

English International: A History of the English Concertina in Sound

ALLAN ATLAS

English International, various artists. Folksounds Records FSCD 80 (2007).

In his wide-ranging essay on *Anglo International* (Folksounds Records, FSCD 70) in *PICA*, vol. 3 (pp. 38-44), Roger Digby confessed to a conflict of interest: he was writing about a set of CDs in which he himself had 'some slight involvement', permission for this having been granted by, as he put it, the 'esteemed editor' of the journal. To 'fess up, then: I find myself in the same position in reviewing *English International* (henceforth *English*), for I am one of the concertinists represented there, and I can say that I offered at least a modicum of advice (sometimes taken, sometimes not, which is just as it should be) as work on the collection progressed. And it is, therefore, with the permission of our esteemed reviews editor that I proceed.

Our reviews (Roger's and mine) share two other characteristics: (1) Roger was and I will be generous with praise and superlatives (and well deserved they are in both instances), and (2) like Roger, I will avoid a track-by-track or even a concertinist-by-concertinist approach (either of which quickly becomes tedious for both writer and reader). Rather, I shall look at *English* from the point of view of repertorial 'themes', as it were; for if there is one thing that *English* demonstrates, it is that the English concertina and its players have been—and still are—comfortable in many musical homes: from Bach to bluegrass, from the lyricism of the Victorian composer George Alexander Macfarren to shades of Woody's 'Herd', and on to some homes that teeter on somewhat hazily defined stylistic fences. And though this diversity sometimes complicates the task of thematicizing, I have settled on the following traditions, which I take up in the rough chronological order (with some inevitable overlapping) in which instrument and traditions initially came together: (1) the Victorian 'art-music' repertory; (2) music hall, vaudeville, and other 'commercial entertainment'; (3) concertina bands; (4) two Russian concertinists; (5) the folk and folk-influenced; (6) what we might call 'stretching the traditions'; and (7) 'art music' (that term again) composed for the concertina since the 1980s.

Prior to setting out, though, we should attend to some preliminary business. Conceived of and compiled by Alan Day and Graham

Bradshaw (APPLAUSE. . .APPLAUSE. . . . TAKE A BOW, GENTLEMEN!), *English* consists of three CDs, with eighty tracks by thirty-nine concertinists (or groups thereof), and runs for 3 hours-45 minutes. It comes with a beautifully illustrated, highly informative, 48-page booklet, and it is worth every pence or penny of its £25 price. It entertains and educates, and it even provides an occasional revelation. Its concertinists range from household names to those either now largely forgotten or just coming to the fore. In effect, it is a *history-in-sound* (beginning with the twentieth century, of course) of the English concertina. And as such it represents a major contribution—surely one of the most important in years—to our knowledge and appreciation of the instrument. Finally, since it is impossible to mention the playing of all the contributors, I hope that they and readers alike will understand that what goes unmentioned may nevertheless be quite mentionable.

1. The Victorian Tradition: Before the music hall, before the bands of the northern industrial towns and Salvation Army, before the village greens and pubs, there were London's leading recital halls and fashionable upper-class salons: that's where the English concertina found its first home, with players and repertory to match. And though we have no recordings by the period's two superstars, Giulio Regondi (d. 1872) and Richard Blagrove (d. 1895)—after whom the tradition pretty much exhausted itself, not to be revived until Douglas Rogers led the way with his recordings of Regondi in the early 1990s (see note 3 below)—*English* does afford us a brief but valuable earful of one player who could still claim direct roots in the tradition.

Though probably best known to concertinists as the author of *A Practical and Comprehensive Tutor for the Duet Concertina* (1914), Ernest Rutterford knew his way around the English. Moreover, he could brag about his pedigree: son or nephew of Charles Rutterford, who could, in turn, boast of having performed with Richard Blagrove. And it is in a performance of Blagrove's *Recollections of Scotland* that we hear Rutterford on *English* (disc 1/tracks 3-4). To be sure, there is nothing particularly subtle about Rutterford's playing: he zips up and down the sometimes interminable arpeggios (this particular piece is not one of Blagrove's better efforts) at a tempo that is just a shade faster than he can always manage cleanly; he plods through 'John Anderson, My Jo'; and with his instrument's low *g* blasting away like a bagpipe gone berserk, he drowns out the 'Monymusk' strathspey that is trying to be heard above (I find the sound of his instrument rather overpowering from the *d'* down).¹ In all, Rutterford seems to bring what I hear as the then-contemporary music hall style of performance to a piece that simply requires a bit more in the way of nuance and

subtlety. Yet it is absolutely wonderful to have the opportunity to hear him, for he no doubt exemplifies the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century approach to the Victorian repertory, and the recording therefore constitutes an important historical document.

