can become a focus for interested musicians trading information and conversation as well as instruments. Many players buy second-hand and the International Concertina Association, local players' groups and the traditional music press all help facilitate the market. Musicians seeking new, quality instruments deal directly with the small number of manufacturers although these are expensive (a new English concertina can cost well over £1,000) and there are long waiting lists. The high cost of instruments is a major factor which influences adoption.

### **Instrument Technology and Design**

The revival has also led to the creation of new concertina keyboard designs. Drawing upon a study of earlier patents, the "Hayden System" concertina was developed with the folk revival player in mind (Figure 12.2). This is promoted as being particularly suited to the non-sight reader (typical of many players of the revival) and is said to encourage transposition without the need to learn radically different fingering patterns.<sup>931</sup> Versions of this concertina are currently manufactured by Wheatstone and Co. and by Bastari of Italy. Although well received in journals concerned with traditional music, it is too early to reach conclusions regarding levels of adoption or aspects of performance using this new form of concertina fingerboard. I have not encountered its use in Scotland.

There have been several attempts to adapt the concertina to the demands of modern electronic music. Individual players, particularly those in dance bands and "folk-rock" groups, have devised their own arrangements for the fitting of microphones to allow the amplification (and electronic manipulation) of the instrument's sound<sup>932</sup> and a number of commercial manufacturers of "pick-up" microphones or "transducers" specifically target the concertina in their trade literature (Figure 12.3).<sup>933</sup>

However, the amplified concertina does not offer the potential range of synthesised "sounds" or access to "sampling" available in many modern keyboard instruments. It would be possible to construct such an electronic instrument with a concertina keyboard for there are a number of commercially available accordions which include

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<sup>931</sup> Townley, John "The Hayden Keyboard: a new breed of concertina" *Concertina and Squeezebox* Vol.3, No.3 (1985) p.13, Hayden, Brian "The Hayden Concertina Keyboards" in *English Dance and Song* Vol.46, No.2 (Summer 1984) and *The Hayden Concertina Keyboard* information sheet published by Brian G. Hayden (1983).

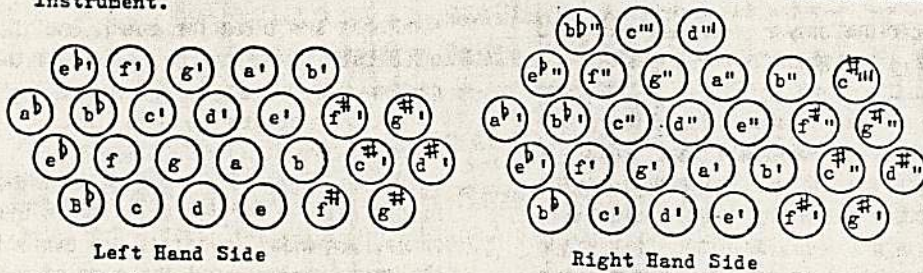
<sup>932</sup> For example, see Galvin, Patch Edward "Electronic Pickups in Concertina" letter to the editor, *Concertina and Squeezebox* Vol.2, No.2 (Spring 1984) p.30. Players often employ "tie-pin" microphones fitted to the instrument ends with "Velcro".

<sup>933</sup> For example, "Accusound" and "Microvox".



