

Next, a letter from Jean Mégly:

"A general appeal to all the (few) French concertina players! Why not create a French section of the I.C.A.? For, if the English players happen to feel themselves isolated, think of the quasi-desperate situation where the French ones are!

"There could be many things to do. For example, a French bulletin with information from the Newsletter, exchanges of addresses, documentation, music, maybe a 'grand meeting', or anything else? So please, if you French players are interested, write to me, and give all the suggestions and ideas that you have in mind.

"A particular appeal to the Crane Duet players - would you like to exchange with me any information, music written or recorded? I would be delighted to hear from you! (and reciprocally)."

Bravo, M. Mégly! Unfortunately, a quick riffle through the overseas envelopes for the Newsletter shows that you are the I.C.A. in France! But, I can think of someone who might be able to help by publicising your offer among accordionists, who might hide concertina players looking for a home. If this can be done, no need to stand on ceremony - do it. And bonne chance (I hope my French is correct) to M. Mégly!

Finally in this section, Arthur Mills sends me a cutting from the Daily Mirror. A Mrs. Malia of Mendip Road, Billingham writes asking about information on a Lachenal concertina. She was informed that Lachenal made concertinas on behalf of Wheatstone's for 20 years. and on until the '30's Perhaps some local member can add and correct the information. Meanwhile, Malcolm.....

In Memoriam

I've had a couple of items with reaction to the sad deaths of Mr. Eric Russell and Mr. Charlie Jeffrey announced in the last Newsletter. The first is an extract from a letter by Maurice Harvey:

"I was sad to read in the Newsletter of the passing of Charlie Jeffrey and Eric Russell knowing them both very well, especially Charlie, being a member of the Kensington group. I well remember one practice evening at the Kensington Hotel, Len Jones saying rather forcibly 'Charlie for God's sake put some guts into it'. But he never did, just playing in his own gentle way, which seemed to suit the solo pieces he chose.

"I played at quite a few Salvation Army meetings at the invitation of Brigadier Russell. I think the gang did on at least one occasion as well. He was a very sensitive player and his style was enhanced by the the instrument (a tenor-treble I think pitched in Bb) he used."

The other item was also sent by Arthur Mills, and is a photocopy of 'The Musician', a Salvation Army paper. There is an obituary of Brigadier-Russell, and a letter giving an appreciation of him by another senior (I assume) Salvation Army officer. Both pay tribute to his musicianship and sense of humour. Thank you, Mr. Mills.

I think, in days to come, we shall sadly miss both these stalwarts.

The February Meeting

This took place, as advertised, on Saturday 25th February at the Conway Hall. Once again, it was a sparsely attended meeting - I counted 11 members and two non-playing visitors. At least the new committee had plenty to talk about following the Annual General Meeting.

The playing started, as is the tradition, with a concerted piece. This was 'The Curtsy' by Perry.

Ted Jevons was the first soloist. His choice was 'O Star of Eve' from Tannhauser by Wagner.

The next piece was concerted, 'A Memory' by Schumann, played in salute to late members Charlie Jeffrey and Eric Russell.

Pat Robson was the next to demonstrate his skill, playing a tango called 'Julian'.

We then heard from Mr. Lloyd, in what I believe was one of his last visits before going abroad. He played 'A Brown Bird Singing' by Hayden

Wood, and provided his own piano accompaniment using a cassette player.

We returned to concerted music with 'Joanne' by Frank Butler.

Looking through my notes for the next group of soloists, I see that there was a 'committee benefit'. First was Howard Rosenblum with 'Just As The Sun Was Setting' and 'The Red Lark'.

He was followed by Malcolm Barr-Hamilton with 'Varsoviana'.

John Royds was the next of the committee to perform, with 'Star of Munster'.

Mr. Blakeman gave us a selection of jigs: 'Sally Hunter', 'The Belfast Almanac', 'Queen's Fancy' and 'Lamb Skinnet'.

Marian Janes completed the 'benefit' with the Playford dances 'Lull Me Beyond Thee', 'Hole In The Wall' and 'Drive The Cold Winter Away'.

The next concerted piece was another of Frank Butler's compositions, 'Rachael'.

We were then treated to one of John Hutcherson's solos, the 'Intermezzo' from Cavalleria Rusticana by Mascagni.

More concerted music followed with the 'Barcarolle' from Tales of Hoffmann by Offenbach, as arranged by Charles Woodhouse.

It was time for an encore from Mr. Robson, and he played 'Italian Polka'.

We were then treated to Douglas Rogers playing a piece from an Opera by Herold, arranged by Regondi.

It was time for some more concerted music. Again, it came from the pen of Frank Butler. This time it was his arrangement of 'Three Welsh Airs'.

Mr. Blakeman returned with 'Walkin' Up Town'.