As for present-day 'Victorianists': Pauline De Snoo offers a sensitive performance of George Alexander Macfarren's exquisite *Barcarole* (1/19)—how instructive it would have been had she offered the piece on the meantone concertina for which Macfarren explicitly wrote it (more than once Macfarren's notation makes one's eyes roll, as he calls for what would have been a rather sharp A flat in the concertina to sound against a G sharp in the piano)—while my own contribution (with pianist David Butler Cannata) consists of the 'Bolero' from Bernhard Molique's *Six Characteristic Pieces*, Op. 61 (1/6), and No. 4 from Giulio Regondi's set of twelve *Leisure Moments* (1/7), both performed on an 1866 Wheatstone beautifully restored by Wim Wakker of Concertina Connection.

Would I have liked a bit more in the way of the Victorian tradition? Of course! I'd have wallowed in it. But I also appreciate the tricky balancing act behind the production of an anthology such as this one: the need to weigh historicism against present-day trends and tastes. In the end, Alan and Graham—and therefore *English*—have probably gotten it right.²

2. Music Hall, Vaudeville, and Commercial Entertainment: I have, with respect to the concertina, been something of an ostrich, with both my performance and my research heads buried mainly in the Victorian sand. Thus while I knew that the English concertina had entered the music hall tradition as early as May 1851, when Alfred B. Sedgwick and a concertinist named Barton were performing at London's Royal Music Hall,³ and though I was familiar with Tina Webb's display of virtuosity on the Fayre Four Sisters' 1950s recording of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Flight of the Bumblebee* (2/13),⁴ my knowledge of this tradition during the intervening hundred years or so was rather slim. And as I quickly discovered in listening to *English*, it was I who had been the musically poorer for it. For as much as any of the traditions represented in the set, this one bowled me over, with the playing of two concertinists in particular—Walter Dale and Tommy Elliott (neither of whom I had ever heard before)—coming as something of a revelation.⁵ The two musicians are different enough in terms of style. Perhaps we can say that the Birmingham-born Dale (1873-1939) represents a musical hall style that was just a bit raw around the technical edges.⁶ Heard in a set of Scottish tunes (1/2), a

reminder of his activity in Glasgow from 1910 to 1935, Dale has technique to spare—I was particularly impressed with his rapid repeated notes—even if there is an occasional, if slight, ‘raggedness’ in the playing. In the end, though, the exuberance, coupled with a kind of musical honesty that lets the music speak for itself, comes through and carries along everything in its wake.

Tommy Elliott (1902-1987) is another story! A member of ‘The Musical Elliotts’ (with his wife and daughters), Elliott, represented by three tracks (2/10-12), was a virtuoso of the highest rank. His playing is smooth, even glitzy at times, as he was performing for a more cosmopolitan audience (he continued to play into the 1980s). And one of the highlights of *English* is Elliott’s performance of the well-known Silver-De Sylva song ‘Avalon’ (2/10),⁷ at the beginning of which he is introduced as the ‘Wizard of the Concertina’. Simply put, he plays up a storm. No less entertaining is the two-tune medley of ‘Nola’ and ‘Gigi’ (2/12); here Elliott plays on a miniature concertina, and shows that the instrument is more than just a ‘toy’, though I admit that some (my eight-year-old Havanese named Chibi, for example) might find it a bit shrill.

Finally, there is Alf Edwards: eminently musical, stylish and suave, and always secure in his technique, the sounding image of a man who sat ramrod straight while playing.⁸ And all of this (minus the manner in which he sat) can be heard in his performance of that old Maurice Chevalier hit ‘Mitzi’ (2/1). Little wonder that Boris Matusewitch held his playing in the highest regard.

At the risk of repeating myself: thank you, *English*, for introducing me to this repertory, to Elliott, as well as to Walter Dale, Walter Jukes, Tommy Dale, *et al.*

3. The Concertina Bands: What do the Cleveland Orchestra under George Szell, Astor Piazzolla’s second quintet, and the Heywood English Concertina Prize Band have in common? They play with a sense of precision that boggles the mind—well perhaps in the case of the Heywood lads (nineteen strong plus drummer and leader in an undated photo from the early twentieth century)⁹ lets say that ‘impressive’ is a more apt description.

First, though, some context.¹⁰ Concertina bands began to come to the fore during the 1880s, modeling themselves, both in terms of conventions and repertory, after the popular brass bands of the period. Concentrated in the industrial towns of Lancashire and Yorkshire (Heywood is just outside Manchester), the number of bands grew

quickly, and, in its issue of October 1889, *The Brass Band News* could claim that there were more than two hundred of them on the equivalent of its mailing list. Among the better known bands were the Heywood, Heckmondwike, Mexborough, Oldham, and Ashton-under-Lyne ensembles; at least they were the ones that walked off with the prize money—£10 for first place in 1923—year after year at such major contests as those at the Crystal Palace (London) and Belle Vue (Manchester) in the early 1900s. Needless to say, World War I put a crimp in things, and, by the end of the '20s, the concertina bands had largely faded into the background, victims of their own conservatism, as they failed to come to terms with changing fashions and musical styles. And while there have been attempts to resurrect the tradition—one thinks, for example, of Jenny Cox's annual concertina band weekends—its glory days are a thing of the past.

