

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.²¹⁶ 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”.²¹⁷ 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.

²¹⁶ Weber, Music and the Middle Class.

²¹⁷ 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.²¹⁸

The early sales records of Wheatstone and Co.²¹⁹ 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,²²⁰ 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.²²¹ 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

²¹⁸ The Orchestra (29 April 1865).

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

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

²²¹ 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.

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

It is known that Regondi was giving public performances on the concertina in the same year that he purchased his first instrument.²²³ 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.²²⁴

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

²²² 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.

²²³ 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.

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

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an instrument astonished the German critics”.²²⁵ He became a friend of Bernhard Molique (1802-1869) who wrote for him a “Concerto for Concertina and Orchestra” (op 46) in 1853²²⁶ which was “played with great success at the concert of the Music Society of London on 20 April 1864”.²²⁷

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.²²⁸

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 records²²⁹ 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.²³⁰ 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.²³¹ The

²²⁵ “Regondi” *GDMM* Vol. IV (1890) p.97.

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

²²⁷ 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.

²²⁸ Scholes, *The Mirror of Music*, Vol.2, p.813.

²²⁹ Butler, “The First Ten Years...”.

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

²³¹ “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.²³²

Blagrove composed fantasias²³³ 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”²³⁴ and two “Romances for Concertina and Piano-forte”. He published a Concertina Journal for amateurs from 1851.

George Case²³⁵

A noted violinist, Case acquired an English concertina in 1841²³⁶ and became associated with Regondi and Blagrove. He was a regular performer in theatre and opera orchestras including the Royal Italian Opera, Covent Garden²³⁷ 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”.²³⁸

Case became well known as a teacher and his methods²³⁹ 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

Molique.

²³² MacTaggart and MacTaggart, Musical Instruments..., p.60.

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

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

²³⁵ Dates unknown.

²³⁶ Butler, “The First Ten Years...”.

²³⁷ 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.

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

²³⁹ 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 1851.²⁴⁰

Example 4.1, the “Grand Exercise” from his Instructions,²⁴¹ 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.²⁴²

Alfred B. Sedgwick²⁴³

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”.²⁴⁴

Sedgwick published a large number of arrangements of popular concert and operatic pieces.²⁴⁵ He issued a tutor for the concertina²⁴⁶ and published for other free-reed and

²⁴⁰ MacTaggart and MacTaggart, Musical Instruments..., p.47.

²⁴¹ Pp.55-57.

²⁴² Ibid., p.46.

²⁴³ Dates unknown.

²⁴⁴ Musical Times (April 1849).

²⁴⁵ 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.

Cres.

Tempo Primo.

Dim.

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.²⁴⁷ It has been suggested that the player was responsible for the introduction of the English concertina into North America.²⁴⁸

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”.²⁴⁹ 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 described²⁵⁰ 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

²⁴⁶ Complete Instructions for the Concertina (London, 1854).

²⁴⁷ E.g. Complete Method for the German Concertina (Boston, 1865).

²⁴⁸ Carlin, Richard in Free Reed 19 (August 1974), p.20.

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

²⁵⁰ Johnson, Music and Society...

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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.²⁵¹

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,²⁵² 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 city²⁵³ 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.²⁵⁴ 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.²⁵⁵

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.²⁵⁶

²⁵¹ Brown, British Musical Biography, p.133.

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

²⁵³ 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.

²⁵⁴ The Dramatic Omnibus (9 June 1849).

²⁵⁵ The Playgoer (3 August 1850).

²⁵⁶ *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.²⁵⁷

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.²⁵⁸

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.²⁵⁹

After a few days he was described as "a really deserving and clever musician".²⁶⁰ 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".²⁶¹

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 Jersey²⁶² 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

²⁵⁷ Ibid. (20 July 1850).

²⁵⁸ Ibid. (10 August 1850).

²⁵⁹ Ibid. (17 August 1850).

²⁶⁰ Ibid. (24 August 1850).

²⁶¹ *The Scotsman* (29 December 1892).

²⁶² *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.²⁶³

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".²⁶⁴ 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".²⁶⁵ Bridgman published little and then only for piano.²⁶⁶

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".²⁶⁷

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".²⁶⁸ 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.²⁶⁹ 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,

²⁶³ 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.

²⁶⁴ The Scotsman (4 April 1885).

²⁶⁵ The Scotsman (29 December 1892).

²⁶⁶ 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.

²⁶⁷ Middleton, Studying Popular Music, p.11.

²⁶⁸ Weber, Music of the Middle Class, p.51.

²⁶⁹ 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”.²⁷⁰ Hector Berlioz had discussed the possibilities of the concertina in the orchestra²⁷¹ but only a few nineteenth century composers responded to his recognition of its potential.²⁷²

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 forms²⁷³ were invented in an attempt to regain lost ground. James Alsepti of Exeter, for example, patented²⁷⁴ the introduction of “relief” or “bowing valves” (Figure 4.1) in an attempt to improve “accent, expression and phrasing”.²⁷⁵ 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.²⁷⁶ 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.²⁷⁷ 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.²⁷⁸ The most

²⁷⁰ Carse, Adam *The History of Orchestration* (London, 1925).

