

## 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

---

<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.

## *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

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

---

<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.

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

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

---

<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.

## *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

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.

---

<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.

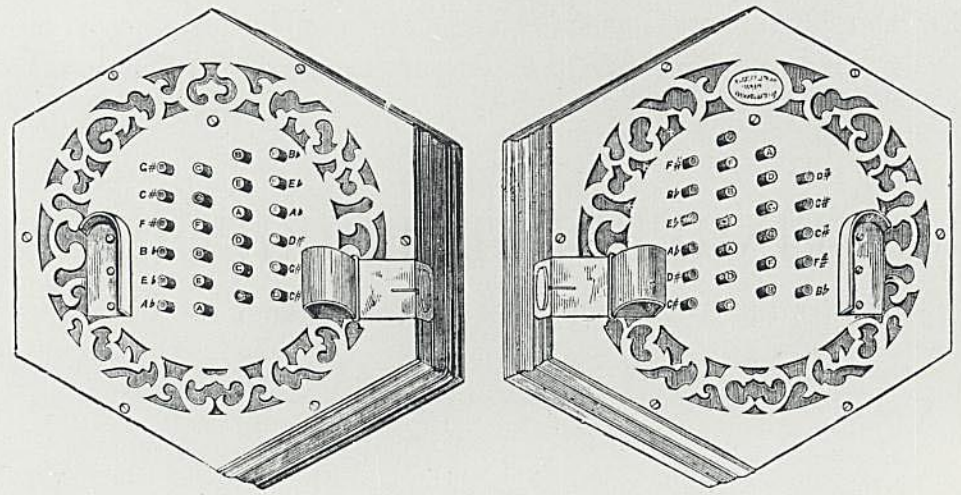


Figure 5.1 Concertina Players.  
 Source: Davidson's Tutor for the Concertina (London n.d.)  
 p.3.

## **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

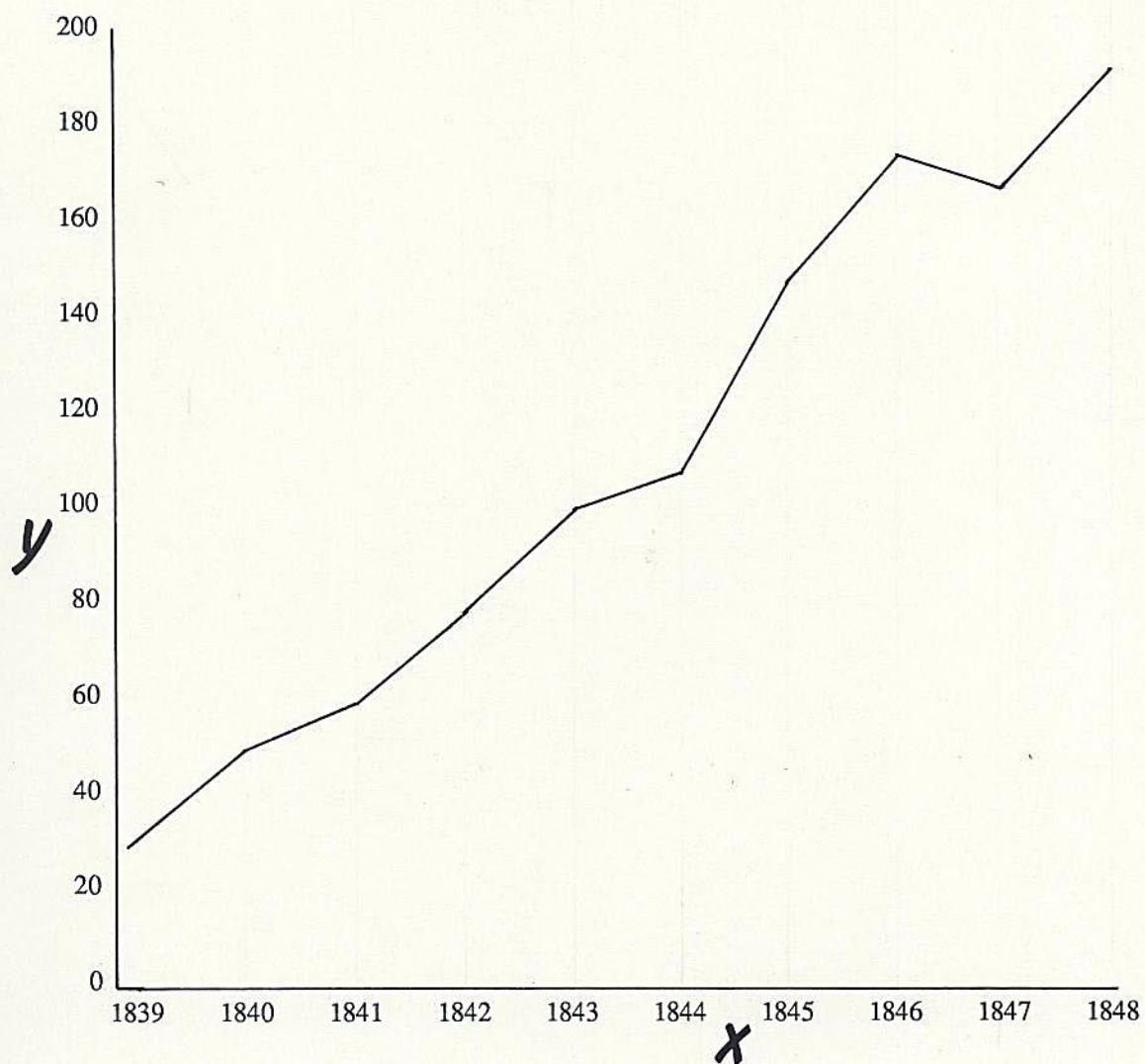
g to c <sup>'''</sup>	48 keys	8 guineas
b to a <sup>'''</sup>	40 keys	£6 16s 6d
b to d <sup>''</sup>	32 keys	5 guineas