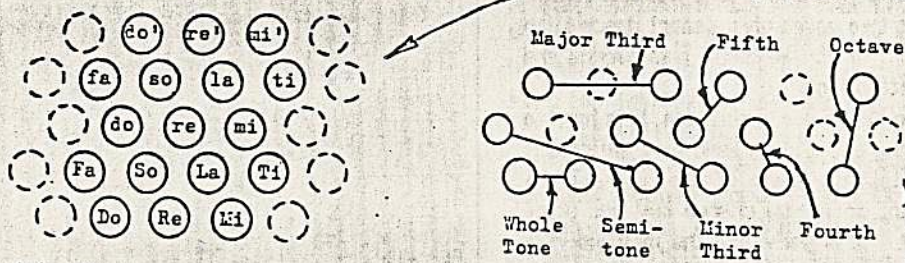
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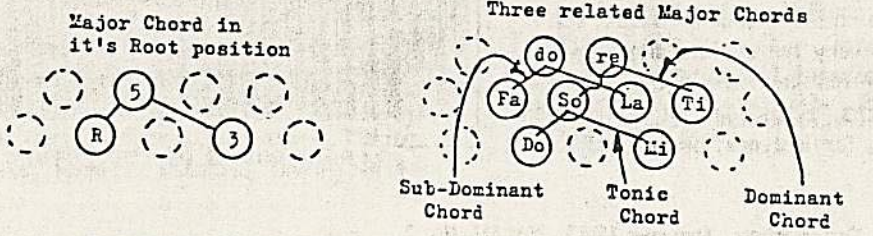


Left Hand Side Right Hand Side

It has a number of advantages over the more common Concertina Keyboard systems. (1) The notes of no less than eight different Keys :- E<sup>b</sup>, B<sup>b</sup>, F, C, G, D, A, & E are arranged in the same manner. (2) Each of these Keys forms a compact block of Touches on the Keyboard, with inter-meshing runs of 3 and 4 Touches. (Note - the other 4 Keys can be played on this Concertina, but with a more or less modified fingering.) (3) Each of these runs goes consecutively from left to right. (4) The Fingers can move easily from one run of notes to the next. (5) The Octaves repeat on the nearest Touch of the next but one row of notes. (6) A tune learned in one of the above Keys can (within the limits of the Keyboard) be Transposed into any of the other 7 Keys without altering the fingering pattern. (This is like Caping a Guitar). These 6 are illustrated SolFarily below:- left



(7) All the various musical intervals have specific constant patterns:-  
 (8) Chords are very easy to play on the Keyboards. The basic Major Chord pattern is about the easiest way the three "strong" fingers fall on the Keyboards. This basic chord may be moved diagonally to the left and right to give a simple 3 chord accompaniment in the 8 most important Keys.



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Figure 12.2 Hayden Duet Concertina Layout. Source: Handbill published by the patentee in 1983.



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Figure 12.3 Advertisement for Accusound.  
Source: The Musician (March 1994) p.20.



## *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

provision for linking into “MIDI” devices. These invariably have the drawback that the keys of the electronic version do not have the same “feel” as the original form or allow the expression which can be gained by varying pressure to the bellows. At the time of writing, an electronics inventor and enthusiastic concertina player, Steve Simpson of Edinburgh, has developed a new design for a “MIDI Universal Instrument Controller” comprising microprocessor-driven digital electronic circuitry within a modest console which can be linked between a musical instrument and a synthesizer or sound module. The controller, it is claimed, is designed to facilitate programming to suit a variety of different input devices and allow “rapid development and minimum delay in controlling new MIDI instrument designs” and is “a low cost solution to attaining a MIDI musical instrument without the cost of developing dedicated hardware”. The device can be easily upgraded and allows for “instrument breath control for bellows and mouth activated instruments”.<sup>934</sup> It is intended that this would offer a versatile control of different instruments which can be rapidly changed during performance yet all linked to one module. By way of a prototype to demonstrate and promote the controller, the inventor has developed a MIDI concertina based device in which the conventional reeds of an existing concertina are replaced by electronic sensors. There is also a means of responding to changes in bellows pressure and the use of the remote console removes any need to install the necessary dedicated control hardware within the concertina body. I have inspected this device and confirm that it has much the same “feel”, response and weight as the conventional concertina.

Although the controller may have a wider applicability, it is difficult to envisage any great demand for the use of the “MIDI concertina” outwith the limited circuit of a few professional artistes with appropriate musical taste and aspirations. Simon Thoumire might be such a player. “High- tech” instruments of this sort are contrary to the folk revival’s respect for an idealised past, ideology of authenticity and preference for personal, intimate sounds.

