

# The Life and Times of the Concertina:

the adoption and usage of a novel musical instrument  
with particular reference to Scotland

Stuart Eydmann

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Supervisors: Dr Peter Cooke & Dr Richard Middleton

<http://www.concertina.com/eydmann>

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## Introduction

### Background

I first became interested in the concertina during the early 1970s when I acquired a second-hand instrument from a Glasgow music dealer and taught myself to play Scottish dance music on it. A number of local folk revival players, competitions at music festivals and authoritative performances and gramophone recordings by leading singers and groups backed my assumption that the concertina was primarily an instrument of the “folk traditions” of the British Isles.

In 1982, a chance encounter with an elderly musician introduced me to other areas of concertina playing, including sacred music, bands, the music hall and many forms of popular music. It was clear that these pockets of musical activity were on the wane and, although they were seemingly at odds with my taste for traditional music and song, I set out to record the music and testimony of their musicians for posterity. My initial objective, therefore, was the protection, preservation and publicising of residual musical forms in a manner similar to the practice of “rescue archaeology”<sup>1</sup> in my day to day work as a local authority conservation officer.

This field work, complemented by library research and wider reading, led me to re-assess my view of the concertina as a “folk” instrument. It became clear that the variety encountered in the field was typical rather than exceptional; the concertina had never been associated with any simply defined musical area, class or group but had enjoyed a number of functions reflecting the richness, contradictions and complexities of music and society in the modern period.<sup>2</sup> Developments in the form of the instrument or changes in its pattern of use could not be explained simply as a single linear path of continual improvement but required to be viewed as a complex of involvements and responses across a range of performance situations, musical sub-cultures and institutions which were continually emerging, changing or passing away. Furthermore, I no longer viewed instruments simply as the tools of the musician’s trade - the apparatus for the creation and communication of sound - and recognised

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<sup>1</sup> Bruno Nettl talks of “urgent anthropology” as a motivation in ethnomusicology in The Study of Ethnomusicology: Twenty-nine Issues and Concepts (Chicago, 1983), p. 274.

<sup>2</sup> Ruth Finnegan has illustrated the richness and complexities of musical activity in everyday life in her recent investigation into music making in Milton Keynes, The Hidden Musicians: Music-making in an English Town (Cambridge, 1989). Her synchronic study found that “musical practices are upheld through a series of socially recognised pathways which systematically linked into a wide variety of settings and institutions within the city” (p. 299).

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the importance of the associated extramusical meanings and functions conditioned by the cultural and historical contexts of their use. I became interested in how the concertina had been used in the one hundred and fifty years of its existence and fascinated by the fact that it had been “invented”. The idea of a novel instrument raised questions relevant at a time when new, electronic devices were appearing almost daily. Who played the instrument at any particular time? What did they use it for and what kind of music did they play? How did they play? What were the forces that led to its adoption? Given the integration of existing instruments into society, the meanings and functions attached to them and the complex web of vested interests in their development, production and consumption, what were the special circumstances which influenced the fortunes of a new musical invention? These questions are addressed in this thesis.

### **Historical and Theoretical Framework**

Any attempt to map and understand the processes involved in the adoption and use of a musical instrument requires an approach which recognises the breadth of the musical field and accommodates its complexities, interpenetrations and contradictions. It should position the development and use of the musical instrument within their social contexts and should embrace a dynamic historical perspective which reflects the constantly changing nature of the musical landscape. I have sought to achieve this through the expansion of conventional historical musicology with inputs from other disciplines.

Organology, the study of musical instruments, has a long pedigree. Laurence Libin<sup>3</sup> has described the western tradition of private and public collections of musical instruments assembled for a variety of purposes: for their use in performance; to serve antiquarian and ethnological purposes; for their financial value; for veneration as visual art; as illustrations of technological development; or simply as curiosities from another age or culture. Such collection, along with the gathering of data from literary and iconographic sources, musical scores, accounts and inventories, has allowed the generation of an enormous body of material and literature concerning the history, construction, scientific description, classification and comparison of musical instruments.

Organology tends to operate as an adjunct to, rather than an area outwith, conventional historical musicology and shares its primary concerns and ideology. There is, for instance, the same interest in the development of the modern “classical” repertory, an evolutionary sense of historical progress and an emphasis on the contribution of “great men”, whether as composers, virtuosi or master instrument makers. Pursuit of “authenticity” and “historical truthfulness” are central and feed a lively dialogue regarding the selection and interpretation of repertory, appropriate

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<sup>3</sup> Libin, Laurence “Musical Instruments: Collections” NGDMM Vol. 9 (1980), pp. 245-254.

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performance practice and musical instrument design. Evidence from musical scores is paramount and there is little consideration of non-classical uses or interest in non-orchestral instruments. Collections of musical instruments might embrace instruments from the “folk” and “popular” areas but in general more attention is paid to their origins and physical form than their use. Developments in musical instruments can often lack sufficiently rich explanation. At worst, instruments are seen as having almost organic or magical qualities: “the harp first appeared in Scotland during the ninth century” or “the piano-forte had developed pedals by then”.

The “early music revival”<sup>4</sup> is an important site of organological activity whose principal area of concern is a “Golden Age” conveniently removed from the changes wrought by the industrial period, although the 19th century now attracts much interest. Primitive, ethnic and popular instruments can be legitimised through “early music” but only on the movement’s own terms. It is not surprising therefore, that the modern free-reed instruments have received little attention.

In attempting to address the shortcomings of conventional organology, I have adopted models and concepts from contemporary ethnomusicology, a multidisciplinary approach whose methodology and techniques have long recognised the value of the study of musical instruments. Early in this century, the pioneers of “comparative musicology” undertook the systematic classification, description and plotting of the distribution of musical instruments in their attempts to understand and explain the origins, development and geographical diffusion of music. More recently, Alan Merriam identified instruments as part of the “culture inventory” of a people and a “particularly sharp tool for analysis”,<sup>5</sup> while Bruno Nettl stressed the view that the study of instruments “can - and should be - integrated with description of musical culture and musical style”.<sup>6</sup> Mantle Hood made an important advance when he separated organography, the description of musical instruments, including their physical features, acoustical properties and history, from organology which also covers the “equally important but neglected aspects of ‘the science’ of musical instruments, such as particular techniques of performance, musical function, decoration (as distinct from construction) and a variety of socio-cultural considerations”.<sup>7</sup> Around the same time, Oler<sup>8</sup> suggested the term ethno-organology to cover the study of musical instruments in culture.

