

The Concertina as an Instrument of Sacred Music

Introduction

In the discussion of the early history of modern free-reed instruments presented in Chapter 2.0, I noted how a recognition of the potential of the free-reed for use in “pseudo-organs” suited to the musical demands of emerging religious institutions was an important stimulus to invention and innovation. Durable, inexpensive, portable organs of the harmonium type have played an important role in religious activity since the first decades of the nineteenth century and have been used in foreign and home missions, open air services, small churches and elsewhere where a conventional organ was either impractical or inappropriate. Although never overtly promoted for this function by their inventors and earliest manufacturers, the hand-held bellows-blown free reed instruments also found a place in some sacred settings, with the concertina enjoying particular popularity as explored below.

In this chapter, I examine the principal areas of concertina use in sacred music, covering in turn, its place in church services; its large scale adoption by evangelistic musicians in Scotland; its use by the Salvation Army and its role in foreign missions.

The Concertina in Church

It is also used in churches, to support the voices in place of an organ or harmonium.⁶⁴⁷

There are a number of references to the use of the concertina in churches in England during the first century of the instrument’s existence. Plunkett, for example, noted that the Anglo-German Concertina was played in Oakington Church up until the Second World War⁶⁴⁸ and the Stephen Chambers Collection holds an early concertina which was played in the church band of Stoke Mandeville Old Church to accompany psalms and hymns.⁶⁴⁹ F.J. Collins recalled that in his parish in Cornwall “there were

⁶⁴⁷ Cocks’ Tutor for the Concertina (London, n.d.) p.3.

⁶⁴⁸ Plunkett, Mervyn “A Note on the Accordion, Melodeon and Concertina” Ethnic Vol.1, No.4 (1959) p.8.

⁶⁴⁹ Galpin Society, Made for Music, p.168.

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[concertina] players who would play in the church service with the organ and also with a brass band”⁶⁵⁰ and Caleb Walker (b.1907), a player from Cheshire, recalled that he learned from his grandfather who played at the local chapel.⁶⁵¹

However, these examples must be seen as residual, for by the late nineteenth century, church bands had already given way to the barrel organ, harmonium and organ, in the face of a increased emphasis on what were regarded as the more “artistic” aspects of church music and the growth of a specifically religious body of music free from any secular influence. Through this modernisation, parish churches experienced the introduction of trained choirs, salaried conductors and organists. The Victorian period also saw a new emphasis on congregational singing and the establishment of an authorised repertory through the publication of “standard” hymnals.

Contemporary attitudes to the use of the concertina in church are exemplified two accounts in *The Musical Times*:⁶⁵² About five or six years ago I happened to attend a Sunday morning service some few miles from Hereford, and, while not expecting very great things, I was hardly prepared to hear the strains of a concertina, and performed upon by the officiating clergyman! I assure you such was the case. The responses were monotoned throughout, and the canticles and hymns were sung by a young girl who, judging from appearances, was connected with the household of the clergyman. She sang everything alone, without even the assistance of the concertina; the clergyman merely playing over the different things, and then leaving the vocalist to herself. And when I say “herself” I mean it. Not a soul else in the church took any audible interest in the singing or the responses, and such an extraordinary service, I never before witnessed. I hope you will not think I was ungallant in not having done my best at least at making a duet of it, but the scene was so far removed from anything I could possibly have imagined that all idea of a stranger taking part in the service vanished and yet it was torture to hear Dr. Dykes’ beautiful setting of “Holy, Holy, Holy” (which was one of the hymns) rendered in such a style. (December 1878).

At a service for invalids held at a Tunbridge Wells church a few weeks ago the vicar accompanied “When I Survey” on a concertina, although a three manual organ, electrically blown, was available. Doubtless he had his reasons, but we suggest that future experiments of this kind should not be tried on a congregation of invalids. It seems like taking a mean advantage! (1921).

In Scotland, the religious tradition which favoured a diet of unaccompanied psalms and paraphrases was more enduring than it had been in England. However, the close of the nineteenth century saw the introduction of hymns and the use of the harmonium

⁶⁵⁰ “The Concertina in Cornwall...”, p.10.

⁶⁵¹ Schofield, Derek “Concertina Caleb” *English Dance and Song* Vol.46, No.2, Summer 1984) pp.2-6.

⁶⁵² Both quotations are from Scholes, *The Mirror...*, p.814.

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and organ as part of a general standardisation of sacred music which drew the Scottish churches closer to British ecclesiastical life.⁶⁵³ The lack of a church band tradition, the absorption of an already formed, modernised, repertory and the late acceptance of religious instrumental music, meant that the concertina never had a place within the established churches of Scotland. It did, however, enjoy adoption into the musical activities of other religious groups which were free from the traditions and conventions of the formal institutions.⁶⁵⁴

The Evangelistic Tradition

The essence of the evangelical tradition is to be found in the music and song associated with the Sunday schools, mission stations and evangelising associations which were set up in the poorer areas of the larger cities by middle-class congregations.

