

THE CONCERTINA NEWSLETTER
FOR PLAYERS AND COLLECTORS OF THE CONCERTINA
AND RELATED METAL REED INSTRUMENTS

Free on Subscription
Supported by Donations

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1. EDITORIAL

We hope you enjoy this first edition of the Concertina Newsletter, and find that it supplies interesting and useful information on the instruments that you play or collect. Though this issue is mainly written by the editor, it is hoped that many of you, the subscribers, will write in with little contributions about your instruments and activities, and with lots of queries, comments and small ads.

Articles and services planned for future issues of the newsletter include:-

- * An interview with Mr. Harry Crabb, the Concertina maker, on the history of his family firm.
- * A project on the computer dating and identification of early Victorian concertinas.
- * The fore-runners of the concertina:- description and discussion of the Sheng, Khae:n, Balinese Temple Organ, and other metal reed folk instruments related to the modern free-reed family: also, Wheatstone's earliest prototypes.
- * A beginners guide to the variations of the concertina, being a description and discussion of the available makes and systems of Anglo, Duet and English concertina, and the best instruments to choose for solos, dance and song accompaniments.
- * A small discography of recorded concertina music, on 33 r.p.m. and 78 r.p.m.
- * A buyer's guide to purchasing old concertinas.
- * Facsimiles of old Wheatstone and Lachenal price lists and catalogues.
- * Regular articles on Morris dance playing, song accompaniment and playing of classical music from scores.
- * Features on the use of the concertina in modern musical education courses.

* The concertina in America.

Some of these future contributions are already drafted, but, once again, I've got to appeal to you, the readership! Please treat this newsletter as your forum, your communication with other players and your publication, to develop as you think necessary. If there is anything of special interest or that you think is important, either write about it and send it in, or demand its appearance. Likewise, if there are any groups of enthusiasts who would like to edit a complete issue of the newsletter - say a "Northern Edition", or "Anglo Edition", just get together and do it, as "guest editors" would be very welcome!

FINANCE OF THE NEWSLETTER

As mentioned in the circular which you all received, the first few issues of the Newsletter are intended to be free to all who are interested. Up to now, the costs of postage, stationery and the printing of circulars has been £3.11½ and this issue has cost, for a print run of 400 copies, £2.50 Luckily, this cost has largely been covered by part of the B.B.C. fee for the spot about the Newsletter on Folk on Friday.

However, the main cost is going to be postage on future issues, (this issue is largely sent out in your S.A.E.'s, for which, many thanks!) and the cost of stencils and duplicating paper. So, once again, an appeal for help: would those of you who can afford it, please send some large S.A.E.'s for as many issues as you would like, and we will try and finance the printing of the Newsletter from revenue from Small Adverts and from donations from "satisfied subscribers". I feel that this would be a far more satisfactory method than charging a "membership fee", for there must be a lot of prospective players who could not afford this. So, if you've enjoyed this Newsletter and would like to help keep it appearing, feel free to send stamps, P.O.'s, or any other help - advice on printing or duplicating, or even photo-litho services that you may have access to would of course be a great help. If you really can't afford it - don't worry, we will try and keep it coming!

When the Newsletter is well established, then we can think about applying for financial help from other sources, such as the Music industry, Folk Music magazines or the E.F.D.S.S. But, for the present, any help from those who can afford it will help to keep this service available to the growing number of players and collectors of concertinas and allied free reed instruments.

SMALL ADVERTS

To advertise in the Newsletter, for information, spares, instruments, or to sell or swap anything, just send the ad. (any reasonable size) plus a 15p. Postal Order. (Don't forget to include your address!) Likewise any ads. for Folk Concerts, Club Events, gatherings, and ads, well, for anything are gladly received - and the 15 p's will help keep the newsletter running and flourishing.

2. REPAIRS AND OTHER SERVICES

One of the main problems for any of us who acquire an old concertina of any sort is that of repairs, tuning and spare parts.

Often, the concertinas found in junk shops and attics, have stood for years and become dusty, rusty, cracked and generally in poor condition, or have usually been laid aside due to damage or heavy wear and tear after decades of constant use - I have often seen concertinas with the keys and fret-work worn away, even the thumb and finger rests gone or crumbling away. Though we hope to cover tuning in detail in a later Newsletter, it might be useful to give some addresses of subscribers and other persons who do repairs, or who can offer supplies of spare parts. If anyone has any useful tips for making or replacing missing parts, or has any "trade secrets" for repairs that they are prepared to divulge, do write in, and we'll soon have enough information to produce a newsletter supplement on "How to choose and recondition old concertinas"!!