In a flow chart (Fig. 1.1) illustrating the scope of “the study of instruments as objects and as aspects of biological and social musical activity”, Wachsmann maps “currents of ideas about musical instruments”<sup>9</sup> to describe the full range of factors the ethnomusicologist should consider. The constructional details (material, design etc..)

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<sup>4</sup> Haskell, Harry The Early Music Revival: A History (London, 1988), pp. 24-25.

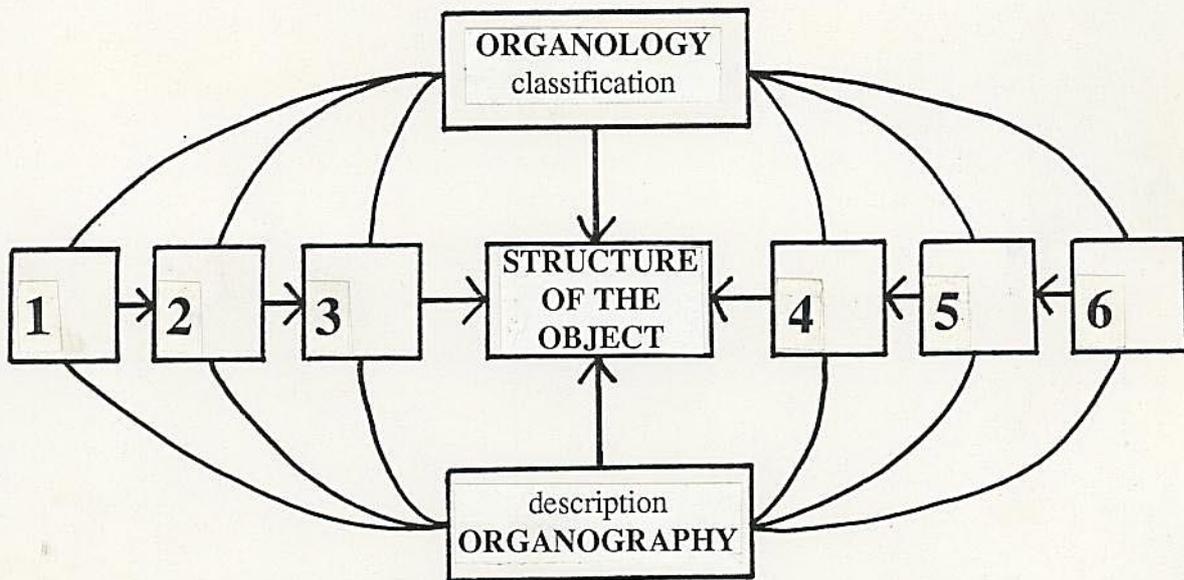
<sup>5</sup> Merriam, Alan The Anthropology of Music (Evanston, 1964), p. 45.

<sup>6</sup> Nettl, Bruno Theory and Method in Ethnomusicology (New York, 1964) p. 215.

<sup>7</sup> Hood, Mantle The Ethnomusicologist (New York, 1971) p. 124.

<sup>8</sup> Oler, W.M. “Definition of Organology” Galpin Society Journal XXIII (1970), p. 170.

<sup>9</sup> Wachsmann, Klaus “Musical Instruments: Classification” NGDMM Vol. 9 (1980), p. 238.



- 1 beliefs and symbolism
- 2 sociology
- 3 history and development
- 4 performance
- 5 corporeal determinants
- 6 music

Figure 1.1 Wachsmann Model.  
 Source: Wachsmann, K. "Musical Instruments: Classification"  
 NGDMM Vol. 9, p.238.

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of the instrument are placed at the centre as a common ground linking organographic and organological concerns while lateral links connect the two fields through the relevant musical and contextual aspects which have a bearing on the instrument's form. This is a particularly useful model on account of its comprehensiveness but, although it does employ curved lines bypassing the centre to indicate that details of construction need not be of primary importance, it is limited in assisting an understanding of adoption and abandonment. This would require a framework which puts processes and musical activity rather than instrument form at the centre.

In practice, ethnomusicology has confirmed its theorists' concern for musical instruments through the gathering, organisation and interpretation of data relating to the nature and use of musical instruments within their cultural contexts. Ethnomusicology offers the advantages of an agreed ideal of bias-free analysis, attention to both oral and written sources, the study of music in its performance setting and an emphasis on comparison with findings from elsewhere. It also offers a number of models which are useful in the study of the use of musical instruments in culture. The theory and method of modern ethnomusicology relies heavily on the work of Merriam<sup>10</sup> who, in his proposed fusion of musicology and anthropology, established a research model comprising three connected analytical areas (Figure 1.2): conceptualisation about music influences physical, social and verbal behaviour in relation to music which in turn conditions the music sound itself. The circular form allows feedback which controls both change and stability in the system. The model is simple and effective and has been at the core of much of the work within the discipline during the past 25 years. It has, however, attracted criticism on account of difficulties in making effective homologies between its three areas and its exclusion of other considerations such as a historical perspective, aspects of musical change and the role of the individual. From the point of view of my own project, I must agree that this model over-emphasises social processes at the expense of the concerns of historical musicology.<sup>11</sup> More recent theorists have moved away from a static view of music cultures towards a picture of complex, dynamic systems in which change is an ever present component, open to analysis and interpretation and requiring specially developed concepts and terminology.<sup>12</sup>

Working with musicians in the field, I have been concerned that my own study of musical instruments should recognise the role of the individual in musical culture, particularly in relation to change and innovation. Ethnomusicology has been found to be weak in this area, the decisions and choices of individual musicians or singers

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<sup>10</sup> Merriam, The Anthropology...

<sup>11</sup> Rice, Timothy "Towards a Remodelling of Ethnomusicology" Ethnomusicology 31 (1987), p. 473.

<sup>12</sup> For example: Blacking, John "Some Problems of Theory and Method in the Study of Musical Change" Yearbook of the International Folk Music Council 9 (1978), pp. 1-26 and "Identifying Processes of Musical Change" World of Music 28 (1986), pp. 3-15; Nettl, Bruno "Some Aspects of the History of World Music in the Twentieth Century: Questions, Problems, Concepts" Ethnomusicology 22 (1978), pp. 123-136; Kartomi, Margaret "The Processes and Results of Culture Contact: A Discussion of Terminology and Concepts" Ethnomusicology 23 (1981), pp. 227-250.