English opens with the Heywood's rendition of William Frederick Rimmer's rousing *Titania* (1/1), with James Eastwood as the featured soloist (the piece was originally for brass band and the solo instrument was the cornet). Three things strike the ear: Eastwood can play like the dickens, the balance between high and low registers is quite good (none of that booming bottom that one often finds with concertina bands), and the sound is remarkably clean. It would be difficult to think of a more inviting and entertaining way in which to begin this set of three CDs.

There is a nice symmetry to disc 1. Having begun with the Heywood band, it concludes with that from Ashton-under-Lyne, which won the Belle Vue contest in 1911-1913 and then again in 1922-1925 (in American sports parlance, that's a 'dynasty' twice over). Here, though—in their c. 1935 recording of the popular 'Glow Worm Idyll' (as it was originally called)¹¹—the bass does boom, even if in a sort of comical way that draws a smile.

In all, the Heywood and Ashton tracks bear witness to an important aspect of the history of the English concertina, as the concertina bands represent one of the first steps in what might be called the democratization of the instrument. And that *English* now makes two snapshots of that history easily accessible to us earns our gratitude and whets our appetite for the single CD that Folksounds Records plans to devote entirely to the concertina bands.

4. *Two Russian Concertinists:* The English concertina made its debut in Russia by 1853 at the latest, when Isabelle Dulcken, one of Regondi's students, performed in Moscow and St. Petersburg.¹²

Whether the concertina began to gain popularity in Russia immediately after her tour we (or at least I) don't know, but it was certainly well entrenched on the musical map there by the 1880s and continued to hold its own after the turn of the century.¹³ And it was from this tradition that two of the phenomenal concertina virtuosos of the twentieth century emerged: Gregori Matusewitch (b. Minsk, 1886/89?; d. New York, 1939) and Raphael Alexandrovich Sonnenberg (b. Tamboff; d. New York—dates uncertain), both of whom eventually came to the United States under the auspices of Sol Hurok in the 1920s (Matusewitch) and 1930s (Raphael, as he was called).¹⁴

They shared more than just national origins, however, as their careers, repertoires, and manner of performance were similar in many respects: (1) they thought of the concertina mainly as a substitute for the violin, and music for that instrument made up the bulk of their repertoires; (2) they played in venues as diverse as New York's staid Town Hall and ritzy Waldorf-Astoria; and (3) they seemed to revel in music suffused with the Eastern- and Central-European *klezmer* (or, more generally, gypsy) tradition. And it is this last aspect of their careers that *English* highlights, with Matusewitch's rendition of that favorite of strolling-violinists, Vittorio Monti's *Csárdás* (1/5),¹⁵ and Raphael's performance of a Romanian *Doina* ('Shepherd's Song', 1/10) and a medley made up of 'Two Guitars' and 'Dark Eyes' (1/11).

Now, while these guys could certainly get around the button boards—their technique ranges from impressive to awesome—there is one feature of their playing (and it also pervades Rutterford's performance, if to a lesser degree) that I find annoying: the constant use of what can only be called the concertinist's 'faux vibrato', obtained by shaking one's hand while sustaining a note. But a vibrato it isn't, at least not in the sense that a string or wind player produces it, since that consists of "A slight fluctuation in pitch", to quote the opening words of the article on that subject in *The New Harvard Dictionary of Music*.¹⁶ Nor is it the same as the more-difficult-to-define vocal vibrato, which many will claim is more a fluctuation in intensity than in pitch.¹⁷ And while the 'faux vibrato' can be effective when used as an occasional *ornament* of sorts (which is how string players generally used vibrato prior to the twentieth century), its non-stop application becomes tiresome. In fact, the uninitiated might even think that the player is suffering from stage fright. Giulio Regondi addressed this 'faux vibrato' in his *New Method for the Concertina*, where he opens his 'Concluding Remarks' with a discussion of 'certain defects of style and execution to be avoided':

A continuous quivering of the sound during a melody has become prevalent among players who perhaps imagine that (by imitating in this manner the tremulousness of voice in which so many singers of the present day indulge to a lamentable degree,) they are playing "with feeling." It must be carefully avoided by all who aim at purity of style and truth of expression.¹⁸

There are, I think, three lessons to be learned from all of this: (1) the Russians neither inaugurated the 'quivering', nor were they the only ones to use it (as noted above, one hears it in the Rutterford recording), (2) I strongly doubt that either Matusewitch or Raphael ever read Regondi, and (3) though they themselves were not that far removed (at least chronologically) from the likes of John Charles Ward, Ernest Rutterford, and Marie Lachenal, for them the Victorian tradition was a dead herring. In fact, I doubt that they knew much of it at all.¹⁹

5. The Folk and Folk-Influenced: This, no doubt, is the 'theme' that will interest most *English* listeners; and in a show of reciprocity (not to mention good marketing strategy—and there's nothing wrong with that!) *English* has accommodated them by emphasizing that theme and the number of concertinists who play within it. Table 1 crunches some numbers.