### **Looking to the Past**

A number of concertina players are currently re-examining the concertina’s nineteenth-century repertory and experimenting with its use in the performance of “art” music.

Douglas Rogers, a London based guitar tutor working in higher education, came to the English concertina as a result of researching the nineteenth-century guitar repertory. Exploring the works of Regondi, he became fascinated by his pieces for concertina and undertook to learn the instrument. He now performs professionally from nineteenth-century concertina scores with piano accompaniment. Rogers

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<sup>934</sup> “MIDI Universal Instrument Controller: Single MIDI Unit Controls Variety of Instruments” marketing information brochure published by [Inventions International](#).

### *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

established concertina classes in “classical” solo and ensemble playing in London in September 1988 which echo the 1960s and 70s courses run by Alf Edwards and Frank Butler for the International Concertina Association. A number of new works for concertina have been written for him as discussed below.

Dave Townsend (1951- ) is another “serious” player who has come to prominence in recent years. His widely based repertory and studied approach to performance contrasts greatly with the “primitivism” of many earlier “traditional” revival players. Already a pianist, he came to the instrument through Irish traditional music while a student in Manchester in the early 1970s but later developed an interest in how the concertina could be used for playing English early music, music hall, classical and contemporary “art” music. His catholic taste is reflected in a gramophone record<sup>935</sup> of which his arrangement of J.S. Bach’s “Suite in E sharp minor” is particularly notable for its complexity, precision and balance in volume between parts (Tape Item 12.2). He has described the problems inherent in playing such music on the English concertina:

That’s a great piece of music with some rattling good tunes. the different sections may have been written for other instruments, then brought together as a suite, perhaps to be played originally on a lute or harpsichord. It was an interesting challenge for me. On lute or harpsichord the sound of each note begins to die away as soon as you have plucked the string or pressed the key. On a concertina you’ve got the opposite; the note stays there as long as the key is depressed, and the sound doesn’t decay. You can bring out the contrapuntal texture more fully because the “hidden” melodies below the upper tune can be brought into greater prominence. But if you play all the notes with their full length, the lower notes start to drown out the higher notes, on a concertina... You have to let the upper notes sing out. I remember when I was first working on the fast bit of the Prelude... I needed to separate out the upper part and the lower part, and phrase them independently... It is possible. It’s not particularly easy, because you have to think the two separate parts, instead of thinking right hand and left hand, as you do on a keyboard.<sup>936</sup>

Townsend is in demand as a concertina player and has taken part in National Theatre productions and performances with several orchestras.

In my chapter on concertina bands I made reference to Nigel Pickles’ attempt to recreate the sound of such ensembles. During the late 1980s, he was also been involved in another project which seeks to revive concertina music from the nineteenth-century repertory. The New Mexborough English Concertina Quartet

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<sup>935</sup> *Portrait of a Concertina* (Saydisc 5DL 351) (1985).

<sup>936</sup> “Dave Townsend” *Concertina and Squeezebox* 22 (Spring 1990) pp.15-16.

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comprises musicians who originally played traditional music only but later developed an interest in the late Victorian and Edwardian popular repertory:

We're really dead serious about the music. We want to preserve it, keep it alive, not take the piss out of it. We found for instance that people like to be told a hell of a lot if you don't make a history lesson out of it. And of course we can cover the whole range of music available for the concertina. This is where it's new for all of us really - we each happen to have our roots in folk, but what we're doing now isn't people's generally accepted idea of folk music.<sup>937</sup>

The group, which made a gramophone record<sup>938</sup> in 1986, performs in evening dress in the manner of an Edwardian string quartet. There is also a new ensemble, "The Lost Chord", which combines serpent and concertina in the accompaniment of Victorian song and which was featured on BBC radio in December 1993.<sup>939</sup>

### **New Music for Concertina**

In parallel with the revival of interest in "early" concertina music, the instrument has recently attracted the attention of a number of contemporary composers.