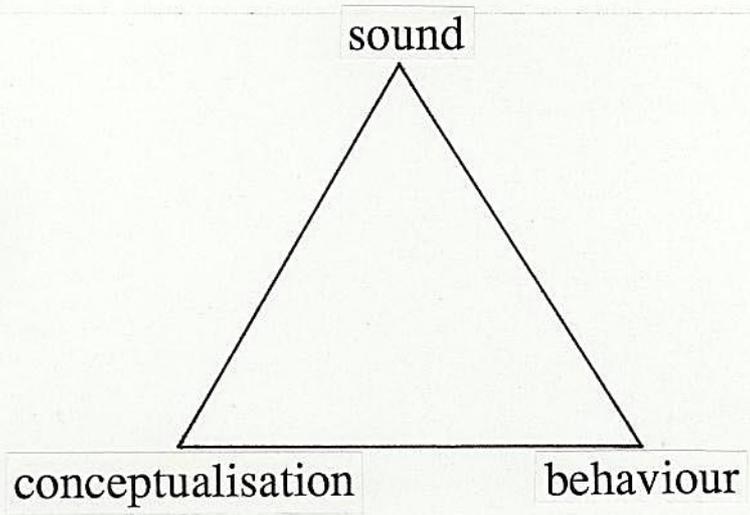


Figure 1.2 Merriam Model.  
Diagrammatic Interpretation.

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being too often overshadowed by consideration of the group.<sup>13</sup> In addressing these concerns, I have found the model recently proposed by Timothy Rice<sup>14</sup> particularly useful. This involves a structure (my interpretation is given in Figure 1.3) which accepts Merriam's earlier model but flexibly embeds it on a lower descriptive and analytical level. In my project, this embraces details of musical instrument form as well as use. Merriam's three considerations feed separately into a principal, interpretative and explanatory level which is concerned with processes rather than specific products or events. Drawing inspiration from Clifford Geertz,<sup>15</sup> this takes place in three interacting formative areas: "Identifying three primary causes, rather than one, has the advantage of allowing for complex, rather than simplistic, explanations. Claiming that historical, social and individual forces work to shape music suggests that all these branches of musicology will be needed to capture a sophisticated understanding of music".<sup>16</sup>

Historical Construction is concerned with change and tradition while Social Maintenance of Music embraces "the way music is sustained, maintained, and altered by socially constructed institutions and belief systems",<sup>17</sup> including aspects of economics and patronage, social organisation, the politics of production and consumption, musical organisations, performance conventions etc.. Individual Creation and Experience involves the consideration of individual behaviour, style, performance, composition, repertory, creativity etc. and balances tendencies towards any over-rigid explanation or generalisation of music based solely on social structure. Rice also suggests that an understanding of these three processes contributes to our deeper appreciation of how people make music and, ultimately, the place of music in humankind as a whole.

At the interpretative level, each of Rice's three fields is tied to the other two by a flexible, two-way relationship in which each process can be explained in terms of the others. For example, in my consideration of the use of the concertina in sacred music (Chapter 9.0), I have worked with living musicians. Field work has led to the gathering and analysis of data relating to their behaviour, conceptualisation and music (Merriam's categories) which, in turn, feed into the three areas in the Rice model. Thus, I consider the individual's beliefs, music and performance. Determining class, political, economic and other social relations are also considered, including the

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<sup>13</sup> Bruno Nettl in The Study of Ethnomusicology: Twenty-nine Issues and Concepts (Chicago, 1983), p. 183 notes that "it is important to be clear that we are talking about changes in behaviour of human beings" while John Blacking ("Identifying Processes...", p. 3) states that "musical and cultural changes are not caused by culture contact, population movements, or changes in technology and in means and modes of production: they are the results of decisions made by individuals about music-making and music or about social and cultural practice, on the basis of their experiences of music and social life and their attitudes to them in different social contexts".

<sup>14</sup> Rice, Towards a Remodelling...

<sup>15</sup> Geertz, Clifford The Interpretation of Cultures (New York, 1973).

<sup>16</sup> Rice, Timothy. Review of Nettl, The Study of Ethnomusicology in Year Book of Traditional Music 18 (1986), p. 185.

<sup>17</sup> Rice, Towards a Remodelling, p. 475.

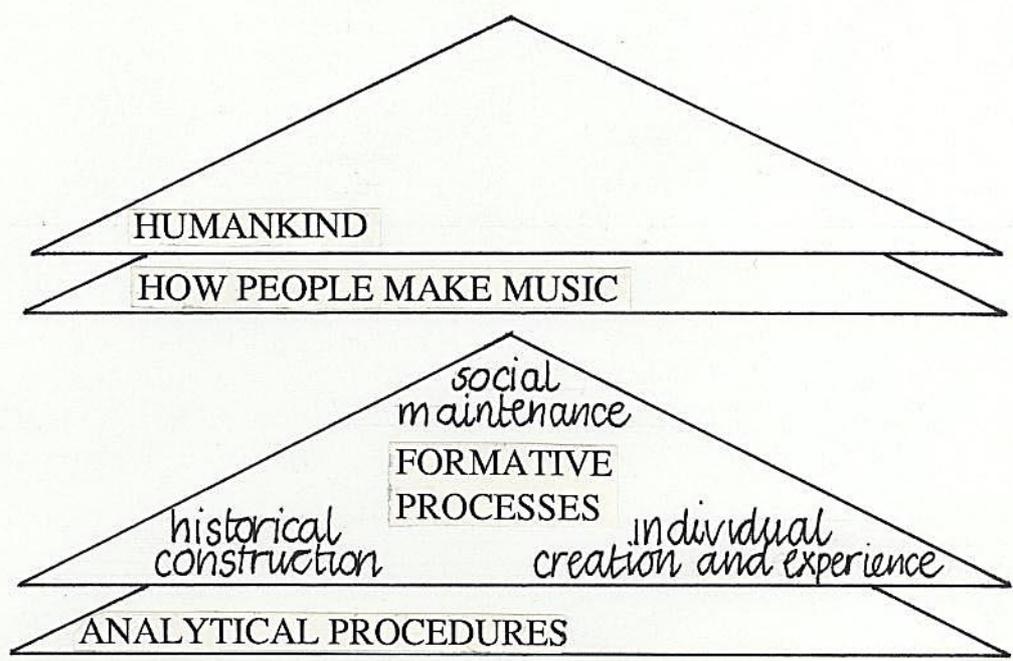


Figure 1.3 Rice Model.  
Diagrammatic Interpretation.

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religious context of the individual's worship and its position and status in society as a whole. Examination of historical determinants brings in consideration of the way these contexts have varied over time, traditions and the individual's personal development.