Should your concertina lack it's wooden hexagonal box, Bob Jennings of 9, Freehold Street, Quorn, Leics. has been making his own for some time, and would be glad to consider making a few for others - write to him direct.

For high quality repairs and reconditioning in general, Mr. Harry Crabb, of 158 Liverpool Road, Islington, London, N.1., who is the only quality concertina maker in the world, is the man to contact - but he's very busy making new ones, and repairs tend to take quite a time. We hope to persuade Mr. Crabb to let us publish some of his tips for care and repair of concertinas at some future date.

Anyone in the Birmingham area would do well to call on Mr. Jack Tamburro, the Accordion expert, who can be persuaded to tune concertinas if he is not too busy! The address is to be found in the Birmingham 'phone book.

Anyone who is short of a small quantity of keys (ivory, bone or metal) springs, pads, or levers can write to me, as I've collected quite a number of spares over the past few years, and would be glad to send some to help get your instruments in order; also Mr. Tommy Williams of 71 Tennyson Street, Battersea, London whose interview appears in a later Newsletter, has a fine stock of spare parts for all makes and types of concertinas and will undertake repairs and tuning.

Do write in if you'd like more information on concertina repairing, or if you know of any people who can do repairs and tuning.

N.W.

3. Subscribers with special interests who'd like to get in touch with others, please write to them c/o Concertina Newsletter.

(The addresses of subscribers are not being included in this issue, as some of you might not wish your addresses published. Before a subscriber's list is published, would anyone who prefers their address and interests to remain confidential please write to let me know).

THE BANDONIAN

This is a very large and complex German instrument, constructed like a button Accordion but similar in fingering

to the Anglo concertina. Several people are playing these, so if you have one, write to Frank Loach of Wolverhampton, and Bruce Bollerud (of the Goose Island Ramblers, Madison, Wisconsin, U.S.A.) c/o the Concertina Newsletter.

Mainly Melodeons

Though many collectors have both Concertinas and Melodeons, melodeon specialists are: James W. Catterall of Newcastle on Tyne, who has a major interest in keeping the melodeon alive as a "living" instrument.

Frank Bull of Hessle, Yorks., who uses various melodeons for Morris accompaniment, and Roger M. Avery of North Finchley, London, who also uses the melodeon for Morris. John Goll of Co. Durham, John Hope of Syston, Leics. and Neil Wayne (your editor) are all interested in the early accordians, "Flutinas" or "Windrow accordians".

"FOLK AND COUNTRY"

A new monthly, out October 26th, is edited by subscriber Frederick Woods of 15, Richmond Bridge Mansions, Twickenham. He is always interested in printable items, so do get in touch if you have any interesting activities planned.

PECULIAR LABELS

If anyone has a concertina with an unusual label, stamp, or name on the box or instrument, the Editor, Neil Wayne, would like to know. Of special interest are names or "makers" labels such as: G. Jones, Metzler, Sedgwick, Ebbelwhite, Joseph Scates, Rock Chidley, Simpson, Nickolds, Shakespeare, Jeffries Bros., M. Journet, George Case, Hyam, Myers, and Thomas Dawkins. Do write if you have instruments with such unusual names on them.

USE OF CONCERTINAS IN MODERN MUSICAL EDUCATION

Instruments which readily make sounds (and that includes the concertina!) are being used in an attempt to steer away from traditional musical education by encouraging musically less gifted children to explore the more unusual sounds around them. Anyone who has an interest in this field, please contact Ian Hibbert, 8, Trent Lane, Castle Donington, Derby.

4. THE INTERNATIONAL CONCERTINA ASSOCIATION

If any subscribers are seriously interested in learning more about the Concertina and its music, and in meeting and playing together with some of the finest players in the country, they should not hesitate to get in touch with the International Concertina Association. Formed in 1951, the I.C.A. exists to "Revive, Establish and maintain the playing of, and interest in, concertinas of every type by a world wide membership", and as well as having a chatty and informative monthly newsletter, large and unique music library, and regular meetings in London, its members, scattered all over Great Britain, are the nicest people, and all lovers and players of the concertina.

Though there are few younger members, the I.C.A. caters for all ages, and has regular socials and courses. The next social is on Saturday evening 30th October, 1971 and more details will be supplied by the I.C.A. Secretary, address below.

I have found the I.C.A. courses extremely valuable and enjoyable - both weekend courses of intensive learning and playing, and also one-day courses, both at very low cost. A one day course is to be arranged in the London area in early February - watch this space for details!