Table 1. The distribution of repertory/themes, concertinists, and concertinists by 'generations' across *English*: VicC = Victorian classical; MH-V-CE = Music Hall, Vaudeville, and Commercial Entertainment; ConB = Concertina bands; Russ = Two Russians; F-FI = Folk and Folk-Influenced; StrT = Stretching the Traditions; CAM = Contemporary 'Art Music'. N.B.: (1) the total number of concertinists accounted for (42) exceeds the number that actually contributed (39), since some are represented by more than one theme; (2) the two tracks over which Rutterford's recording is split is counted only as one.

	VicC	MH- V-CE	ConB	Russ	F-FI	StrT	CAM
Tracks (80)	5	15	2	3	46	8	1
Concertinists (39)	4	9	2	2	19	5	1
Living concertinists (23)	2	0	0	0	19	5	1

Though numbers can be read in many ways, and though *English* could include only what it received upon its 'call for recordings', Table 1 tells a pretty clear story: (1) folk and folk-influenced music predominates, with more than half the total number of tracks and virtually all of the living concertinists; (2) the various traditions that grew out of the Victorian period are pretty much dead, with not a single live concertinist, for example, contributing to the Music Hall-Vaudeville-Commercial Entertainment theme;²⁰ (3) that there is only one track devoted to Contemporary 'Art Music' shows how little that repertory has taken hold (let's face it: it's even less well known than the Victorian classical); and (4) few English players seem to be willing to 'stretch the traditions' in brave and meaningful ways. Folk music, then, is the main attraction, both for players and—to the extent that *English* has taken the pulse of the prospective buyers—for listeners. And that's fine! It's great stuff! I also enjoy whiling away a Saturday or Sunday afternoon with it (in private). But, I would plead (I'm sitting, not kneeling): there's a wide, wide, very wide world of music out there—experience it in hands-on-the-concertina fashion!

Having crunched the numbers and delivered the sermon, I should move on and consider a few of the contributions to this theme (with apologies to those who go unmentioned). To begin with another revelation (for me): Mark Evans and the Obi's Boys band playing two traditional American tunes, 'Whiskey before Breakfast' and 'Blackberry Blossom' (3/17-18)—you'd think that the English was to blue grass born. This is simply good, foot-stompin' music, nicely arranged (see below), and with the concertina utilized to perfection. Also Appalachian: Ian Robb's lovely rendition of 'One Day I Will' (3/2), a gospel song from the North Carolina/Virginia singer Estil Ball, played here as a lilting waltz on a rare 'double-reeded' concertina, part of which has two reeds per note, these tuned an octave apart; and Sarah Graves's lovely 'Fair and Tender Ladies' (3/9), on which she both sings and plays the concertina.²¹ In all, it was a surprise to put on disc 3, which is devoted entirely to folk and folk-influenced music, and be regaled by music with some down-home, I-77 soul.²²

Jumping across the ocean: there is the consistently beautiful playing of Tim Jennings and harpist Leanne Ponder, who offer a stunning performance of Turlough O'Carolan's 'Lord Inchiquin' (2/22); the meticulously clean technique of Rob Harbron (1/21-22 and 3/11-12); and Simon Thoumire (3/6-7), who, if better known for his jazz playing, simply bowls one over with his performance of 'Bonaparte' (3/6). Finally, there is Dave Townsend's 'Giga ferrarese' (2/19), about which I would say this: if ever pressed to single out a performance that

demonstrates the English concertina's technical capabilities in the field of folk music, this is the performance to which I'd point. Townsend turns this attractive sixteen-bar 'folk' tune (from the Emilia-Romagna region of Italy) into a tour de force, the likes of which concertinists have not done since Regondi and Blagrove were turning out their many 'Fantasias on. . .' a few concertina lifetimes ago. There is something for everyone to admire: single-note passage work, chordal accompaniment, and fleet parallel thirds (though as most English players will know, these sound more impressive than they are difficult to play). Finally, for those Anglo players who insist that only their instrument can deliver dance music with the proper punch: listen to Dave and the 'Giga'. *Bravo!*

Our forty-six tracks of folk and folk-influenced music raise some questions. Is Dave Townsend's virtuosic 'Giga ferrarese' any longer representative of the 'folk'? Are the beautifully crafted arrangements presented by Mark Evans and friends still the voice of the 'folk'? Are things realized in an Oxford studio or a Boston pub truly 'folk'-like? Do all those players of the English concertina really like 'folk' music? When does 'folk' music verge on—or even become—commercial entertainment? Is it the 'source' of the music that counts? Is it the way in which it's transmitted (and if so, where does O'Carolan's music—carefully notated—stand in the mix)? Is it the venue in which it's played that counts? Happily, no one says that he or she who asks questions is obliged to answer them! Rather, I will let Ralph Vaughan Williams shoulder the responsibility:

Our folk song, like our language, is neither new nor old... they are both of immemorial antiquity and both are means of expression today just as they were 500 years ago. In our native song just as in our native speech the form gradually changes with the changing needs of the community. Our language and our song are like an old tree, continually putting out new leaves.²³

6. *Stretching the Traditions:* To be frank, I have created this theme in order to accommodate music that does not fit easily into any of the other traditions. We might consider two of them: jazz and 'classical' music of bygone—or even recent—times that was obviously not conceived for the concertina. To the first category belong three multi-tracked contributions of John Nixon, whose 'Slipped Disc' (2/7) looks back to the old Benny Goodman Sextet, while an up-tempo 'Besame mucho' (2/9) packs a Latin punch. I assume that John first establishes the rhythmic foundation and then adds the various lines

above it. I also enjoyed Martin Bradley's 'Spot the Tune', where he wails away as if her were playing a Dixieland clarinet.