This model is comprehensive and offers rich interpretative opportunities. It addresses many of the criticisms and omissions discussed previously and brings ethnomusicology closer to the best of historical musicology. It allows both the widest musical field and historical period to be embraced and is thus suited to the examination of the adoption, use and abandonment of musical instruments in the dynamic and culturally diverse society covered by this study. In practice, I have found it a useful framework for adding shape to a wide range of concerns, and the large number of linkages it suggests has offered an effective means of evaluating my work. I have also found the model useful in allowing inputs from other disciplines as required.

Musical instruments, particularly those of the modern period with its "transition from patronage to market-place",<sup>18</sup> can be studied as commodities as well as "things"<sup>19</sup> through the field of economic history. Much can be gained from an examination of the circumstances of their production, consumption, distribution and sale, as has already been effectively demonstrated in a number of studies, including those of Cyril Ehrlich<sup>20</sup> who has advocated greater use of this kind of data.<sup>21</sup> Ehrlich values the method's diachronic perspective, potential for "analytical insights and quantitative sense",<sup>22</sup> avoidance of "dogma" and its illumination of typical rather than exceptional events. Used on its own, however, this approach can at best only describe, rather than explain, the processes behind adoption. Explanations for demand in terms of utility are too crude, placing materialistic and physical needs over cultural or spiritual requirements. Using music as an example, Douglas and Isherwood have levelled criticism at the economists' failure to recognise the cultural implications of consumption, noting that "this minimum watertight rationality leaves the individual impossibly isolated. His rational objectives are tidied out of sight and trivialised under the term 'tastes'."<sup>23</sup> Accounting for the rise in popularity of a musical instrument through an envy theory of needs or a spread of infection model is too

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<sup>18</sup> Ehrlich, Cyril "Market Themes" Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association Vol. LXIV, No. 1 (1989), p. 1.

<sup>19</sup> In Victorian Things (London, 1990), pp. 13-14, the historian Asa Briggs stresses the value of studying everyday nineteenth century things, including musical instruments, "as they were used and appreciated within their own context" and discusses how they exhibit "often surprising links between them: common themes, transfers of technology, shared designs".

<sup>20</sup> Ehrlich, Cyril The Piano: A History (London, 1976) and The Music Profession in Britain Since the Eighteenth Century: A Social History (Oxford, 1985).

<sup>21</sup> Ehrlich, Cyril "Economic History and Music" Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association 103 (1976) pp. 188-99 and "Market Themes", pp. 1-5.

<sup>22</sup> Ehrlich, "Economic History...", p. 188.

<sup>23</sup> Douglas, M. and Isherwood, B. The World of Goods: Towards an Anthropology of Consumption (London, 1979) pp. 19-20.

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simplistic. Ehrlich's explanation of the rise in popularity of the piano,<sup>24</sup> for example, has attracted criticism on account of his heavy emphasis on "social emulation". Russell notes that:

The search for respectability obscures the existence of deep levels of genuine musical sensibility amongst the working classes. The purchase of a piano was often simply another manifestation of the contemporary appetite for music, and an attempt to satisfy it. While musical and social aspirations were undoubtedly mixed in many minds, to view this phenomenon as mere snobbery oversimplifies a complex picture.<sup>25</sup>

Purely economic explanations for abandonment are even less satisfactory. Furthermore, reliable statistics are hard to find, are rarely of a form suitable for comparison and can lead to a bias in interpretation in which the moment of exchange takes precedence over the moment of use. The importance of the second-hand market and the complexity of patterns of use of a musical instrument makes even a crude investigation difficult.

Insights into the development of musical instruments in the modern period can also be gained from such areas as industrial history, product development and the history of technology. Grame, for example, has advocated that organology should pay "heed to the important effects that the material available for construction has had on the history and development of musical instruments"<sup>26</sup> and Chanan,<sup>27</sup> has described the development of the modern piano in terms of both the large number of independent technical advances which were applied to separate parts of its mechanism and the application of mass production processes.

In tackling the complexities of the formative processes in Rice's model, I have benefitted from the perspective of writers working in the field of cultural studies, especially those concerned with popular music. Particularly valuable are their endeavours to "recover the wider experience of everyday life, in leisure as well as work, but to integrate this with an understanding of structure and process in the formation of class structures in a capitalist society".<sup>28</sup> Their interest in a strong historical dimension, discussion of cultural forms through class relations and ideology and examination of the institutions of the modern period (music hall, Victorian

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<sup>24</sup> Ehrlich, The Piano...

<sup>25</sup> Russell, Dave Popular Music in England 1840-1914: A Social History (Manchester, 1987), pp. 143-144.

<sup>26</sup> Grame, Theodore C. "Bamboo and Music: A New Approach to Organology" Ethnomusicology 6 (1962) pp. 8-14, reprinted in David P. McAllister (ed.) Readings in Ethnomusicology (London, 1971) p. 142.

<sup>27</sup> Chanan, Michael "Piano Studies: On Science, Technology and Manufacture from Harpsichords to Yamahas" Science as Culture 3 (1988), pp. 54-91.

<sup>28</sup> Bailey, P. (ed.) Music Hall: Business and Pleasure (Milton Keynes, 1986), pp. xiv-xv.

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popular song, sacred music, bands popular recreations, the folk song revival etc..) are too often ignored or ill served by other disciplines.<sup>29</sup> The value of modern social history in pursuing a diachronic appreciation of the contexts of musical activity has been recognised by a number of contemporary workers<sup>30</sup> in the field of folk music studies.

### **Thesis Structure**

This introduction is followed by a discussion of the concertina within the context of musical instrument development in Europe in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Chapter 2.0) and then by detailed consideration of the invention of the English concertina (Chapter 3.0). The instrument's initial adoption by professional "art" musicians (Chapter 4.0) and middle-class amateurs (Chapter 5.0) is explored before I examine the introduction of the Anglo-German concertina, the principal diversification of the instrument to suit new markets (Chapter 6.0). A number of relatively self-contained areas of working class music making during the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first of the present are then explored: the concertina in the music hall (Chapter 7.0), in concertina bands (Chapter 8.0) and in sacred music (Chapter 9.0). A case study of working class amateur use in Scotland in the early twentieth century based on field work (Chapter 10.0) is followed by consideration of recent revivals of interest in the instrument (Chapter 11.0). The dissertation concludes with a discussion of current developments in the use of the concertina.

While it would be wrong to assume that the history of the instrument's adoption and abandonment has followed a linear path through time, I have found it convenient to organise the chapters of this thesis in chronological order (Figure 1.4). There is a degree of overlap in the content of some chapters, for, in the constantly changing and contradictory map of popular music, it is not unusual to find performers active in, or familiar with the repertory of, different areas of musical activity.