Keith Amos (1939- ) published his "Sonata for Concertina and Piano" in 1988. Commissioned by Douglas Rogers, it lasts approximately 12 minutes and is in 3 movements. The piece is not particularly difficult although there is one slightly awkward passage in chromatic chords in the first movement (Example 12.2), quite a lot of octave work throughout and two part writing in the dance-like last movement (Example 12.3). In the words of Rogers:

The whole piece is beautifully written for the concertina, and the slow middle movement ("lament") with its discreet pedal and double-dotted rhythms has that poignant celtic lilt that falls so very well on the instrument. The piano part is not hard, but is light in texture to give just the right balance and tone.<sup>940</sup>

The piece was first performed at Wimpole Hall, London on 14 November 1988. Also written for Douglas Rogers, Oliver Hunt's "Song of the Sea" exploits the concertina's associations with seafaring: A "programmatic" work scored for concertina and piano, with the latter playing more than just an accompanying role. It is built round the well-

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<sup>937</sup> Nigel Pickles interviewed by Maggy St. George in "Their boots all polished black..." *Concertina and Squeezebox* 12 (1986) p.9.

<sup>938</sup> *The New Mexborough English Concertina Quartet* (Plant Life Records, 055).

<sup>939</sup> *Folk on Two* (22 December 1993).

<sup>940</sup> *NICA* 344 (March 1987) p.3.

The image shows a handwritten musical score for a piano piece, consisting of ten staves of music. The notation includes various chords, melodic lines, and dynamic markings such as 'f', 'pp', 'dim', and 'Psub.'. There are also some boxed letters like 'H' and 'T' and numerical markings like '2' and '3'.

Example 12.2 Sonata for Concertina and Piano (extract).  
 Composed Keith Amos. Published by CMA Publications  
 (Kingston, 1987).



Handwritten musical score for a piano sonata extract. The score is written on a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. It features several systems of music with various annotations including dynamic markings (mf, p), articulation (>), and phrasing slurs. Chord symbols F, G, and H are placed above the staff. The tempo marking "Più Mosso" is written above the final system, which also includes the dynamic marking "mf sub." and a key signature change to one sharp (F#).

Example 12.3 Sonata for Concertina and Piano (extract).  
 Composed Keith Amos. Published by CMA Publications  
 (Kingston, 1987).



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known sea shanty “Windy Old Weather”, of which occasional fragments can be heard throughout... appearing mysteriously like the distant, ghostly voices of drowned men fleetingly heard, then lost on the wind or veiled by the mist. Near the end the tune appears in its entirety, a lonely requiem, but disturbed and haunted still by an accompaniment that, like the sea itself, has no sympathy, but surges on and on unfeeling and unknowing.<sup>941</sup>

The Scottish composer Edward McGuire (1948- ) used the concertina in a number of pieces of varying character and function throughout the 1980s and 90s. In the incidental music for the feature film “Blood Red Roses”,<sup>942</sup> which tells the life story of a twentieth century trades union activist and is set in both urban and rural Scotland, the concertina is given the lead role. This was at the request of the producer John McGrath who felt that the sound of the instrument lent the correct “feel” to his film, the concertina having originally been scored in a less prominent position along with other instruments.<sup>943</sup> In “The Spirit of Flight” (1991), a ballet suite for string orchestra with brass and traditional instruments, the concertina’s role is limited to a few chords and unison performance with the Scottish instruments in sections based upon traditional Gaelic song and dance rhythms. McGuire’s “Riverside” (1991), for chamber orchestra and traditional music group, uses the concertina in similar way but gives it a prominent part along with the oboe and bassoon in the atmospheric close of the piece (Example 12.4). His “Prelude 11 for English Concertina” (1994) is distinctly “modern” in character and makes use of the full range of the instrument and a variety of bellows effects. In this piece, which mainly comprises a series of chords or “clusters”, the writing is exceptional in that the composer has scored the piece on two lines, one for each hand, a device which recognises and exploits the “stereo” effect of the English concertina’s separate manuals. His use of the duplicate notes found on either side of the concertina further emphasises this (Example 12.5).