We might quibble about whether or not adapting music from the Baroque period really constitutes 'stretching the traditions'. After all, Giulio Regondi included excerpts from the Bach unaccompanied sonatas and partitas for violin in his *Rudimenti del Concertinista* of 1844 and Arthur James Balfour spent many an hour playing Handel trio sonatas with Mary Gladstone, daughter of the prime minister.²⁴ Thus Baroque music and the English concertina have gone together almost from the instrument's inception, with the tradition having been extended beyond the Victorians by the likes of Gregori Matusewitch and his son Boris, as well as by Dave Townsend, whose recording of the Bach Suite for Lute in E minor, BWV 996, adapted (though only slightly) for a tenor-treble instrument, is certainly a highlight among recent recordings of the instrument.²⁵ In any event, Danny Chapman treats us to a 'Bourrée and Minuet'—originally for keyboard—by the German composer Johann Krieger (1/25), and then comes chronologically forward with an 'Andante - Largo', Op. 5, No. 5, for guitar by the Spanish composer-guitarist Fernando Sor (1/27), both played with an exquisite feeling for their respective styles.²⁶ Moving in the other direction, Martyn Bradley reaches back to the early sixteenth century and treats us to a fine performance of 'Helas madame', attributed to no one other than King Henry VIII (2/13); here the concertina stands in very nicely for the shawm or crumhorn.²⁷

7. Contemporary 'Art Music': The Victorians produced half a dozen concertos for the English concertina,²⁸ after which the well of concertina concertos ran dry until the New York-based composer James Cohn wrote his *Concerto in A for Concertina and Strings*, Op. 44, in 1966. For various reasons the work lay pretty much dormant for thirty-five years²⁹ until it was taken up by Wim Wakker and the Latvian National Symphony on a 2002 recording devoted entirely to the music of Cohn.³⁰ And thanks to the generosity of the composer, *English* was able to borrow from that recording the third movement of the work, the devilishly difficult Rondo, which Wim romps through as though he had been playing it for years (I can attest that he learned the piece in just a few weeks).

As I noted earlier, *English* runs for almost four hours. Wim gets through the Rondo in 2:33 (that's two minutes and thirty-three seconds, not two hours and thirty-three minutes—just making sure), and that is it for the very impressive and growing (slowly but surely) body of music that has recently—let's say from the mid-1980s—been

written for the English concertina. How nice it would have been to have included Oliver Hunt's haunting *Song of the Sea* or Alla Borzova's *Pinsk and Blue* or, in a lighter vein (and much easier to play), Stephen Jackman's *Two Jazz Duets* or *Jazz Menagerie*, any of which—especially the two pieces by Jackman—might have encouraged concertinists to try this repertory.³¹ Would another few minutes devoted to one of these pieces have been worth knocking out a 'tune' or two? I think so. Others will think not. And I have already given one sermon too many.

I would, before concluding, like to raise a question: now that we have *English*, now that *English* sums up about a century's worth of playing and repertory, *whither the English concertina?* Clearly there is no one answer, and whatever answer each of us comes up with may ride on just how he or she uses the instrument. In other words, those who use the English concertina 'merely' as a vehicle on which to play their favorite music—and clearly, that is music that falls into the broad category of folk or folk-influenced—will likely continue the profile that already characterizes *English*: the Victorian period in all its guises is pretty much dead, there is relatively little 'stretching of the traditions' going on, and the 'new' music for the instrument remains almost completely unknown except to a very small, infant-size handful of concertinists. On the other hand, those with an itch to explore the instrument's historical repertory and/or technical capabilities will no doubt want—and even have—to broaden their repertorial horizons. And though I rather suspect which will be the path more heavily trod, I don't have a crystal ball. Perhaps I'll be surprised.

It is time to sum up: *English International* is a wonderful collection. It presents the English concertina from myriad angles: thirty-nine concertinists diving into seven different repertories, and with most of the performances being of very high caliber. It is, as I called it earlier, a history-in-sound of the English concertina, as that history unfurled during the twentieth—and now the early twenty-first—century. As such, it surely ranks as one of the most significant contributions to recent 'scholarship' about the instrument. Moreover, everyone will find something—in fact, everyone will find quite a bit—that he/she likes, and—equally important (and central to my own personal agenda)—everyone will no doubt learn something about the instrument; as I said some pages back, *English* both entertains and educates. In all, I know I speak for all of us when I offer Alan Day and Graham Bradshaw our heartfelt thanks for a job **very, very very well done**.³²

NOTES

1. Part of the problem is that Rutterford plays the *Recollections* (published no later than 1876) on a 'modern' instrument for the sound of which it was not conceived. I argue for playing the Victorian repertory on period instruments in 'The Victorian Concertina: Some Issues Relating to Performance', *Nineteenth-Century Music Review*, 3/2 (2006), 33-61, especially 38-44; online at www.concertina.com/atlas/index.