Each subject area has presented its own problems in terms of sources and there is an inevitable imbalance between chapters in the quantity and quality of data. I have not

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<sup>29</sup> The texts in the Open University Press series Popular Music in Britain (Milton Keynes), the material associated with the Open University course Popular Culture: U203, (Milton Keynes, 1982) and Richard Middleton's Studying Popular Music (Milton Keynes, 1990) have been invaluable in this area.

<sup>30</sup> Michael Pickering, in "Song and Social Context" (Ian Russell (ed.), Singer, Song and Scholar (Sheffield, 1986) p. 86), acknowledges the assistance of social history "in bidding farewell to the antiquarian fetishism of curious objects and cultural oddities" while Vic Gammon, in "Problems of Method in the Historical Study of Popular Music" (Popular Music Perspectives (Gothenburg, 1982) p. 16), claimed a method which drew "on the fairly recent tradition of British social history and the history of popular culture which seeks to rescue the life experience of working people from what E.P. Thompson has called 'the enormous condescension of posterity'. To attempt this is to work both within and against traditional historiography".

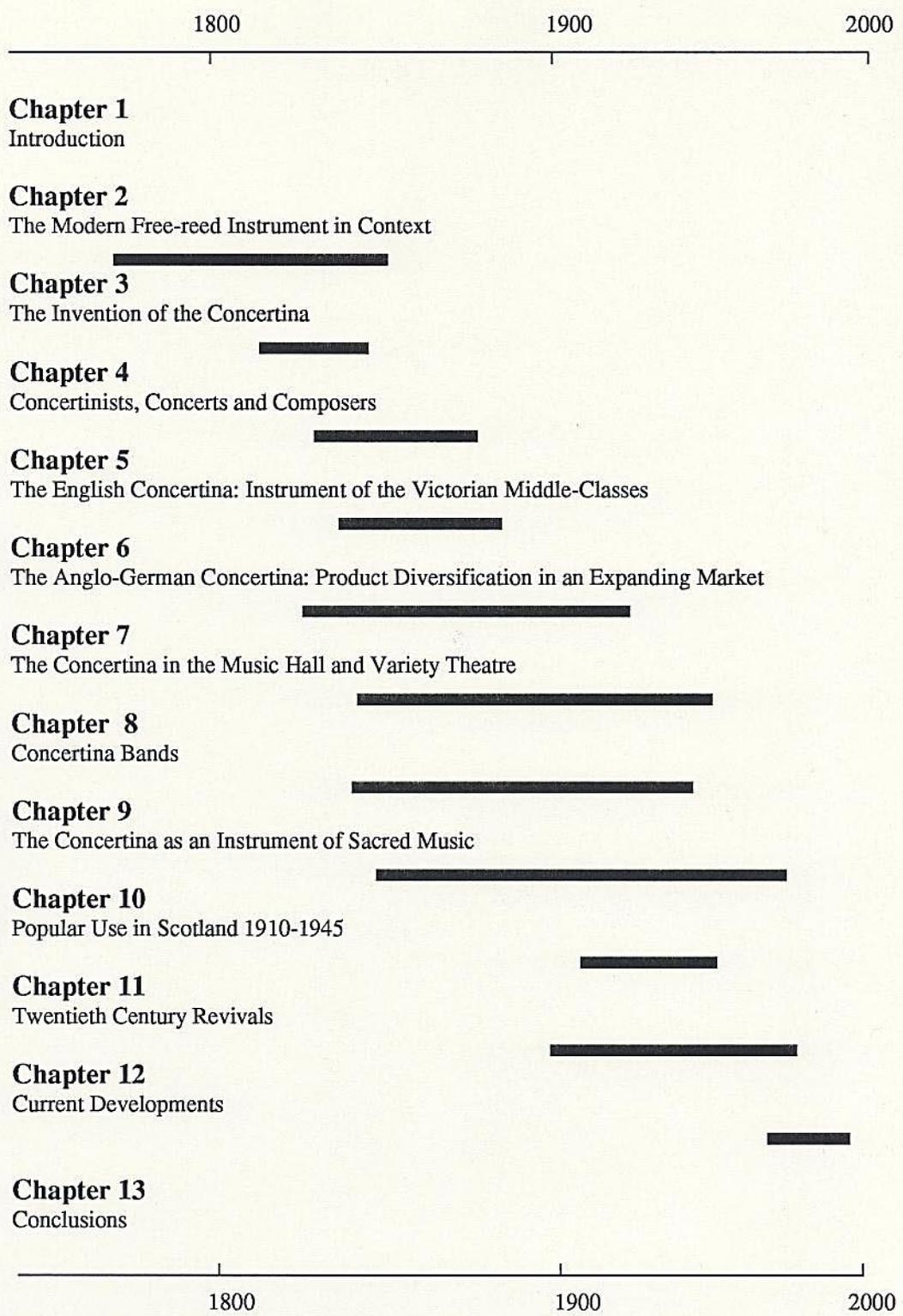


Figure 1.4 Chapter Periodisation.

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attempted to present the corpus of any individual or group or to chart the geographical distribution of the instrument, themes common in some ethnomusicological studies.

### **Scotland as a Case Study**

Scotland has been chosen for more detailed study for a number of reasons:

1. Scotland has rich, well defined and, in some areas at least, well researched musical traditions which form a good framework within which to examine the fortunes of a novel musical instrument. My working knowledge of these traditions offers practical advantages.
2. The study helps address a pressing need to examine aspects of an under-researched site of popular music during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, for in the words of Elspeth King:

The study of popular culture in Scotland is still the preserve of the antiquarian rather than the social historian, a frivolous frill seen in terms of amusements, sports and pastimes and ignored in favour of subjects with more apparent seriousness. This is as true for popular culture of the middle and upper classes as it is for that of the working classes.<sup>31</sup>

3. Despite a long history of urban settlement, research into Scottish popular music has largely ignored the towns and cities<sup>32</sup> and a pessimistic interpretation of the cultural consequences of industrialisation and urbanisation too often causes the period after 1820 to be regarded as bleak and unmusical. Much writing on Scottish music operates within a framework which privileges that which is regarded as “traditional”, in which ideas of folk authenticity are overlaid with “national” considerations.<sup>33</sup> As a consequence certain instruments (viz. the fiddle, harp and bagpipes) enjoy a status and monopoly of attention at the expense of others which are discounted as “modern”, “commercial” or “foreign”, irrespective of their degree of popularity. This is further complicated by the rejection of aspects of modern popular culture in Scotland by intellectuals and writers from the “Scotch Myths” school.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> King, Elspeth “Popular Culture in Glasgow” in R.A. Cage (ed.) The Working Class in Glasgow 1750-1914 (London, 1987), p. 142.

