

HISTORICAL DOCUMENT

George Grove's Article on the 'Concertina' in the First Edition of *A Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (1878)

Introductory Note by ALLAN ATLAS

Published by Macmillan & Co. in four volumes over the course of eleven years—from 1878 to 1889—Sir George Grove's *A Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (A.D. 1450-1889) is a landmark in English-language musical lexicography. Its main goal was, as stated in a pre-publication announcement, to correct the following situation:

There is no one work in English from which an intelligent inquirer can learn, in small compass and in untechnical language, what is meant by a Symphony or Sonata, a Fugue. . .or any other of the terms which necessarily occur in every description or analysis of a Concert or a piece of Music; or from which he can gain a readable and succinct account of the history of the various branches of the art, or of the rise and progress of the Pianoforte and other instruments, or the main facts and characteristics of the lives of eminent Musicians.¹

As such, Grove had an agenda: to teach the public (or at least the 'cultivated' portion thereof) about music, specifically the 'high-brow' music that was then in the process of being canonized and that his readers would have heard in the concert hall and upper-class drawing rooms. And among the things that he thought worthwhile informing them about was the concertina.

What must strike the present-day concertinist immediately—and perhaps it would have been noticed even by contemporary readers of the *Dictionary*—is that Grove accounts for one type of concertina only: the 'English'. Nowhere is there even an allusion to the existence of the 'Anglo' or the 'Duet', though these would certainly have been known to—if not loved and easily distinguished by—Grove's 'intelligent inquirer' through their presence in such places as street corners and other venues that made up the everyday Victorian soundscape. This, of course, should not surprise us. It is simply a consequence of the English concertina's contemporary presence in the concert hall and upper-class musical circles in general (though by the late 1870s this was already on the wane), its chamber music repertory (cited in part by Grove), and Grove's (and thus his *Dictionary's*) own prejudices and personal tastes. In other words, it was only in the form of the English that the concertina and Grove's agenda could share common ground.²

Beyond that, Grove's article calls for a few comments with respect to its claims about both the instrument and its repertory.

(1) Grove writes that the concertina was 'patented by the late Sir Charles Wheatstone June 19, 1829'. Now there are two patents that are pertinent to Grove's claim: No. 5803 of 1829, which deals mainly with the Symphonion, but which alludes to what is at least the drawing-board state of the concertina—though without referring to it by name—in its drawings of a bellows-driven instrument; and No. 10041 of 1844, which offers a full-blown description of the English concertina as it then existed. Now even if the 1844 patent is 'the definitive concertina patent', as Neil Wayne calls it,³ Grove was quite right in dating the original patent from 1829. For instance, when Giulio Regondi performed in Ireland in 1834-1835, *The Dublin Evening Post* announced his concert of 12 June 1834 as follows: 'Master G Regondi. . .intends to give two Musical Entertainments on the Guitar and on Wheatstone's Patent Concertina. . .'.⁴ Likewise, when Regondi performed at London's Haymarket on 28 June 1837, his instrument was once again described as the 'Patent Concertina'.⁵ Moreover, as Stephen Chambers has pointed out, Wheatstone's first real competitor, Joseph Scates, set up shop as a concertina manufacturer in his own right in 1844, that is, the very year in which the patent of 1829 would have run its fourteen-year course (and to chalk that up as sheer coincidence strains creditability).⁶ Finally, we may clinch the case for Grove. As Wheatstone's claimed in their price list of 1848, titled *The Concertina, A New Musical Instrument. . .*: 'No instruments, except those manufactured by Messrs. WHEATSTONE and Co. are constructed with the improvements for which a *second Patent* [my italics] was obtained by them in February, 1844 . . .'.⁷

(2) Grove claims that the treble is a 'double'-action instrument (producing 'the same note both on drawing and pressing the bellows'), while tenor (about which, more presently), bass, and double bass are 'single'-action instruments (producing 'the sound by pressure only'). He thus uses the 'single/double' terminology in two different ways: first to distinguish the English treble from the Anglo, on which the buttons produce different pitches depending on the direction of the bellows, and then to identify instruments that sound only when the bellows are being pressed in. It is a confusing use of the 'single/double'-action terminology, one that persists even today.

(3) With his statement that the tenor concertina is a single-action instrument (that is, that it sounds only when the bellows are going in), Grove opens up a can of worm-like questions at which we can only hint here.⁸ For instance, the Lachenal price lists of 1859 and 1862 make it clear that 'Tenor or Baritone' concertinas are double-

action instruments.⁹ On the other hand, the Wheatstone sales ledger C1052 (p. 35) records the following transaction for 7 November 1860: 'Boucher [name of customer] ----- SH [second hand] Single Act[ion] Tenor',¹⁰ while Rock Chidley exhibited both single- and double-action tenors at the Great Exhibition of 1851.¹¹ Thus tenors were available as both single- and double-action instruments.