#### 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

---

<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).

## *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

### **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
-----------	------------

### **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

---

<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.



## *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

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>

---

<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.

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

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

---

<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.

## *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

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>

---

<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

---

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.

---

<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:

---

<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,

---

<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.

---

<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>

---

<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.

WOODMAN SPARE THAT TREE.

MODERATO.  
con. espressione.

Musical notation for 'WOODMAN SPARE THAT TREE.' in treble clef, 2/4 time, key of E major. It consists of three staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The tempo is 'MODERATO.' and the performance instruction is 'con. espressione.'. The music features various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. Fingering numbers (1, 2, 3) are indicated below the notes. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

AULD ROBIN GRAY.

ADAGIO.  
p

Calando.

Musical notation for 'AULD ROBIN GRAY.' in treble clef, 2/4 time, key of E major. It consists of four staves of music. The tempo is 'ADAGIO.' and the performance instruction is 'p'. The music is characterized by a slower pace and includes many triplets and sixteenth notes. Fingering numbers (1, 2, 3) are present. The piece ends with a 'Calando.' instruction and a double bar line.

PRELUDE IN THE KEY OF E MINOR.

LARGHETTO.

Musical notation for 'PRELUDE IN THE KEY OF E MINOR.' in treble clef, 2/4 time, key of E minor. It consists of one staff of music. The tempo is 'LARGHETTO.'. The music features a slow, steady rhythm with eighth and sixteenth notes. Fingering numbers (1, 2, 3) are indicated.

ROSLIN CASTLE.

ADAGIO.

SCOTCH AIR.

Musical notation for 'ROSLIN CASTLE.' in treble clef, 2/4 time, key of E major. It consists of three staves of music. The tempo is 'ADAGIO.' and it is labeled as a 'SCOTCH AIR.'. The music is a slow, melodic piece with many triplets and sixteenth notes. Fingering numbers (1, 2, 3) are present throughout.

Example 5.1 Auld Robin Gray and Roslin Castle.  
Source: Arranged by Joseph Warren. Published in Complete Instructions for the Concertina (London, c1845) p.72.

