

HISTORICAL DOCUMENT

Concertinas in *The Times*, 1860

Notes by ALLAN ATLAS

In my research for a forthcoming article, 'Ladies in the Wheatstone Ledgers: The Gendered Concertina in Victorian England, 1835-1870',¹ I had occasion to sift through the pages of three years worth of *The Times* (1845, 1855, and 1860) in search of references to the concertina.² I was not disappointed: notices about the concertina abound, and they contribute powerfully toward the history—the social history in particular—of the instrument in mid-Victorian England.

What follows are seven notices—with brief comments—from the pages of *The Times* for 1860.

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20 April (p. 3): AN AMATEUR is desirous of joining a select MUSICAL PARTY for mutual improvement in concerted music, either instrumental or mixed. Plays the bass concertina, and would take either the bassoon or alto part. Address, with full particulars, to Basso, Stanesby's Library, Sloane-street, Chelsea.

By 'alto part' the writer refers to the viola, and thus attests to the practice of concertinists—both professional and amateur—to form ensembles in which they availed themselves of the string quartet literature. The opportunity to delve into this repertory was especially welcome among women, since string instruments were more or less off limits to them until the final quarter of the century.³

20 April (p. 3): MRS. ARTHUR STONE begs to announce she continues to give LESSONS in SINGING, and on the guitar and concertina—169, Great Portland-street, Portland-place, W.

Mrs Stone is listed as a Professor of Music in the *Musical Directory, Register and Almanack for 1855* (p. 70), at which time she resided at 18 Great Portland Street. A frequent visitor to Wheatstone's shop on Conduit Street—the Wheatstone sales ledgers record nine transactions for her from the late 1840s to 1859—she was one of twelve concertinists who participated together with Richard Blagrove and George Case at a mammoth concertina concert—it featured an ensemble of twelve concertinas—in June 1848. Finally, she is but one of a number of women who played and taught both concertina and guitar.⁴

19 June (p. 5): GERMAN and ENGLISH CONCERTINA MUSIC:—Regondi's 200 sacred airs, 1s., and his 200 miscellaneous airs, 1s, for the German concertina; or both works, bound in one vol., cloth, gilt edges, 3s.; Regondi's celebrated Hand-book, a complete tutor or the German concertina, with 60 melodies (100th edition), 1s.; Regondi's German Concertina Melodist, in 18 Nos. (30 airs in each), 6d. each; Sedgwick's 200 airs for the English concertina, 1s.; upwards of 100 books, 1s. each, of vocal and instrumental music. Published only at the Musical Bouquet office, 192, High Holborn.

23 June (p. 1): NOTICE.—Signor GIULIO REGONDI has never Composed or arranged any music for an instrument so called the German concertina.

This is fascinating! Regondi adamantly denies having anything to do with the German concertina ('Anglo-German') tutors and song collections that the firm of Charles Sheard was issuing under his name. Clearly, Sheard was cashing in on Regondi's fame.⁵

13 July (p. 3): SHELLS of OCEAN, the beautiful Fantasia by [William] Abbot, 3s.; 88th edition of the song, 2s.6d.; two voices, 2s.6d.; glee, 2s.6d.; guitar, 1s.6d.; concertina and piano, 2s; piano duet, 3s.—Holloway, publisher, Hanway-street, Oxford-street, W., where may be had all the best music at half-price.

This advertisement attests to the common practice of arranging hit songs for myriad instruments and ensembles. The original song, 'I Wandered on the Sea-Beat Shore, or The Shells of the Ocean', was written by Cherry and Lake and published by Holloway & Co. in 1855. William Abbott's 'Fantasia' was one of a number of arrangements for piano.⁶ I do not know who arranged the song for concertina.

26 July (p. 4): EDUCATION (superior) for YOUNG LADIES: inclusive terms 40 guineas a year.—In old-established finishing school, of high standing, conducted by a lady of talent, assisted by English and foreign governesses and eminent masters daily for all the accomplishments. The instruction comprehends all the higher branches of English, modern languages, piano, singing, concertina, guitar, drawing, dancing, and calisthenics. The domestic arrangements are on a most liberal scale. The residence is a spacious mansion, delightfully situate, with extensive garden, and the locality not to be surpassed for salubrity. Address A.B., 9, Stanley-gardens, Kensington-park.

14 November (p. 3): *MORNING or DAILY GOVERNESS*.—A married lady, accustomed to tuition, wishes an *ENGAGEMENT*. She teaches piano, harp, concertina, singing, French, and Italian fluently, drawing, rudiments of German, and all other requisites To a Lady's education.—A.B., 5, Lyndon-street, Sussex-gardens, Hyde-park.

These two notices express in quintessential fashion the Victorian notion that, for the well-bred young woman, music was a necessary 'accomplishment'. They also show that the successful governess had to possess a background in music, with the concertina—and we are dealing with the English concertina only—taking its place alongside the piano, harp, and guitar among instruments that were considered suitable for women.⁷

NOTES

1. To appear in the *Royal Musical Association Research Chronicle*, 39 (2006).
2. For his help with the task, I am grateful to Mr Robert Wood, a candidate for the Ph.D. in Music at The Graduate Center of The City University of New York.
3. On the gendering of string instruments, particularly the violin, see the fine survey in Paula Gillett, *Musical Women in England, 1870-1914: "Encroaching on all Man's Privileges"* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 77-140.
4. On Mrs Stone, see Atlas, 'Ladies in the Wheatstone Ledgers', which also discusses the intersection between concertina and guitar circles, the most important female member of which was undoubtedly Catherina Josepha Pelzer, later Mrs R. Sidney Pratten. There is a review of the 1848 concert in *The Musical World*, xxiii/23 (3 June 1848), 3; a similar concert in May 1851, organized by Case, featured an arrangement of Rossini's Overture to *William Tell* for twelve concertinas; see Atlas, *The Wheatstone English Concertina in Victorian England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 68. The nine extant Wheatstone sales ledgers, preserved in the Wayne Archive of the Horniman Museum, London, are available online at www.horniman.info.
5. The tutors are listed in Randall C. Merris, 'Instruction Manuals for the English, Anglo, and Duet Concertina: An Annotated Bibliography', *The Free-Reed Journal*, 4 (2002), 111-12; an updated version of the article appears online at www.concertina.com/merris/index.html.
6. There is a list of arrangements in the British Library's *Integrated Catalogue*, online at <http://catalogue.bl.uk>.
7. See my 'Ladies in the Wheatstone Ledgers' for a fuller discussion of the concertina's role.