

THE INTERNATIONAL CONCERTINA ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

NO. 155.

June, 1968.

NO JUNE MEETING.

A Member recently expressed the view that if we held slightly fewer meetings, we should increase the attendance at those which are held. For this and certain other reasons, it has been decided to omit the June meeting, and the next will therefore be on the afternoon of July 27th.

LONDON MUSICAL COMPETITION FESTIVAL

The following letter has been received from the Hon. Organising Secretary.

My Chairman (Hr. Leonard Smith) joins me in conveying to you our appreciation to the International Concertina Association for subsidising the entry fees and to you and all who took part in the competitions. It was a most enjoyable and 'cosy' evening with a lot of interesting music of a high standard.

With kind regards.

Yours sincerely,
(Signed) Kenneth S. Ranger.

CURRENT CASUALTIES

We regret to report that:

L. Mudel has returned to hospital for the second time in quick succession for treatment for his heart complaint. Lilian Nicholls was also in hospital for an operation and is now happily convalescent.

Our Treasurer, Doris Butler became seriously ill when on holiday, and is likely to be in hospital for a few weeks. (N.B. The funds are safe).

Mrs. Rigby suffered a broken hip earlier this year, and has now returned home to become the principal engagement for the time being of John Rigby, the noted Wigan player.

The I.C.A. sends good wishes for speedy recovery to all.

NEW MEMBER

We welcome H.E. Daniels, 253, Northfield Road, Kings Norton, Birmingham, 30. and wish him many years pleasant association with us. He plays English Concertina, his interest being classical, notably playing flute, violin and oboe parts in chamber music.

This Newsletter is issued for the I.C.A. by The Secretary, Frank E. Butler, 60, Mayfield Crescent, London, N.9. England.

Meeting on the 25th May, 1968.

CONWAY HALL.

The weather was not very encouraging to turn out, but an enthusiast group gathered for the usual playing and listening.

Very early on the scene was Mr. Realf from Bognor who we do not see very often and who we were glad to welcome.

The playing started with two trios "Minuet in G." Bach and "Minuet from Berenice" Handel. A duet from Vena MacDougall and John Hutcherson followed, - "Les Carillons".

All got together for "Theme from Elgars Pomp and Circumstance", soloists were Mr. F. Watts "New Gallopade and "Air" Weber, Billy Hartford gave us some more jolly modern tunes. Mr. Realf was handed Mac's instrument and joined by Billy Hartford gave us a delightful ten minutes of Duet playing of the "Nun's Chorus" and later joined also by Tommy Williams "Edelweiss" and "The Awakening". Mr. Crook Over the Waves Waltz. Tommy Williams with some of his own arrangements "Wonderland Flowers" and a piece he calls "Springtime in Battersea!" Mr. Meekham a German Air. Vena, Mr. Crook and Mr. Meekham got together for a "Minuet and Trio", Haydn. We were delighted to find Mac had some songs with him and so with Vena on the piano he entertained us by singing "Without a Song" and "Moira My Girl".

It was Mr. Watts turn to talk to us in the series "My Concertina Life and Times" reported separately. The meeting closed with a group comprising Vena, Mr. Watts and John Hutcherson playing "Allegro" Haydn and "Allege" Handel.

The party were pleased to have passed on to them a greeting from our Secretary who is on Holiday in Scotland.

We were glad to see with us again Mr. Cross a recent member who joined in some of the playing.

Talk by Mr. Fred Watts - 25th May, 1968.

At the very early age of 3 or 4 years Fred Watts used to listen to his Father's attempts to play an Ango Concertina. He eventually put a stop to all his Fathers music by cutting the bellows in half with a razor blade to find out how it worked.

In the home were some records of Concertina playing by the old time professional Alexander Prince. Fred Watts loved to hear these records and to pretend he was playing himself especially when at the age of six his little special girl friend used to pass by the open window!

He grew up with the urge to own and play an instrument of his own.

He found himself in London at the age of 15 and was intrigued by the street buskers that he met. He decided to buy a Concertina. By the time he was 18 he had managed to save ^25. but alas a family emergency caused the money to be directed elsewhere. At 21 he found himself again in the position to buy. He was faced with the problem should he join his mates with motor-cycles and girl friends on the back or acquire his instrument? The Concertina won. He found nobody in Luton who could advise or help, so he came to London, was attracted by Messrs. Wheatstones smart showrooms and broke down all rigid formality by announcing that he needed a concertina with some high notes and some low notes! They sold him a tenor-treble.