2. Having said that, I must qualify things just a bit in what I hope is not too nit-picky a fashion. The Victorian period is in fact represented by one more track, Harry Dunn's rather weird performance (I'm being polite) of Regondi's little masterpiece, *Les Oiseaux*. What's weird about it? Two things: (1) Dunn omits the piano part entirely, and thus misrepresents the music, and (2) he begins in bar 5 (obviously skipping over the four-bar piano introduction) and ends in bar 52; the problem is that the piece as a whole is 252 bars long, so that we only have about twenty percent of the work, and we never do hear Regondi's wistful second theme. But perhaps we should be happy that the performance is cut short, since the fifty-two bars that we do have leave much to be desired (once again, I am trying to be polite). And yet there is some virtue in including Dunn's recording, for it shows us into what disregard Regondi and the Victorian tradition in general fell in the twentieth century. Those who would like to hear a truly bravura recording of *Les Oiseaux* should listen to the Douglas Rogers CD cited below.

Finally, I simply cannot pass up this opportunity to take note of just how paltry is the representation on 'modern' recordings of the instrument's Victorian repertory. First and foremost—and really occupying a place of honor for its path-breaking efforts—are the two recordings of Regondi's music by Douglas Rogers: *The Great Regondi: Original Compositions by the 19th Century's Unparalleled Guitarist & Concertinist*, The Giulio Regondi Guild, Douglas Rogers, concertina; David Starobin, guitar; Julie Lustman, piano; d'Anna Fortunato, mezzo-soprano. 2 CDs, Bridge Records, BCD 9039 and 9055 (1993, 1994); Dave Townsend has recorded two items: the 'Serenade' from Bernhard Molique's *Six Characteristic Pieces*, Op. 61 (1859), and Joseph Warren's *Variations on 'Home, Sweet Home'*, both on *Concertina Landscape*, Serpent Press, SER 006 (1998); he had already recorded part of the Warren on *The Music of Dickens and his Time*, Beautiful Jo Records, BEJO CD-9 (1996); there is a 'private' (unissued) recording by the fine Finnish concertinist Petri Ikkelä which includes Molique's entire set of *Six Characteristic Pieces* as well as Julius Benedict's *Andantino*; beyond these, Wim Wakker is working on a recording, Douglas Rogers might still resurrect his series of Regondi CDs, and I hope to turn out a CD in conjunction with my forthcoming *Victorian Music for the English Concertina*, an anthology to be published by A-R Editions in 2009. There is almost something embarrassing about just how short the list is. In fact, in terms of total recording time, there is almost twice as much Victorian concertina music available on CD in performances by *accordionists!* (yes, by accordionists!): Joseph Petric has recorded Molique's Sonata in B flat, Op. 57 (c. 1860) and the same composer's *Six Melodies, Lieder ohne Worte* (Op. 51?/1854?), transcribed for concertina and harp by Regondi and Charles Oberthür, both on *Joseph Petric, Accordion*, CBC Recordings/Les disques SRC, Musica viva MVCD 1056 (1993); Petric has recorded both of these pieces anew and added Molique's *Flying Leaves*,

Op. 50 (1856) (another set of six pieces) on a CD scheduled to appear shortly; Helmut C. Jacobs, *Giulio Regondi (1823-1872): Souvenir d'amitié, Compositions for concertina and baritone concertina*, Musikproduktion Dabringhaus und Grimm, MDG 903 1420-6 (2006), this CD reviewed by Wim Wakker in *PICA*, 4. Am I alone in finding this both astonishing and dismaying?

3. There is a notice about them in *The Times*, 2 May 1851; cited in Allan W. Atlas, *The Wheatstone English Concertina in Victorian England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 57, n. 45.

4. This recording has long been available on Richard Carlin's valuable compilation, *The English Concertina*, The Smithsonian Institution, Folkways Cassette Series 08845 (1976/reissued 1992); on the Webb sisters, see Richard Carlin, 'The Fayre Four Sisters: Concertina Virtuosi', *The Free-Reed Journal*, 3 (2001), 79-88. Having listened to the performance again on *English*, I am struck by the extraordinary degree to which her playing surpasses the quartet's overall sense of ensemble in terms of both precision and balance.

5. For profiles of both musicians, see Randall C. Merris, 'Dutch Daly: Comedy and Concertinas on the Variety Stage', *PICA*, 4 (2007), 16, and Viona 'Elliott' Lane, Randall C. Merris, and Chris Algar, 'Tommy Elliott and the Musical Elliotts', in this issue of *PICA*; on Dale, see also, Stuart Eydmann, 'The Life and Times of the Concertina: The Adoption and Usage of a Novel Instrument with Particular Reference to Scotland', Ph.D. dissertation, Open University (1995), 121-23; further references to this study are to the version available online at www.concertina.com/eydmann/index.