Choral singing, with its regular rehearsals, performances and festivals, was an important form of religious “rational recreation” which provided a medium for the singing of hymns and other sacred music where this was denied in the formal religious setting. Also promoted was the middle-class ideal of home based recreation, including music and song, as a relaxed form of Sunday observance and a respectable alternative to the perceived dangers of the music hall, street or public house.

Until 1850, evangelical agencies were predominantly educational and reforming in nature but thereafter temperance ideology,⁶⁵⁵ combined with a degree of revivalism, heightened the redemptive aims of organisations and turned them more towards conversion. This had further musical consequences through the influence of the Salvation Army and successive waves of visiting American evangelists.

American revivalism met with considerable success in Scotland where it built upon earlier evangelistic foundations and contributed to the shift in working-class Presbyterianism away from an older emphasis on prolonged and serious contemplation of sin towards the sureness of salvation and the joyousness of the conversion experience. Visiting evangelists introduced the distinctive revival service: a short sermon, joyous hymns, and the call to the “anxious” to come forward. This appeal for decisions, which was also adopted by temperance organisations in the form of the pledge, would normally be followed by an invitation hymn.

⁶⁵³ Brown, Calum G. *The Social History of Religion in Scotland since 1730*. (London, 1987).

⁶⁵⁴ This and the following section draws on my paper *He'll dry a' yer tears: 100 Years of Music and Song in the Gospel and Mission* presented to the conference *Scottish Traditional Music*, Centre for Scottish Cultural Studies, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, 11 May 1991.

⁶⁵⁵ See King, Elspeth *Scotland Sober and Free* (Glasgow, 1979) and “Whisky's Awa” in Kay, Billy (ed.) *Odyssey: The Second Collection* (Edinburgh, 1982) pp.88-99.

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The musical effect of modern urban evangelism gained pace after 1870 with the visits of the American evangelists Moody and Sankey. The gospel preaching of Moody offered a popular alternative to the hell-fire and damnation sermons of the time and the songs of Sankey were immensely influential in both the sacred and secular spheres. Like the Salvation Army, Sankey made full use of existing popular music: heart songs, civil war marches, music of Scottish and Irish origin, the music of the open air camp meetings etc. and, from 1873, he brought guest Negro spiritual singers. These included the Fisk Jubilee Singers,⁶⁵⁶ one of the first major introductions of popular American music into Great Britain.⁶⁵⁷ Sankey, and subsequent visiting singing evangelists, helped establish the idea of the “sacred solo”, the gospel song concert style and a new preacher/singer combination; this brought a “star” system into modern religious music which has survived to the present day. In addition to introducing and popularising new forms of religious musical expression, the Americans were also a power for musical change in the established churches, leading them to sanction instrumental music and hymns also.

By the early years of the present century, these threads had come together in the gospel and mission halls to form a collective body of musical activity with its own canon which, unlike the music of the established churches, allowed the adoption of the concertina.

The Concertina in Urban Evangelism in Scotland

By the 1880s, the middle-class mission to the unchurched working classes was losing patronage, bourgeois lay assistance and proletarian acceptance. Evangelism was increasingly left to the care of full-time missionaries who were often working-class products of earlier religious revivalism. Although this proletarian evangelism was highly fragmented and loosely organized, a number of substantial independent institutions developed, such as the United Evangelistic Associations of Glasgow and Dundee, which ran a vast range of activities in large purpose-built premises. However, such activity was more commonly the preserve of independent temperance societies and small missions scattered throughout urban areas and operating from huts, hired halls or in former commercial premises on the ground floors of tenements. Many such organisations offered not only teetotal religion but also “respectable” leisure in the way of games, outings, lectures, musical entertainment and other secular activities.

By the 1920s, many had become self-supporting, semi- permanent congregations under professional, trained evangelists offering a kind of “underground”, unregulated Protestantism. Such institutions continued the musical traditions of nineteenth-

⁶⁵⁶ *The Scotsman* (4 March 1884). The singers were present when Moody formally opened Carruber’s Close Mission, the largest evangelical hall in Edinburgh.

⁶⁵⁷ The minstrel troupe was the other principal early American import.

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century evangelism and built on it through the work of local composers,⁶⁵⁸ mobile preacher/musicians,⁶⁵⁹ small scale music publishing, gramophone recordings and festivals of religious song. In these halls, music was informal and intimate. Organs and harmoniums were found in only the largest and singing was commonly led by the preachers themselves.⁶⁶⁰

Fragments of this network still survive in urban Scotland⁶⁶¹ and my work in the field with musicians associated with these institutions has pointed to the concertina as the principal musical instrument used in their activities.