<sup>32</sup> Cooke, Peter The Fiddle Tradition of the Shetland Isles (Cambridge, 1986), p. iv.

<sup>33</sup> See, for example, Francis Collinson’s The Traditional and National Music of Scotland (London, 1966). The concept of musical instruments as “emblems” of national identity “similar to those of flags and national anthems” is discussed by Bruno Nettl in The Western Impact on World Music (New York, 1985), pp. 57-61.

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, Tom Nairn The Break-up of Britain (London, 1977), Colin McArthur (ed.) Scotch Reels: Scotland in Cinema and Television (London, 1982), and David McCrone “Representing Scotland: Culture and Tradition” in McCrone, David, Stephen Kendrick and Pat Straw (eds.) The Making of Scotland: Nation, Culture and Social Change (Edinburgh, 1989) pp. 161-174.

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Rather than confront its inherent complexities and contradictions, they simply dismiss popular culture as part of “that prodigious array of kitsch”<sup>35</sup> which stands in the way of the development of a modern, international and “artistic” culture.

4. The emergence of the concertina and other new musical instruments in the first half of the nineteenth century coincided with the end of a period regarded by some writers<sup>36</sup> as “The Golden Age” of Scottish traditional music, after which native music declined and there was an emerging vogue for more modern, European fashions in music and dance. The new musical instruments, particularly those of the free-reed group, are held highly responsible by some for the decline which is identified in the fortunes of indigenous musical traditions.<sup>37</sup> New instruments are often seen as direct substitutes for older ones which they elbow out of the tradition.

The explicit and implicit denigration of modern, commercially produced instruments, and those associated with emerging, popular as opposed to “traditional” or “ethnic” forms of music, is not limited to writers on Scottish music. It is not uncommon to read of the modern free-reed instruments blamed as causes, rather than symptoms, of the fundamental musical change which their appearance often accompanied. Anna Czekanowska, writing of traditional music in Poland, notes that:

There are non-folk instruments which are transforming performed music. This process, however, starting in the nineteenth century, is slow, but it develops progressively... The changes described lead to the almost total transformation, if not annihilation, of substantial patterns of Polish folk music and of its traditions of collective performance... This transformed quasi-folk music is mostly popular and in real demand.<sup>38</sup>

Lortat-Jacob<sup>39</sup> writes of the accordion having “supplanted” the traditional “launeddas” reed pipe of Sardinia and Buchner comments: “As elsewhere, the original folk instruments of the western European nations are being driven out by the accordion and concertina which are very popular in England and France”.<sup>40</sup> On the subject of

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<sup>35</sup> Nairn, The Break-up of Britain, p. 22.

<sup>36</sup> Hunter, James The Fiddle Music of Scotland (Edinburgh, 1979), pp. x, xiv, Alburger, Mary Anne Scottish Fiddlers and their Music (London, 1983), p. 154 and Johnson, David Scottish Fiddle Music in the Eighteenth Century (Edinburgh, 1984) p. 245.

<sup>37</sup> See, for example, MacInnes, Ian “Who Paid the Pipers?” Common Stock 3 (August 1986), p. 25, Mooney, Gordon A Collection of the Choicest Scots Tunes (Linlithgow, 1982), p. iii, Cannon, Roderick The Highland Bagpipe and its Music (Edinburgh, 1988), p. 21 and Emmerson, George S. Rantin’ Pipe and Tremblin’ String (London, 1977), pp. 107, 113-4.

<sup>38</sup> Czekanowska, Anna Polish Folk Music: Slavonic Heritage, Polish Tradition, Contemporary Trends (Cambridge, 1990) pp. 177-8.

<sup>39</sup> Lortat-Jacob, Bernard “Theory and ‘Bricolage’: Attilio Cannargiu’s Temperament” Yearbook of Traditional Music 14 (1982) pp. 45-54.

<sup>40</sup> Buchner, Alexander (trans. Simon Pellar) Colour Encyclopedia of Musical Instruments (London, 1980) p. 287.

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the accordion in Irish music, Seán ó Riáda expressed the view that “unfortunately this instrument - designed by foreigners for the music of peasants with neither the time, inclination nor application for a worthier instrument - is gaining vast popularity throughout the country”.<sup>41</sup>

In contrast to these “purist” views, I am of the opinion that the industrial period, during which Scotland underwent considerable change, is especially fruitful and see this study as an opportunity to challenge such arguments. The lack of academic attention to the free-reed instruments in Scotland has already been identified by Craig Beveridge.<sup>42</sup>

5. The country has a considerable geographical and cultural diversity, yet is of a convenient scale for study. Distinct traditions, combined with cultural and political integration into the wider spheres of the British Isles, offer a good opportunity for comparative study.

6. A study of the concertina in Scotland could have international relevance in the way that Wallis and Malm found an examination of the popular music industry in other small countries “a practical approach to a complex problem area”.<sup>43</sup>

### **Principal Primary Sources**

Given the interdisciplinary approach, the timespan covered and the contrasting areas of musical activity investigated, the sources employed in this study are many and varied.

Published music for the concertina exists in large quantities and from all periods, but manuscripts are rare. Both can offer insights into popular taste, repertoire, performance and style although the score itself tells us little about the popularity of a piece or about precisely how it was performed. The situation is further complicated by the fact that the concertinist can employ scores prepared for other instruments without rearrangement.

I have been able to make use of commercial gramophone recordings and off-air material from radio and television, archive film and iconographic material in museums, libraries and private collections. Music journals, trade literature, manufacturers’ and retailers’ catalogues, handbills, account books, patents, and a wide range of general ephemera have all proved useful in this project. Although research has not been systematic, published biography, memoirs, reviews, local history

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<sup>41</sup> Our Musical Heritage (Portlaoise, 1982), p. 69.

<sup>42</sup> Beveridge, Craig “Accordion and Fiddle: An Undervalued Musical Tradition” Cencrastus 25 (Spring 1987), pp. 28-29.

<sup>43</sup> Wallis, Roger and Malm, Krister Big Sounds from Small Peoples: The Music Industry in Small Countries (London, 1984), p. xiv.