6. As Eydmann, 'The Life and Times of the Concertina', puts it, his music was a reflection of 'conservative working-class' tastes.

7. Louis Silver and G.B. De Sylva; the song was introduced by Al Jolson in the 1921 Broadway musical *Bombo*.

8. There is a photo of him in action—sitting ramrod straight in tuxedo and black tie—in Allan Atlas, *Contemplating the Concertina: An Historically-Informed Tutor for the English Concertina* (Amherst: The Button Box, 2003), 9.

9. A concert announcement dated 14 October 1928 from the Olympia Theatre, Coalville, puts their number at twenty-five; my thanks to Alan Day for sending me a copy of the announcement.

10. What follows draws upon Stuart Eydmann, 'The Life and Times of the Concertina'; Stephen Chambers, 'Joseph Astley, Oldham Concertina Band and the MHJ Shield', *PICA*, 4 (2007), 27-40 (online at www.concertina.org/pica/index.htm and www.concertina.com/chambers/index/htm); Nigel Pickles, 'The Heckmondwike English Concertina Band', *International Concertina Association Newsletter*, 321 (October 1987), 5-9.

11. A word about this well-known song: written by the German composer-conductor-violinist Paul Lincke (1866-1946) as part of his 1902 operetta *Lysistrata-Idyll*, the song, originally known as 'Glühwürmchen', became popular throughout

Europe; it was translated into the English version that we know today in the late 1940s, and climbed to No. 1 on the Hit Parade thanks to the 1952 recording by the Mills Brothers (in collaboration with the arranger Johnny Mercer). On Lincke, see *Grove Music Online*, ed. Laura Macy, at www.grovemusic.com.

12. See Atlas, 'Ladies in the Wheatstone Ledgers: The Gendered Concertina in Victorian England, 1835-1870', *Royal Musical Association Research Chronicle*, 39 (2006), 34-35, 105-6 (online at www.concertina.com/atlas/index); Isabelle was the niece of Louis Dulcken (d. 1850), piano teacher to the royal family.

13. See Hilding Bergquist, 'Concertinas', *Accordion World*, September 1949; online at the website of The Classical Free Reed: www.ksanti.net/free-reed/essays/bergquistconcertinas.html. There is an oft-repeated error about the concertina in Russia: Tchaikovsky did not use concertinas in his Suite No. 2, in C, Op. 58; he used accordions (or, more precisely, bayans).

14. On Gregori Matusewitch, see Eric Matusewitch, 'The Matusewitch Family: Concertina and Accordion Virtuosi—Russia, Europe and the United States; online at www.ksanti.net/free-reed/essays.matusewitch.html, and 'The Matusewitch Family: An Annotated Bibliography', *PICA*, 2 (2005), 52-60; on Raphael, see two unsigned notices: 'Squeeze Music: Raphael Presses out Anything from Beethoven to Gershwin', *Literary Digest*, 5 December 1936, 20, and 'Raphael', *Accordion World*, 1/7 (October 1936), 14.

15. Despite the obvious gypsy flavor of the piece—the *czárdás* is a dance of Hungarian origin—Monti (1868-1922) was born and bred in Naples. It is instructive to compare Matusewitch's performance of the piece with that by Dave Townsend on *Portrait of the Concertina*, Saydisc SDL-351 (1985). Though Townsend can keep up with anyone in the fast sections, his performance of the slow, opening section misses the gypsy flavor (this notwithstanding guitarist Nick Hooper's occasional imitation of a zither). On the other hand, for Matusewitch, who came out of the same musical-cultural milieu as Mischa Elman and other Russian violinists of that generation, 'schmalz' came naturally.

16. Ed. by Don Randall (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1986), 910.

17. *The New Harvard Dictionary of Music*, 910.

18. Regondi, *New Method for the Concertina* (Dublin: Joseph Scates/London: Wessel & Co., [1857]), 52.

19. Having studied with Boris Matusewitch, with whom the Russian tradition of concertinists came to an end (at least in the West), I can say that he played—and may only have known—very little of the Victorian repertory. He performed (1) the Molique Concerto No. 1, (2) the opening, self-contained *Andantino* from Regondi's lengthy *Morceau de salon: Andantino et capriccio-mazurka*, and (3) Regondi's unaccompanied *Hexameron*. For 'exercises', he drew mainly on nineteenth-century violin methods. One can hear Boris Matusewitch on Carlin's *English Concertina* compilation (see note 5).