But what was the mid-century tenor concertina? As noted above, the Lachenal price lists refer to 'Tenor *or* Baritone' (my italics), and then go on to describe 'Tenor or Baritone' as sounding one octave lower than the treble, in which case their lowest note would be *G*. If, however, they shared the same range, how did they differ from one another? To add to the confusion: the Wheatstone price list of 1848 (see note 7) states that the tenor goes down only to *c* (an octave beneath middle C), so that it does not reach an octave below the treble (as the Lachenal advertisements claim it does), omits any reference to the baritone altogether, and says nothing about the single- or double-action question. And to further muddy the waters: although I am acquainted with a fair amount of Victorian music for baritone concertina (by Regondi and Case, among others), as I am also with the repertory for concertina ensembles (usually calling for some combination of treble(s) and baritone, with bass thrown in on occasion), I have yet to see a piece that called for tenor concertina. On the other hand, John Hill Maccann's *The Concertinist's Guide* (1888), notes that 'At the Inventions Exhibition Messrs. Wheatstones' Recitals. . .were greatly admired, and the Quartettes. . .were played on the Treble, *Tenor* [my italics], and Bass Concertinas. . .' (p. 3);¹² the Lachenal sisters performed on trebles, tenor, and bass when they toured Scotland in 1865-1866;¹³ and William Cawdell speaks of ensembles that consisted of tenors *and* baritones.¹⁴ In the end, then, the term 'tenor' may well have been applied to more than one kind of concertina, may have varied in its meaning from one manufacturer to another, and may have changed at least some of its characteristics as the second half of the century rolled along.

(4) Much of the music cited by Grove was seemingly never published and is apparently lost. Thus we no longer have either Molique's concerto in D (while Regondi's E-flat concerto survives only in manuscript) or the series of pieces by Silas, while Macfarren's Quintet, the two-movement *Romance and Allegro agitato*, reaches us only as a single-movement *Romance* for concertina and piano.¹⁵

Grove's article on the concertina appeared in *A Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, vol. I/fasc. 4 (London: Macmillan, 1878), 386-87.

CONCERTINA, a portable instrument of the Seraphine family, patented by the late Sir Charles Wheatstone June 19, 1829.

It is hexagonal, and has a keyboard at each end, with expansible bellows between the two. The sound is produced by the pressure of air from the bellows on free metallic reeds. The compass of the treble concertina is four octaves [a music example shows the range extending from *g* to *g*^{'''}, and thus a 56-button instrument], through which it has a complete chromatic scale. This instrument is double action, and produces the same note both on drawing and pressing the bellows. Much variety of tone can be obtained by a skilful player, and it has the power of being played with great expression and complete *sostenuto* and *staccato*. Violin, flute, and oboe music can be performed on it without alteration; but music written specially for the concertina cannot be played on any other instrument, except the organ or harmonium. Nothing but the last-named instruments can produce at once the extended harmonies, the *sostenuto* and *staccato* combined, of which the concertina is capable. There are also tenor, bass, and double bass concertinas, varying in size and shape. These instruments are single-action, producing the sound by pressure only, and are capable of taking tenor, bass, and double bass parts without alteration. The compass of these is as follows—[a music example shows the ranges of the three instruments: tenor = *c* – *c*^{'''}; bass = *C* – *c*^{''}; double bass = *C* – *c*] making the total range of the four instruments 6 5/8 octaves. The late Signor Regondi was the first to make the instrument known, and was followed by Mr. George Case. Mr. Richard Blagrove is now the principal performer and professor. Among the music written specially for the instrument are 2 Concertos in G and D for solo concertina and orchestra, by Molique; 2 ditto ditto in D and Eb, by G. Regondi; Sonata for piano and concertina in Bb, by Molique; Quintet for concertina and strings, by G. A. Macfarren; Adagio for 8 concertinas in E, by E. Silas; Quintet in D for piano, concertina, violin, viola, and cello, by the same; 6 Trios for piano, concertina, and violin, by the same. Much brilliant *salon* music has also been written for it. Messrs. Wheatstone & Co. are the best makers. [G.]