McGuire’s “Cullercoats Tommy”, first performed in Newcastle upon Tyne in 1993, is a one hour, one act opera based on a local historical incident. The music for this modern dramatic piece combines actors, orchestra, dancers and choruses (adults and children) and a traditional music quartet of concertina, small-pipes, fiddle and flute. The traditional musicians appear on stage playing dance music in a “Northumbrian style”, sometimes as a group, sometimes embedded in the larger orchestral sound. In some sections the concertina is also used to accompany the principal soprano. The concertina player for this production was Alistair Anderson.

Anderson himself has been actively composing for the instrument since the early 1970s. At first this took the form of dance tunes in a traditional style but more recently he has tackled more involved pieces, including his “Steel Skies” for traditional flute, fiddle, English concertina and Northumbrian small-pipes. This

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<sup>941</sup> Ibid.

<sup>942</sup> Freeway Films, 1986.

<sup>943</sup> From the personal experience of the writer who played the concertina part in the recording.

ORCHESTRA

OBOE  
1. *p*  
PPP < SOLO

BASSOON  
PPP < SOLO

VIOLINS 1  
PPP

VIOLINS 2  
PPP

VIOLAS  
PPP

CELLOS  
PPP

BASSES  
sf > 1/2 SIM.

WOOD FLUTE  
(VOICES) SHH

SCOTS FIDDLE

LOWLAND BAGPIPES

TREBLE CONCERTINA  
LIBERO (NOT IN TEMPO)  
PPP < SOLO

CLARSACH  
(VOICE) SHH

Example 12.4 Riverside (close).

Source: Composed by Edward McGuire, 1991, reproduced from composer's manuscript.



## 2 PRELUDE 11 for Concertina

$p = 112$  Eddie McGuire '94

R.H. (AIR SOUND ONLY) --- PITCH APPEARS --- STEREO SOUND GROWS ---  
NIENTE (PPP)

L.H. IN OUT IN OUT SIM. .... Circa 15"

x4 x3 x2 xc3

psf pp < > sim. sf > < sf > < sf >

(EXCITED, RHYTHMICAL, SOMETIMES SYNCOPATED)

3 3 SAME CHORD

CRES. ---

ffp sf

CRES. poco a poco

molto

Example 12.5 Prelude 11 for Concertina (extract).  
Source: Composed by Edward McGuire, 1994, reproduced from  
composer's manuscript.

### *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

music, which is based upon rhythms of the dance music of the British Isles, makes allowances for each player's own interpretation and decoration:

Since the style has evolved to interpret melody, then, I decided that all or the vast majority of the lines within "Steel Skies" as it turned out to be, would need to be highly melodic so that they could still use those styles. In other words, you couldn't write the sort of piece you might write for a standard second violin because if it isn't a good enough tune, then you don't feel like interpreting it. And what's more, you can't suddenly ask somebody to play two notes here, six bars rest, three notes here, six bars rest. You can make wonderful music out of that, but it's a different thing. You can't really play three notes in the middle of nothing in traditional style. I wanted to stay close enough to use those strengths, so that's why all the harmonies and everything are separate melodies. If you take "The Iron Bridge", for instance, the fun there is that each of us has got a tune which is ours, and we all learnt our tune and went off and interpreted it the way we wanted and, and then came together, and then the fun was listening very carefully to everybody.<sup>944</sup>

An extract from the published music for "The Iron Bridge" is given in Example 12.6. This piece is written for five parts in the treble clef, with the main tune in the upper part. The musicians are invited to devise their own arrangement an instrumental combinations based on the score. On Anderson's gramophone recording of the piece he uses concertina, Northumbrian pipes, two fiddles, viola, flute and mandolin.<sup>945</sup>

Karen Wilmhurst and Ron Shaw are both composing members of the ensemble The Cauld Blast Orchestra which originally came together for the 1991 stage play "Jock Tamson's Bairns". Both have produced work which uses the English concertina in a syncretic approach to Scottish music by combining jazz, rock and traditional elements. The ensemble's concertina player, Norman Chalmers, who was introduced in the last chapter, frequently plays with theatre companies in Scotland and has contributed much new music for the instrument.