One problem is that due to distribution of members, the courses and meetings tend always to be arranged in the London area. But this situation, I think, is changing - more and more younger I.C.A. members, and other tina players, are to be found in the provinces and North of England, and I feel sure that through the medium of this Newsletter, and the I.C.A. Newsletter, some gatherings can soon be arranged out of London! Also, it would be nice to re-start Anglo concertina classes along the lines of those run by Phil at Cecil Sharp house in 1967. The I.C.A. committee assure me that they will be glad to welcome any Newsletter readers at their meetings and socials, and I've put their address below for you to write to them if you're interested.

We hope to feature more articles about the I.C.A. and its activities in future Concertina Newsletters, and also hope to be able to reprint several interesting articles from the I.C.A.'s excellent Newsletter - this has, in the past, produced articles on the old manufacturers of concertinas, on famous players, the reminiscences of I.C.A. members, and supplements of music, arranged specially for the instrument. Those of you who play from music or who are keen to learn, should know that the I.C.A., as well as having the largest selection in the country of classical and other music arranged for solo and group playing, in its library, also sponsor two evening classes at Battersea and Kensington Further Education Institutes (night-school), both of which are of a high standard and enable beginners to learn the English concertina, Anglo and Duet, from first principles. Just write to the "I.C.A." for information on this. The Secretary is Mr. Jim Harvey, 42, St. Barnabas St., London and he'll be glad to hear from you.

Future dates of I.C.A. meetings are also available from Mr. Harvey. If anyone in the Midlands or North of England is interested in arranging or hosting one-day gatherings of local tina players, please let us know, and it'll be advertized in this Newsletter and the I.C.A. Newsletter too!

N.W.

5. CONCERTINA EVENING CLASSES

Two evening courses in Concertina playing are due to start soon in the London area.

On Mondays - at the Holloway Institute, North London

On Tuesdays - at the Battersea Institute, Latchmore Rd.,
Battersea.

Apply at these Institutes for further details.

6. HISTORY OF THE CONCERTINA

Here are some notes on the history of the concertina and its players from Mr. Fred Osborne of Leeds, who is the Folk Music Correspondent for "Banjo-Mandolin)Guitar Magazine".

The English Concertina was invented by Sir Charles Wheatstone

the famous scientist in 1829, the same year as Beethoven's death. Wheatstone was a contemporary and personal friend of the illustrious Michael Faraday, the scientist.

The English concertina differs radically from the Anglo-German concertina. The keys are differently placed and on the English model the same note is sounded whether the bellows are inflated or deflated. On the Anglo-German model, the system is similar to the mouth organ, a different note sounds as the bellows are inflated or deflated. The English concertina is superior in every way.

I believe it was Regondi, a great virtuoso on the classical guitar, who abandoned this instrument and became an equally proficient virtuoso on the concertina, giving astounding performances all over the country in the last century.

Tchaikovsky, the great Russian composer wrote a masterly work, an octette, for eight concertinas.

The writer of these notes was a personal friend of Thomas Mann of Bolton, Lancs. who in the early 1920's was the conductor of the 40 strong "Bolton Concertina Band". This was comprised of all members of the concertina family, including the large bass models. The band wore a very elaborate gold-braided uniform, and were in much demand, for concerts and street marches. Thomas Mann, who conducted them was also a well-known Northern Brass Band Adjudicator at contests. He later conducted the 26 piece "Bolton Banjo, Mandolin, and Guitar" orchestra, of which the writer was a member. The "Bolton Concertina Band" disbanded towards the latter part of the twenties.

An interesting character who played concertina was Ralph Rooney, of Harkshaw Lane, a tiny hamlet in the heart of the country near Holcombe Brook, Lancs. He was noted for his prodigious walking feats as he had tramped from John O Groats to Lands End and the reverse route on many occasions. When he was almost 80 he did the arduous walk along Hadrian's Wall (70 miles) in Northumberland. He played "solos" on his concertina and also music for country dancing. Sometimes he was joined by his brother who also played the concertina, and they did duets together. The writer of these notes (Fred Osborne) has danced to his concertina playing, and dined at his tiny country cottage.

Old Ralph wore boots with soles about one inch and a half thick, but he has led the writer on walks and country rambles, in a party, where this quaint old character rather incongruously wore Bowler Hat, Frock Coat, Striped Trousers, and the aforesaid inch and a half thick boots! He had an immense knowledge of the herbs of the countryside. He certainly made foet dance when he played his concertina.

Advertisement

Wanted - English Concertina, 48 keys, treble. Please quote price, and make to A. G. Hague, 288, Wollaton Road, Wollaton, Nottingham.