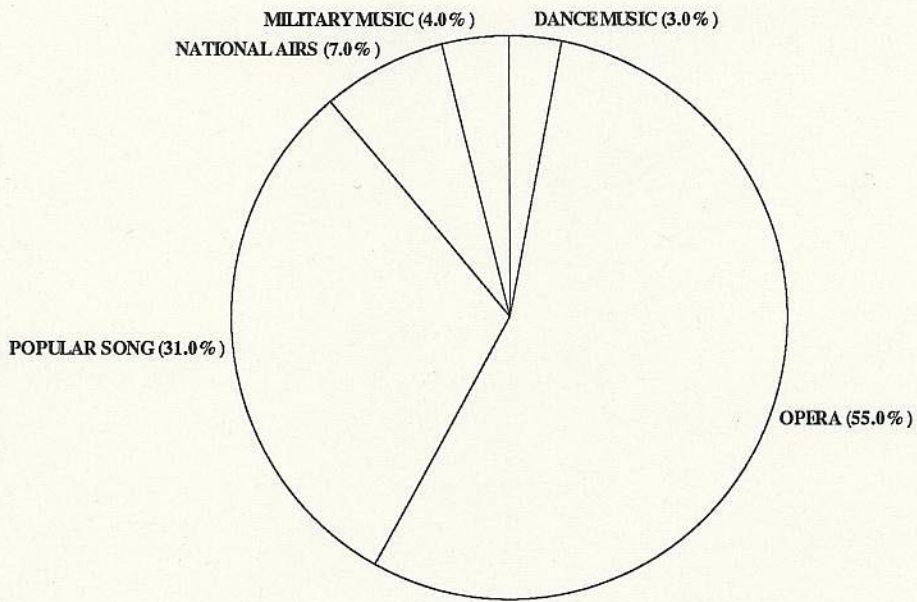


Figure 5.3 Analysis of Contents of the Concertina Library of Sir George Douglas.

## *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

---

<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.

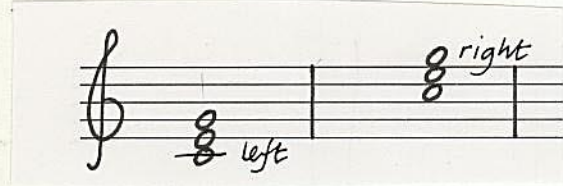
Example 5.2 Ah cedi o piu sciagure.  
Source: From "Lucia Di Lammermoor" by Donizetti.  
Published in Simpson's Journal for the Concertina Vol. 20  
(London, c1848) p.230.

left

right



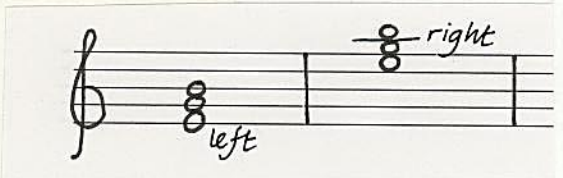
Triads of I



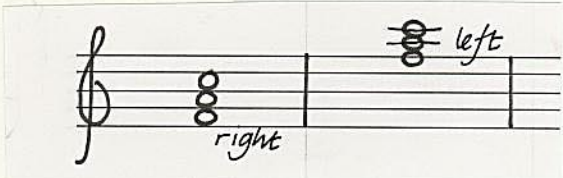
Triads of II



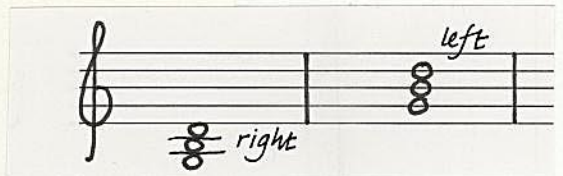
Triads of III



Triads of IV



Triads of V



Triads of VI



Triads of VII



Figure 5.4 Basic Triads in the Key of C Major as Fingered on the English Concertina.

"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 'Introduction.' and 'Playfully.'. The second staff begins the main piece, marked 'Air with energy & rather slower.'. The third staff is marked 'with spirit.'. The fourth staff is marked 'Sym: dolce.'. The fifth staff is marked '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 is marked '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!

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

CHEERFUL  
but not  
quick.

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

LONDON. — Simpson, 266 Regent St.

Example 5.4 Mary of Argyle.

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



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

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

---

<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 .

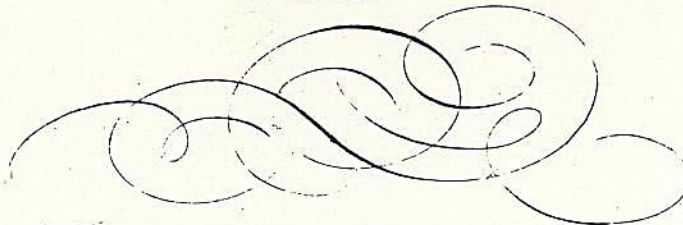
Andante

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.

---

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

---

<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.*

Nº 6.

*Mosso.*

*p* *cres:* *f*

*p* *cres:* *f*

*p* *rit:*

*f*

Songs of Scotland, Nº 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).

## *The Life and Times of the Concertina*

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.

---

<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.

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

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.