He started tuition under Mr. Charles Rutherford but after the second lesson the old Gentleman died. Later he took lessons for about two years with Mr. Arthur Clark of East Hill, Wandsworth. This was a long trek from Luton and back on Saturdays.

Later he changed his employment which caused him to have to live away from home. Practising music became difficult and other interests intervened, he more or less ceased to play. Following some ill health his Wife encouraged him to take up his music again.

They were listening one day to a B.B.C. programme which dealt with items from an I.C.A. Festival. Mrs. Watts phoned the B.B.C. for information, they were put in touch with Mr. Frank Butler.

Fred Watts found his interest restored* He joined the I.C.A. and later entered in one of our Festivals, he competed, and to his surprise and pleasure won the class and went home with a Silver Medal.

He is in possession also of a bass concertina which he went all the way up to Oldham to purchase.

Fred Watts is now a valued member of the I.C.A. Committee, the only one at present, from outside the London Area.

REMINISCENCES-CONCERTINAS IN OLDHAM
from J.H. Mellor

I am now a little over 80 years of age and still play a 48 Key 8 sided "Aeola".

When a boy of 10 years my parents wanted me to have lessons on the Piano, but I wanted to have an instrument that I could carry about, and finally was presented with a second-hand Anglo tina, and put under the tuition of a player who was the leader of a band, mostly made up of Anglo instruments.

However I could not give my mind to the Anglo; and requested that I might turn over to the English tina, with the object of joining the Oldham tina band, which was then quite famous and under the leadership of Joe Astley, who had a music shop, and sold Wheatstone English concertinas.

I was put under the tuition of a very fine player (a member of this band) and my parents purchased me a brand new instrument, which cost over £20. and put under the tuition of this band member.

For a time I was quite enthusiastic, but later began to lose this interest. For quite a long time my tina was more often in its case than out.

Later on, I got married, and losing all my interest in music I sold my concertina for £12. to an Oldham Salvation Army man.

The years went by and I was blessed with two children, a boy and girl.

As my son showed musical interest, we purchased him an American Organ and he became a decent player.

It was he who introduced me again to the concertina.

One Saturday he arrived home from work, carrying a concertina in a wooden box. He had purchased it from an old second-hand shop, for the low figure of s)1. and he made me a present of it.

It was this which renewed by interest; so purchasing a decent

instrument, I decided to take a course of lessons to brighten up my playing.

As a result I became a fairly good player; and later, a dealer in second-hand tinns, dozens of which passed through my hands, not only in Britain, but also abroad. One tina was sent so far away as Australia.

Now however, all that is finished; and I am content to get out my "Aeola" occasionally to have twenty-minutes delight, sometimes extending to an hour, or maybe more.

NEWS OF THE MEMBERS AND OTHER.

Neil Wayne is working in the University of Wisconsin, U.S.A. but returns to this country in the autumn, He has an English and an Anglo with him, and talks freely of concertinas and the I.C.A. He has been fortunate enough to spend an afternoon with Sergei Matusewitch, one of the famous concertina playing brothers.

J. Hargreaves, 3, Cambridge Road, Orrell, Wigan plays a 72 key Duet by Wheatstone. He has been playing for seven years, chiefly music which he obtains from Mr. Stanley of Birmingham, the famous player and arranger.

Martin Brown has rightly forsaken the concertina for his finals for his teachers certificate examination, but he says he will be back.

W.E. King reports a marvellous evening with the Kensington Group, followed by a kerbside chat, and a session to 4.30 a.m. listening to tapes provided by Jim Harvey.

Frank Pitt of Victoria, Australia, reports the arrival of several new players, for whom he has done some restoration.

Doreen Hunt has added guitar playing to her accomplishments, but still remains faithful to the I.C.A.

Miss H.J.Swain, 14, Westwood Avenue, Heaton, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 5QT, is a concertina player, and is writing a thesis on the history and development of the instrument, as part of her music examination at a Teacher's Training College.