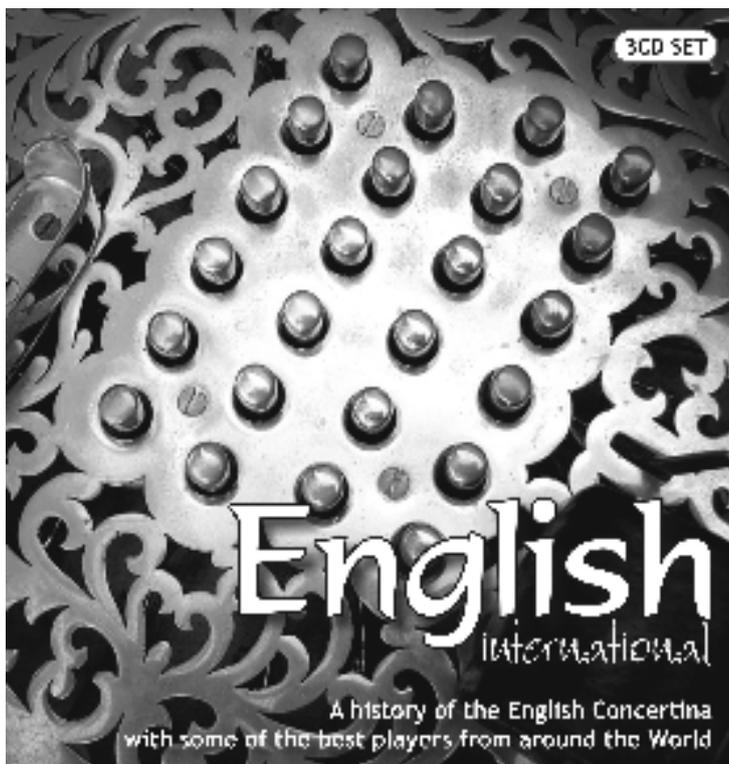
20. This is a little surprising in view of the availability of Phil Hopkinson's nice collection titled *Dancing with Ma Baby* (Newbiggin-by-the-Sea: Dragonfly Music, 1994), which can certainly serve to start players off in this repertory.
21. Readers might be interested in knowing that there is a novel by one Lee Smith called *Fair and Tender Ladies* (New York: Random House, 1993); it evokes life in Appalachia as it plays out in the mountains of Virginia. (I cannot say that I've read it.)
22. Interstate 77 runs north-south for 611 miles through Ohio, West Virginia, Virginia, and the Carolinas, that is, through what some call 'mid-Appalachia', where this music is entirely at home.
23. Ralph Vaughan Williams, 'British Music', *The Music Student*, 7 (1914); reprinted in *Vaughan Williams on Music*, ed. David Manning (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 45.
24. On Balfour and the concertina, see my article, 'Lord Arthur's "Infernals": Arthur James Balfour and the Concertina', *The Musical Times*, 149/No. 1904 (Autumn, 2008); the article will eventually be posted at www.concertina.com.
25. On Baroque music as part of the repertory of the Matusewitches, see Eric Matusewitch, 'The Matusewitch Family', 52-59; for the Townsend recording: *Portrait of a Concertina*, Saydisc CD-SDL 351 (1985). It is interesting to note that there is even a piece of Baroque music on *Anglo International* (2005): John Kirkpatrick's performance of the Gigue from Johann Mattheson's Suite No. 11, which is included in his *Pieces de Clavecin en deux volumes* (1714).
26. On Krieger (1652-1735—not to be confused with his older brother Johann Philipp Krieger) and Sor (1778-1839), see *Grove Music Online* (www.grovemusic.com).
27. On Henry VIII as a composer, see *Grove Music Online* (www.grovemusic.com).
28. These are listed in Atlas, *The Wheatstone English Concertina*, 59.
29. Though it was I who commissioned the work, I never had the opportunity to play more than a movement here or there, and even then only with piano.
30. *James Cohn: Concertos and Tone Poems*, XLNT Music, XLNT CD-18010 (2002); the work received its first live performance by Wim Wakker and the Queens College (CUNY) String Orchestra at a concert sponsored by The Center for the Study of Free-Reed Instruments, 'The Incredible Concertina 2', The Graduate Center of The City University of New York, 26 March 2004.
31. Of the pieces just mentioned, all but Hunt's *Song of the Sea* are easily available in editions from Concertina Connection. For some background about this 'new' repertory for the English, see my article, 'The "Respectable" Concertina', *Music and Letters*, 80 (1999), 242-47, where, however, my list of pieces is already sadly out of date. Within a few weeks of my having finished this review

(but before we went to press), I learned of a new recording by Pauline De Snoo, *Concertina Scape: Contemporary Music for Wheatstone's Concertina, 1985-2004*, Concertina Academy Con-Ac 1112 (2008), available from Concertina Academy, of which Ms. De Snoo is Director. Happily, Hunt's *Song of the Sea* is on that recording, as is music by Richard Williams, Chris van de Kuilen, Hazel Leach, and Keith Amos. There will be a review of the recording in *PICA*, 6 (2009).

32. Still to come in the *International* series: a three (?) -CD set devoted to the Duet concertina. In addition, there will be the single CD devoted to concertina bands (see above), and *PICA*, volume 6, for 2009, will carry an article by Alan and Graham that will give readers a glimpse into the making of *International*.

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