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publications, newspaper features, fiction and other literary material have offered much to complement other sources. Musical instrument collections (particularly that of Stephen Chambers of Dublin) have been invaluable.

In addition to using the small amount of material held in university, private, national and regional sound archives, I have undertaken my own programme of field recording. The resulting musical and oral data is referred to throughout the text. Material has been archived according to the system employed by the School of Scottish Studies, Edinburgh University, where copies are lodged (see Appendix 1). Field work has presented a number of problems. Several of my oldest informants were infirm or had abandoned musical performance for other reasons and were therefore able to offer oral data only. Furthermore, work with those who used the concertina in a sacred setting required a different approach compared to that appropriate to performers of secular music, who shared their music and information in a different manner. In several cases, approaches to older informants met with suspicion due to earlier insensitive overtures by dealers and collectors anxious to acquire the performer's instruments which attract high prices on the international second-hand market. On more than one occasion, informants kindly offered information but wished their identity to remain anonymous. Unable to interview a number of informants living abroad, I was able to enter into fruitful correspondence. My approaches stimulated a reawakening of interest in the instrument in some performers and with others, I entered into an interactive situation, playing with musicians who often took it upon themselves to encourage and "educate" me.

I have organised a number of public seminars and informal assemblies to bring together players, manufacturers, historians and collectors of the concertina. The proceedings provided valuable oral and musical data and stimulated discussion.

"Doorstep ethnomusicology" of this type can have difficulties through the absence of the "analytical distance" expected in good work in the field. Although I belong to the same broad cultural background and class as most of my subjects, and share their race, language, geography etc..., I am an "outsider" to most of the subcultures studied. On the other hand, however, working within my own culture has offered advantages of understanding of language and social context and has led to an acceptance which might be lost to the foreign student. Although the range of musical contexts examined has required that research be "extensive", I have also taken the opportunity to pursue more "intensive" work within certain areas rich in source material. After an initial period of exploratory and wide ranging research, the restrictions of part-time study forced me to tailor my work to the problems of the project. Nevertheless, I have gathered sufficient material to form a substantial archive which will allow further study by others.

The concertina has presented its own problems in terms of recording. The swinging technique used by some players, the dual manual of the instrument and the tendency of free-reeds to produce intensity "peaks", made recording difficult. These factors,

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combined with the heavy chordal playing of some players, presented particular problems during the transcription of taped music.

Full use has been made of photography but, in retrospect, I regret that I have been unable to employ film and video as an aid to understanding musical performance.

### **Main Secondary Sources and Work Done By Others**

#### **The Concertina**

To date, there has been only limited academic research relating to the concertina. Maria Dunkel's Bandonion und Konzertina. Ein Beitrag zur Darstellung des Instrumententyps<sup>44</sup> presents a comprehensive organography of related instruments as they developed in Germany and includes much relating to the development of British concertinas. Although she makes little reference to the use of instruments, her study establishes the importance of the subject and sets standards for others to follow. A companion organography of the British concertina family is still awaited.

Neil Wayne, concertina collector and founder of a private Concertina Museum, Duffield, Derby, has undertaken considerable research into the history of the concertina. Unfortunately I have not had access to his Annotated Catalogue of the Concertina Museum Collection.<sup>45</sup> His two articles on the concertina revival of the 1970s<sup>46</sup> and a more recent paper on the concertina in the nineteenth century<sup>47</sup> are the most substantial publications in the field. His enthusiasm during the late 1960s and early 1970s was an important influence on the revival of interest in the instrument.

The American writer, Richard Carlin, carried out a programme of field recording in Great Britain during the early 1970s with the assistance of a National Endowment for the Humanities.<sup>48</sup> He subsequently published some of this material on a commercial gramophone recording The English Concertina<sup>49</sup> and in a concertina tutor of the same name.<sup>50</sup> Another modern tutor,<sup>51</sup> by Frank Butler of London, contains a brief, but valuable, introduction to the history of the instrument. The Arts Council of Great Britain aided research into players of the Mccann Duet concertina in England by John O'Mahony of Peterborough in the early 1980s but his findings have not been published. Dave Russell, in Popular Music in England 1840-1914: A Social History,

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<sup>44</sup> (Munich, 1987).

<sup>45</sup> (Belper, date unknown).

<sup>46</sup> "The Concertina Revival" in Folk News Part 1 (March 1974), pp. 4-10; Part 2 (April 1974), pp. 4-10.

<sup>47</sup> "The Wheatstone English Concertina" Galpin Society Journal XLIV (March 1991), pp. 117-149.

<sup>48</sup> Grant No. AY-2245-75.

<sup>49</sup> Folkways Records FW 8845 (1976).

<sup>50</sup> The English Concertina (New York, 1977).

<sup>51</sup> The Concertina (New York, 1976).

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refers to his researches into concertina playing in the North of England<sup>52</sup> and Carole Pegg discusses the concertina in East Sussex in her academic and published work.<sup>53</sup> Reg Hall has recently published an in-depth study of the concertina player Scan Tester of Sussex<sup>54</sup> and the tradition of Anglo-German concertina playing in Ireland has received close attention in the studies of Koning and Ó hAllmhuráin.<sup>55</sup> There is no published material relating to the concertina in Scotland.

A vast amount of relevant material is contained in specialist journals concerned with the concertina. The Newsletter of the International Concertina Association,<sup>56</sup> now Concertina World, is an excellent source, as is The Concertina Newsletter (later Free Reed),<sup>57</sup> which paved the way for similar journals serving the revival in other countries: Concertina and Squeezebox<sup>58</sup> in the United States, Concertina Magazine<sup>59</sup> in Australia and Anche Libre<sup>60</sup> in France. These journals are worthy of study as primary sources on account of their evidence relating to the use and status of the concertina.

Important articles have been published in folk music publications such as Folk Music Journal, The Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Association, Musical Traditions and Traditional Music, although little of this is concerned with Scotland.

### **General Works on Musical Instruments**

The lack of academic interest in the concertina family is reflected in more general publications on musical instruments. Their limited information is too often derived from a small number of unreliable sources and writers tend to mention the concertina only in passing or while discussing other free-reed instruments. There is a good introduction to the field in James Howarth's chapter "Free-Reed Instruments" in Anthony Baines' Musical Instruments through the Ages,<sup>61</sup> but Sibyl Marcuse describes the instrument only briefly in Musical Instruments: A Comprehensive Dictionary.<sup>62</sup> Her A Survey of Musical Instruments<sup>63</sup> limits attention to the statement that "it has now joined the ranks of other forgotten free-reed aerophones".<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> (Manchester, 1987), pp. 195, 284.