One further area of concertina use which should be mentioned here is the American composer John Cage's use of the concertina in his work with Scottish traditional musicians.

In the late summer of 1984 he spent a day in Edinburgh listening to a group of Scottish musicians and before directing an "arrangement" using their music. The composer was particularly interested in the English concertina and insisted that the

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<sup>944</sup> "An Interview with Alistair Anderson" Concertina and Squeezebox 13 (1986) p.9.

<sup>945</sup> Steel Skies (Topic Records 12TS427).



## The Ironbridge

The musical score for 'The Ironbridge' (extract) is presented in two systems, each containing five staves. The first system is marked 'A' and begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The music features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including triplets (marked '3') and trills (marked 'tr'). The second system continues the piece, incorporating a sixteenth-note trill (marked 'tr') and a seventh-note chord (marked '7'). The notation is clear and detailed, showing the specific notes and their durations for each instrument part.

Example 12.6 The Iron Bridge (extract).

Source: Composed by Alistair Anderson, c1982. Published by the Serpent Press (Witney, 1982) p.15. The piece is played nine times with different combinations from concertina, Northumbrian pipes, fiddles (2), viola, flute and mandolin in each.



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instrument be employed in this and in his subsequent “Scottish Circus” which was premiered in Glasgow in 1990.<sup>946</sup> In these pieces, the musicians play separate selections of traditional music in their own time and in various locations within the performance space. According to Revill:

The effect of the performance is spacious; tonalities are superimposed non-intentionally as players weave in and out. It can be criticised, on the other hand, as essentially a parasitic work; the input from Cage was minimal - he simply “signed” it, not unlike a Duchamp readymade - and so dependent on a folk tradition with a lengthy lineage which, arguably, it denatures.<sup>947</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Although the concertina continues to attract a number of enthusiastic players, it must be regarded as something of a minority interest. In traditional music, the principal site of its current use, the fortunes of the concertina are tied to the direction of the present post-revival phase. In Scottish music it is likely to remain marginalised as more overtly “national” instruments (i.e. the bagpipes and harp) dominate. Key individuals will continue to exert an important influence but unless there is some form of awakening of “grass roots” interest there is unlikely to be any substantial increase in adoption. Perhaps those players of the early revival who are now in middle-age will come to be discovered by younger generations and venerated as “old timers” in Ledang’s sense.

New instrument designs may be developed but it is unlikely that these will ever challenge the dominance of the English and Anglo-German types which currently dominate the market. The availability of inexpensive, but good quality instruments, will remain a problem unless a major manufacturer enters the scene. A good second-hand stock of instruments will continue for some time but the instruments will eventually “wear out” as the reeds can only tolerate a few re-tunings and other parts will fail. This will only contribute to the fact that demand outstrips supply.

The concertina will still be used in unusual musical settings (playing both old and new music) on account of its novelty or antiquarian interest and I would suggest that the symbolic, ideological and historical associations linked to the instrument will be more important than its musical qualities in determining the patterns of its future adoption. The theatre, for example, draws on these aspects and is an area in which one can expect to see the use of the concertina developed in future.

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<sup>946</sup> The concertina was played by the writer.

<sup>947</sup> Revill, David *The Roaring Silence. John Cage: A Life* (London, 1992) pp.293-4.