Malcolm Barr-Hamilton also played an encore, giving us an Irish tune, the name of which he had forgotten.

It was then back to the concerted music with a 'Rondeau' by G.B. Buonaneino.

Doug Rogers continued with a 'Waltz' written by Regondi.

John Hutcherson returned to play 'Amazing Grace' in memory of Mr. Russell. As he remarked, we will never hear him do it again.

John Royds did a second turn, playing a piece whose title he had forgotten.

Pat Robson was the last player, with the 'Song of the Wind'.

Reviews

Nigel Pickles:- 'The Mexborough English Concertina Prize Band'
(Plant Life Records - PLR 055).

On this record Nigel Pickles attempts to re-create the sound the Mexborough English Concertina Prize Band (which was in existence between 1897 and 1978) by using ten of the band's original instruments, their original music and a 16-track tape recording machine. English concertina bands were chiefly a phenomenon of the West Riding and Lancashire during the late nineteenth century and the first three decades of the twentieth. Apparently only one commercial recording was ever made of such a band.

I must admit that I was doubtful as to whether this record would appeal to me, an Anglo player with a preference for folk music, but these doubts proved to be ill-founded and it has been much in evidence on my turntable since I first played it. The music has a very full and pleasant sound to it and Mr. Pickles is clearly a very accomplished player. There are some very catchy tunes among the selection of polkas, marches, etc. My favorites are the Fantasias 'Echoes of Scotland' and 'Memories of Britain' (both arr. W. Rimmer) and Henry Purcell's 'Martial Air'.

I wondered how true to the original sound of these bands was this recording. Ted Jevons, one of our members, was in the Mexborough Band, (He is in the picture on the front cover - perhaps we should run a 'Spot Ted Jevons Competition') and in a recent conversation with him, he vouched for the authenticity of the sound. The record is attractively packaged with some interesting photographs and information on the history of concertina bands. I would thoroughly recommend this album to anyone seriously interested in the concertina and its music and history.

M. B.-H.

Concertina Two by Frank Butler, Price £4.00 inc. postage from Mr. Butler at 60 Mayfield Crescent, London N9 7NJ.
(Overseas orders £4.50 inc. postage, to be paid in STERLING by International Money Order.)

This book is a long-awaited addition to 'The Concertina' by the same author. But, it seems to me that the intention is not quite the same. In 'The Concertina', the purpose is to teach the basics of playing the English concertina, but in 'Concertina Two', I think that the ability of the player is not so much advanced as broadened. The point I am trying to make is mentioned in the Foreword: 'It takes into account the desire of most players to embellish their performances with chords.'

Having said that, how is it to work from? I found that the early exercises overlapped the later ones in 'The Concertina', and I had no great difficulty in the initial attempts to play them. Mastery will, of course, come with practice. The later exercises have not been attempted as yet because with my present ability (somewhere about Intermediate level) I get a bit mesmerised by all those black dots and especially thick black lines scattered about the stave. In between the exercises are helpful comments about playing and fingering the music, and advice about additional exercises such as scales, and useful advanced tutors. There is also a booklet entitled 'Arranging Music for the English Concertina' included as a supplement.

This book reminds me of the days when I was a member of Mr. Butler's evening class. As it is not possible for those times to come back, I think that working from this tutor is the next best thing.

H.A.R.

Editorial Chuntering

Once again, I have to use my judgement in setting a deadline for the next Newsletter. Looking back from the date of the next meeting, it appears that the Easter weekend is going to be at the usual time. As there will be no post on Easter Monday, the deadline will have to be Tuesday 24th April. However, that is going to be a busy week for me, so I hope you will understand if the Newsletter is shorter than usual.

I was sorry to hear from Eileen Jones that she had no reply to her notice for a Midlands section to form. In the same spirit, I wish the best of luck to Jean Megly in his attempt to rally the French players. I would be pleased to hear of more people in France who play the concertina. This is the sort of enthusiasm that is needed to expand the membership of the I.C.A. and assure its future. If members in the Midlands are content to leave things to each other when a clear lead is shown, all that will happen is another crisis of the proportions of a couple of years ago, when we nearly ceased to exist! On the wider horizon, I would enjoy hearing about the formation of other overseas groups. Looking through the envelopes for the Newsletter, it looks like the West Coast of the U.S.A. could give birth to such a group.

The final subject for chuntering is a new Editor for the Newsletter. So far, no one has got in touch with me to show an interest in taking over this chair. Don't forget, all you need is a typewriter (or, as I sometimes call it, a tripewriter) which is capable of cutting stencils, and a couple of evenings a month. That's not much to ask. I can take care of all of the other work needed. But, be warned. If there are no volunteers, then someone could get browbeaten into the job, very soon. And it could be YOU!

Howard.

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