We regret to announce the death of A.G.Robbins, of Bow, London., on 12th April. Mr. Bobbins was a founder member of the I.C.A. He had played an Anglo Concertina nearly forty years, but it is some time since he had been able to attend a meeting

SQUEEZE AGAIN - WHITTINGTON

This year's Lord Major of London is a musician and a patron of music, as the floats at the Lord Mayors show last November demonstrated. It was to quite expected, therefore, that he would consent to present the prizes at the Concert of prizewinners of the London Musical Festival.

Vena McDougall, who won the Advanced English Concertina own choice, and the Rodin Cup for performance of the day, was chosen to play in the concert, and felt herself honoured to have His Worship in the audience.

The I.C.A was honoured to have its ideals of playing so worthily presented to a distinguished audience, for Vena has a acquired splendid technique and rare musicianship.

Other artists in the dressing room were intrigued with the

concertina and Vena enjoyed pointing out its capabilities, and stressing that it was emphatically not some kind of accordion.

She enjoyed the praise of the Lord Mayor himself, who with other guests admired her playing. Finally, in her own words "as the people liked the sound of the concertina, I hope we shall have many more stringers in our audiences where ever we may play".

MUSIC AT SEVEN-THIRTY

Holloway Institute presented its annual concert of the Institute's musical activities at Archway School on 10th June. An enthusiastic audience listened to a programme which included duets for two pianos (splendid playing here), excerpts from light and grand opera, guitar playing both classical and "mod", and wonderful soprano solos by a guest artist.

Concertinas were represented by the Monday class playing Beethoven and Haydn, the instructor entering the ranks for the occasion and the baton being taken by his substitute Valerie Hawkes. Also by the Friday class under Harry Crabb, which turned out in force to play popular airs to the delight of the audience, which sung lustily with them.

The evening passed quickly, and the excellent refreshments vanished even more quickly.

NO MUSIC

We note with regret that Galliard Limited, which at one time gave excellent service to customers requiring music of any kind, has now closed its premises in Charing Cross Road, and operates entirely from its address in Yarmouth. Further, it is no longer prepared to accept orders for music not published by or through them.

We quite understand their dilemma. Shortage of skilled staff, and the very high cost of servicing miscellaneous orders make the sale of music quite unprofitable, and we wonder how much more serious the position will get.

At one time all towns of reasonable size had a specialist sheet music shop, but your editor in his travels finds them rarely now. London boasted about six large wholesalers, none remain. The retailers sell records and guitars; the wholesalers have either gone out of business, or restrict their activities to their own publications.

Players, and to a lesser extent singers, complain of the high cost of music. The price could be justified by examining the cost of production and distribution in relation to quantity. Ask yourself the question - is it not worth a few shillings to provide yourself with the means of playing for your pleasure for years ahead. You would pay more for a single performance at a concert.

Lastly, copy less, and buy more, lest all the publishers go out of business.

VIVALDI

The Holloway Concertina Class has been studying a violin concerto by Vivaldi. Vivaldi wrote over 250 works of this kind, an incredibly large output for any composer. Much of his work is enjoyable to play, and sounds well on the concertina, but it is more a matter for agility than melody. It was written when only broad contrasts of loud and soft were employed, and variations of tempo, with crescendo and diminuendo had not been invented.

Vivaldi was a red-haired priest in charge of an orphanage. His child pupils must have reached a fine standard of ability, as you will realise if you recall that this fine music was written two hundred and fifty years ago.

C.T.BIRD.

It is with pleasure and gratitude that we pay tribute to C.T.Bird, Esq., who retires this term from the post of Principal of Holloway Institute.

Always a human and warm personality, he has used his vast knowledge of Evening Institutes in London for the benefit of many thousands of students, always anxious to move with the times and provide just what instruction they sought in a great range of subjects. Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools have paid tribute to Mr. Bird's wide sweep of activities, and we acknowledge also the calm orderliness of his administration.

To the I.C.A. he has been a good friend, in practical terms one of our best friends. At Holloway we have regular Monday and Friday concertina classes; the functions of the Institute provide an opportunity to display our prowess, and the premises can be and are made available for other concertina activities. Holloway Institute became the first corporate member of the I.C.A.

To Mr. Bird we extend grateful thanks for his encouragement, and offer good wishes for many years of happy, healthy and zestful retirement. We hope he may feel disposed to visit us from time to time, and that if at last in a busy life he finds time to spare, he may become a concertina player.