NOTES

1. 'Preparing for Publication: the Dictionary of Music. . .' (London: Macmillan, March 1874); cited after Leanne Langley, 'Roots of a Tradition: the First *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*', in *George Grove, Music and Victorian Culture*, ed. Michael Musgrave (London: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2003), 169; Langley's article provides a fascinating glimpse into the *Dictionary's* concept, design, editorial processes, publication, and reception. For a well-rounded portrait of the multi-talented Grove (1820-1900)—he was an engineer, biblical scholar, long-time editor of *Macmillan's Magazine*, secretary of and writer of program notes for the Crystal Palace concerts, authority on the music of Beethoven, Schubert, and Mendelssohn, and first director of the Royal College of Music—see the collection of articles just cited; for a biography, see Percy Young, *George Grove, 1820-1900* (London: Macmillan, 1980). Finally, the *Dictionary* itself went through five editions as of 1954 (with a change of name along the way to *Grove's Dictionary*); in 1980 the *Dictionary* was totally revamped, expanded, made more global-minded, and renamed *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, which in turn has now gone through a second, revised edition of 2001; note that *New Grove/2* is available online at <<http://www.grovemusic.com>>, though a subscription is necessary.

2 Indeed, it was not until the *Dictionary* was totally overhauled in 1980 as *The New Grove Dictionary* (see note 1) that it began to afford proper and ample coverage to the likes of folk, popular, and non-western music traditions (as well as to the instruments with which those musics are made). Admittedly, my own article on the concertina in *The New Grove/2*, vi, 236-40, lavishes more space on the English than it does on the Anglo and Duet combined.

3. Wayne, 'The Wheatstone English Concertina', *The Galpin Society Journal*, xlv (1991), 120; available on line: <<http://www.free-reed.co.uk/galpin/gl.htm>>.

4. Cited after Tom Lawrence, 'Giulio Regondi and the Concertina in Ireland', *Concertina World: International Concertina Association Newsletter*, 411 (July 1998), 22; available on line: <<http://ucd.ie/pages/99/articles/lawrence.pdf>>.

5. My thanks to Alessandro Boris Amisich for calling the announcement of this performance to my attention. Mr Amisich's article, 'Where was Giulio Regondi Born?', will appear in *PICA*, 3 (2006).

6. Chambers, 'Louis Lachenal: "Engineer and Concertina Manufacturer", Pt 1', *The Free-Reed Journal*, 1 (1999), 13, sees the 1844 patent 'largely [as] an attempt to prolong the life of [the] . . .original Symphonium [and concertina] Patent of 1829' (p. 13); available online: <<http://www.concertina.com/chambers/chambers-lachenal-part1.htm>>; the two patents are online: <<http://www.concertina.com/patents/>>.

7. The price list is available in Chambers, 'Louis Lachenal', 16-18, the passage just cited appearing on p. 17; the pricelist is available online: <<http://www.concertina.com/docs.Wheatstone-Pricelist-1848-C824.pdf>>.

8. The brief discussion that follows owes much to a stimulating exchange of e-mails with Stephen Chambers, Robert Gaskins, and Chris Algar during the first days of 2005.

9. The price lists are conveniently reproduced in facsimile in Stephen Chambers, 'Some Notes on Lachenal Concertina Production and Serial Numbers', *PICA*, 1 (2004), 5-6; the pricelists are available online: <<http://www.concertina.com/chambers/chambers-lachenal-prod.htm>>.

10. The entry lacks a serial number for the instrument. The ledger is housed in the Wayne Archive, The Horniman Museum, London. The complete series of nineteenth-century Wheatstone ledgers are available online: <<http://www.horniman.info>>.

11. See *Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations, 1851. Official Descriptive and Illustrated Catalogue* (London, 1851), 470; for a convenient summary of all the instruments exhibited at the Exhibition, see Peter and Ann Mactaggart, *Musical Instruments in the 1851 Exhibition* (Welwyn [Herts]: Mac & Me, 1986).

12. Maccann's *Guide* is available online: <<http://www.concertina.com/docs/Maccann-Concertinists-Guide.pdf>>.

13. My thanks to Robert Gaskins for this information; Mr Gaskins is preparing his research on the sisters' Scottish tour for publication online: <<http://www.concertina.com/lachenal-sisters>>; see also the article by Faye Debenham and Randall C. Merris in this issue of *PICA*.

14. Cawdell, *A Short Account of the English Concertina* (London: William Cawdell, 1865), 10, 15; available online: <<http://www.concertina.com/cawdell/>>.

15. For further information on these pieces, see Allan W. Atlas, *The Wheatstone English Concertina in Victorian England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 58-68; available online: <<http://www.questia.com>> (by subscription, though one can 'preview' things).