## **Concluding Remarks**

In my introductory chapter, I tabled a number of questions. Who played the concertina? What did they use it for? What kind of music did they play? How did they play? etc... In addressing these issues I have found that the history of usage of the concertina has not followed any single linear path but rather it has been adopted at different times by different musical groups for a whole variety of purposes. Once “invented” and in the public domain, the concertina soon found favour in settings and activities well away from the inventor’s original aim of creating a formal concert instrument and its adoption has never been limited to any self-contained group or associated with any simple defined repertory or musical style.

My evidence leads to the conclusion that, in the nineteenth century, this “novel” instrument was most readily adopted into institutions and settings which were themselves new and free from convention, such as the music hall, concertina bands, new forms of sacred music making and the expanding domestic market. It fared less well in the more formally structured world of “art” music where, after an initial period of novelty, it became reduced to occasional use as a curiosity or source of exotic tone colour. In the present century, adoption has been greatly influenced by the wide range of popular images (working class, seafaring, Victorian nostalgia etc...) which have become attached to the instrument. My findings confirm the suggestion in the introduction that musical instruments are not just the tools of the musician’s trade, selected for musical effectiveness, but are taken up to serve extra-musical functions also. The case study of the concertina shows that the inherent fundamental qualities of musical instruments do not alone dictate their usage; but rather they are, adopted, promoted, abandoned, rediscovered and revived for a combination of reasons and in many different ways.

I commenced this study as an enthusiast for the concertina family but came to develop a wider concern for the forces and processes behind the creation, use and abandonment of musical instruments in general. My work with the concertina has raised many questions regarding the fortunes of other “novel” instruments such as the accordion and saxophone. Similar studies of these instruments would, of course, tell different stories but taken together they would help build up a wider understanding of the adoption and abandonment of musical instruments in the modern period.

My work has led me to develop a wider fascination for the broader issues of popular music in Great Britain, and has brought an awareness of the constancy of musical change. As we have seen, the concertina has proved a good subject for the study of this aspect of music making. I have also been struck by the variety of music encountered at the popular level and have had to reassess my previous notions regarding musical boundaries. My introductory comments that the study of instruments in society requires a theoretical framework which recognised the richness, complexities and contradictions of the musical field have been justified.

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I have found that adoption of the concertina in Scotland has tended to reflect the situation in Britain as a whole, but with differences due to prevailing performance traditions (e.g. social dance, the piping tradition, etc...) and different rates of social and musical change. Although the use of the concertina in Scotland was never great in comparison to the level of usage of older, more traditional instruments (fiddle, bagpipes etc..) and other new instruments (accordion, melodeon etc..) it did play a significant part in the general “nationalisation” and modernisation of native traditions which occurred throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This study backs my view that, far from supplanting existing instruments and debasing native traditions, as some hold, the arrival of the concertina (and other novel musical inventions) should be seen as part of a broadening and enriching of music making in Scotland.

It is customary to make suggestions for further work in the area and here I offer a few ideas for consideration. The Victorian repertory of both “art” and popular music is worthy of more in-depth study. A vast amount of concertina music from the nineteenth century awaits cataloguing and discussion. Professional concertinists, such as Regondi and Blagrove, deserve attention on account of their integration into the wider musical community in the mid-nineteenth century. The music hall and the Salvation Army are principal sites of concertina use which are also rich in primary source material. The activities of the International Concertina Association are worthy of more detailed examination because of the variety of musical tastes the institution embraces and the fact that the group has encouraged interaction between older and younger musicians. The continuing popularity of the concertina in the folk music revival demands further extensive and intensive recording.

At the time of writing these concluding remarks, articles appeared in the national press reporting the impending sale of the concertina collection presently housed in the private museum of Neil Wayne in Belper, Derbyshire. These features lamented the lack of attention being paid to the concertina in 1994, the 150th. anniversary of Wheatstone’s 1844 consolidating patent for the instrument. Although only a modest contribution, it is hoped that this study adds to our understanding of the life and times of this fascinating and largely misunderstood family of musical instruments.

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