<sup>53</sup> "Musical Choices and Traditional Suffolk Musicians" Cambridge Anthropology 8 (1983) pp. 17-33; Music and Society in East Suffolk (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Department of Social Anthropology, University of Cambridge) (1985) and "An Ethnomusicological Approach to Traditional Music in East Suffolk" in Ian Russell (ed.) Singer, Song and Scholar (Sheffield, 1986) pp. 55-72.

<sup>54</sup> I Never Played to many Posh Dances... Scan Tester, Sussex Musician 1887-1972 (Essex, 1990).

<sup>55</sup> See Chapter 6.0.

<sup>56</sup> London 1952- . It became Concertina World circa 1990.

<sup>57</sup> Nantwich, Cheshire 1971- c1979. It ran to 24 issues.

<sup>58</sup> (Whitestone, USA, 1982- ). Vol. 1, Nos. 1 and 2 as Concertina and Free Reed, Vol. 1, No. 3 as Concertina, Vol. 1, No. 4- as Concertina and Squeezebox.

<sup>59</sup> (Bell, Australia, 1982- ). There is a useful Concertina Magazine Index 1-10 (Bell, 1985).

<sup>60</sup> (Evry, France, dates unknown).

<sup>61</sup> (London, 1961), pp. 318-326.

<sup>62</sup> (London, 1964) p. 121.

<sup>63</sup> (New York, 1975).

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 742.

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### **Encyclopedias**

The concertina fares better in musical encyclopedias. Successive editions of the Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians gave reliable introductions to the instrument and they have been recently replaced in The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians<sup>65</sup> and The New Grove Dictionary of Musical Instruments<sup>66</sup> with contributions by G. Romani and Ivor Beynon. The Oxford Companion to Music<sup>67</sup> discusses the instrument in the chapter on the reed organ family while The New Oxford Companion to Music<sup>68</sup> is exceptional in its reflection of more recent concertina research and good descriptions of the different members of the concertina family. Encyclopedia Britannica 11,<sup>69</sup> published at a time when the concertina enjoyed great popularity, devotes considerable space to free-reed instruments under a number of headings. The decline in interest in the concertina during the middle of this century is reflected in the reduced attention in subsequent editions.

### **Studies of Other Modern Free-Reed Instruments**

The free-reed instruments have attracted more attention from historians and writers in other countries, although little of this material is published in English and too often organography predominates instrument use. Nevertheless, while most are not directly relevant to the problems of this thesis, many do contain material for comparison, extensive bibliographies and discussion which help outline the wider, international context. The pioneering work of Pierre Monichon<sup>70</sup> deserves particular attention for its comprehensive and reliable information relating to the history of the accordion and the evolution of other modern free-reed instruments. Toni Chahuras' The Accordion<sup>71</sup> was an important early history in English which influenced The Accordion Resource Manual<sup>72</sup> by A. Macarello. A more recent comprehensive introduction to the use of the accordion throughout the world is François Billard and Didier Roussin's Histoires de l'Accordéon.<sup>73</sup>

A history of free-reed instrument manufacture in Germany,<sup>74</sup> published in the mid-sixties, offers much information relating to the expansion of the industry during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Also published in German, Walter Maurer's Das Accordion,<sup>75</sup> describes and illustrates the different families of free-reed instrument, although without discussion of their use.

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<sup>65</sup> Sadie, Stanley (ed.), Vol. 4, (London, 1980) pp. 625-6.

<sup>66</sup> Sadie, Stanley (ed.), Vol 1 (London, 1984), pp. 459- 460.

<sup>67</sup> Scholes, Percy (ed.), (Oxford, 1955).

<sup>68</sup> Pilling, Julian "Concertina" Vol. 1 (Oxford, 1983), pp. 459-462.

<sup>69</sup> 11th Edition Vol. VI (Cambridge, 1910).

<sup>70</sup> Petite histoire de l'accordéon (Paris, 1958); (with E. Leipp, A. Abbott and E. Lorin) "L'Accordéon" Bulletin du Groupe d'Acoustique Musicale 59 (Paris, 1972) and L'Accordéon (Lausanne, 1985).

<sup>71</sup> (New York, 1955).

<sup>72</sup> (Ottawa, 1980).

<sup>73</sup> (Castelnau-le-Lez, France, 1991).

<sup>74</sup> Autorenkollektiv Das Akkordeon (Leipzig, 1964).

<sup>75</sup> (Vienna, 1983).

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Francesco Giannastasio, in L'Organetto. Uno strumento musicale contadino dell'era industriale,<sup>76</sup> considers the button accordion in Italy and is exceptional in its examination of the instrument in relation to native musical traditions and social context. The history and use of the accordion, and to a lesser degree, the concertina, are considered by Birgit Kjellström in her Dragspel. Om ett kärt och misskänt instrument<sup>77</sup> and in Dragspelet.<sup>78</sup> Mainly concerned with Sweden, these studies contain much regarding the status and use of the instruments. Alois Mauerhofer, in "Zur Ergologie der Steirischen Harmonika",<sup>79</sup> gives an in-depth examination of the physical properties of one free-reed instrument, while Ernst Roth's Schwyzörgeli Eine Instrumentenkunde und Wegleitung für Volksmusikliebhaber<sup>80</sup> offers excellent material relating to the organography and manufacture of the button accordion in Switzerland. The French journal Modal<sup>81</sup> has devoted much space to the accordion, including a special number which contains a useful "Bibliographie Sélective sur L'accordéon" by Phillippe Krümm.<sup>82</sup> Fermo Galbiati and Nino Ciravegna have produced an interesting picture book of free-reed instruments from a variety of countries in Le Fisarmoniche<sup>83</sup> but their historical introduction is somewhat sketchy.

The Harmonium<sup>84</sup> by Arthur Ord-Hume is a historical and organographic study which, while often weak, unstructured and offering unreliable material, contains excellent illustrations and a number of references relevant to this thesis. This book gives due attention to the British contribution to free-reed instrument manufacture.

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<sup>76</sup> (Rome, 1974).

<sup>77</sup> (Motala, 1976).

<sup>78</sup> (Stockholm, 1986).

<sup>79</sup> In Studia Instrumentorum Musicae Popularis VII (Stockholm, 1981), pp. 169-179.

<sup>80</sup> (Aarau, 1983).

<sup>81</sup> (Robeq, c1985- ).

<sup>82</sup> No. 3 (June 1986) p. 47.

<sup>83</sup> (Milan, 1987).

<sup>84</sup> (London, 1986).