²⁷¹ (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.

²⁷² 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.

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

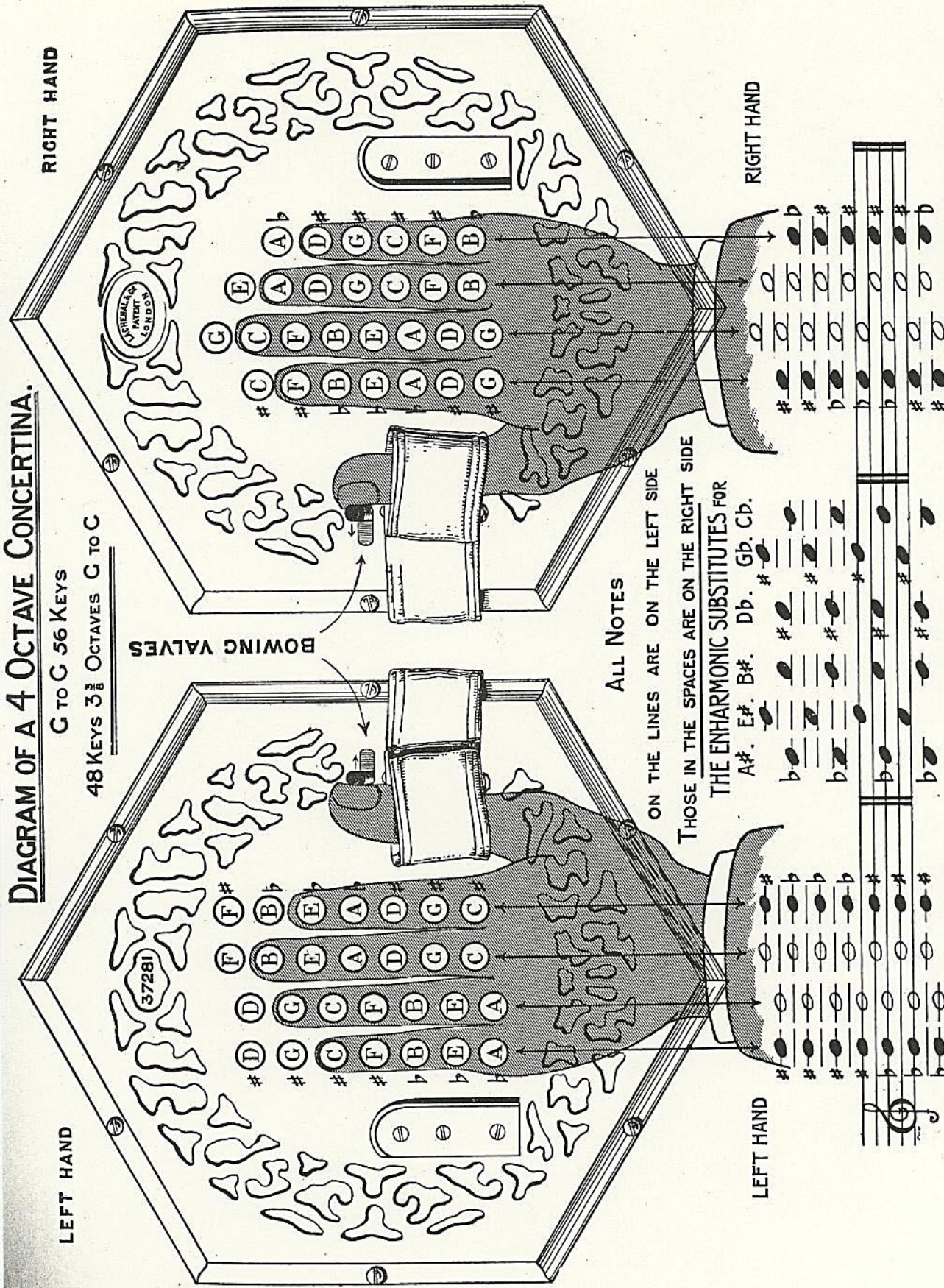
²⁷⁴ 8290 *Improvements in Concertinas Provisional Specification* (8 July 1885).

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

²⁷⁶ 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.

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

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



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Figure 4.1 English Concertina Layout showing Alsepti's "Bowing Valves".
 Source: Alsepti, Signor The Modern English Concertina Method (London, c1885), p.2.

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adventurous was perhaps that developed by Charles Wheatstone and John Stroh²⁷⁹ 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,²⁸⁰ 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.²⁸¹ 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.²⁸²

²⁷⁹ 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.

²⁸⁰ *Musical Times* (January 1869).

²⁸¹ *The Musical Times* (January 1869, June 1873).

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

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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.²⁸³

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".²⁸⁴

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.

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

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p.118.

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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.²⁸⁵

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.

²⁸⁵ 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.

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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.²⁸⁶

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).

²⁸⁶ The Scotsman (23 October 1865).

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