My informant Peter McCabe has no doubts as to the popularity of the concertina in evangelical work:

It was the most popular instrument in Glasgow. It's popular, it's world-wide but it was most popular in Glasgow. Whenever you went to any [mission] hall the concertina was there. The concertina was a sacred instrument and [there was] wonderful music off it.⁶⁶²

Brought up in inner Glasgow, Peter now lives in Easterhouse, a large peripheral housing scheme developed during the 1960s. He bought his first English concertina as a youth during the early 1930s and has used it ever since in the mission halls throughout Central Scotland and in what he calls "evangelical social work". To Peter, the concertina and sacred music are inseparable:

A Christian is one who comes and who invites the Lord into his own heart and he changes him and the concertina. Maybe they played it when they were'na converted but see when they got converted, the instrument got converted as well... They began to play sacred music because they were changed themselves and that makes a difference.⁶⁶³

⁶⁵⁸ For the story of a working class evangelical worker and composer in Glasgow see Sykes, Mrs Seth and Seth A.G. Sykes *A Great Little Man* (Glasgow, 1958).

⁶⁵⁹ Lesmahagow Parish Historical Association *Clydesdale in Old Photographs* (Stroud, 1991) p.102, includes a photograph of a concertina-playing evangelist, G.H. Greenhough, outside his "Scottish Gospel Mission Van" at New Lanark in the early years of the century.

⁶⁶⁰ I regret that I did not have the opportunity to carry out field study of such services. The whole area of urban evangelism offers great opportunities for study by others.

⁶⁶¹ This area of protestantism is given little attention in much of the writing relating to contemporary religion in Scotland. My informant Peter McCabe publishes a small newsletter called *The Christian Band of Helping Hands* in connection with his evangelical work which lists over 50 institutions, mainly in West Central Scotland.

⁶⁶² Peter McCabe: Eydmann 84.02.B11. The concertina was also adopted into evangelistic work elsewhere in Europe: Kjellström, *Dragspel*, p.75, includes a photograph of "Lapp- Lisa", Anna-Lisa öst, a noted Swedish evangelist and concertina player of the early years of this century.

⁶⁶³ Peter McCabe: Eydmann 84.02.B12.

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He does not read music but stresses that the spontaneity and flexibility of playing from memory are crucial in his work. Peter learned by first mastering the scales and some basic chords, using the finger chart in a popular tutor⁶⁶⁴ and he is proud that he has taught many other beginners, drawing out the same chart by hand for each. Peter suggests that the relative ease with which beginners can play chords on the English concertina and the uncomplicated harmony and structure of the music of the evangelical tradition account for the instrument's adoption for use in the gospel hall and mission. He also speaks of the advantages of portability offered by the instrument:

I discovered it was handy to carry about. 'likes of the accordion was different. You could get the concertina, carry it and you could take it out anywhere and play it.⁶⁶⁵

His repertory is almost wholly sacred in origin but also includes some Scottish music of a solemn or sentimental character and other remnants of the Victorian bourgeois tradition. As noted in Chapter 5.0, the boundaries between the sacred and secular music of the middle-classes in the nineteenth century were particularly blurred in terms of imagery, language, sentiment and musical structure. Much of the popular repertory could therefore serve both sacred and secular roles at the same time.

Peter uses the concertina to accompany his own singing which is delivered in a straightforward and personal manner using his own dialect. In the song, "Love Divine" (Tape Item 9.1), the concertina is played in unison with the voice but with the occasional addition of chords to add emphasis to the end of lines and certain sections. His passionate yet informal delivery seems ideally suited to "conversion" work and suggests the style of Ira Sankey as described by J.S. Curwen:

A singing-master would find faults in every measure that he sings. His style is more recitative than singing; he sacrifices time unnecessarily to impulse and feeling. The effect is often jerky, intermittent, disconnected. It is speaking with a sustained voice. But his earnestness is so apparent that it covers a multitude of faults; indeed, his transparent naturalness and his fervour so fix attention upon what he is singing that we do not think of the faults... Every word throbs with feeling, and in yearning, pleading phrases, the large, tender heart of the man is especially conspicuous.⁶⁶⁶

The combined sound of voice and concertina is more than adequate to fill a small hall.

⁶⁶⁴ Roylance's Tutor for the English Concertina (London. n.d.).

⁶⁶⁵ Peter McCabe: Eydmann 84.02.A4.

⁶⁶⁶ Moffat, Rev. Prof. James Handbook to the Church Hymnary (London, 1927) pp.487-8.

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Peter also uses the instrument to lead congregational singing, using a full chordal style as in Example 9.1, the popular “The Old Rugged Cross”. In the informal setting of the mission hall, playing “correctly” and with textbook harmony is much less important than successfully leading the singing. This has allowed Peter and other players who lack formal musical education to develop their accompaniments over time by trial and error, selecting that which sounds right and is easy to finger. In his playing, he changes to each new chord gradually and unevenly, building it up slowly and often at the expense of a regular rhythm, as his fingers find their new locations. The resultant overlapping sound gives the music a solemn, harmonium like character.

As the photograph (Figure 9.1) shows, Peter plays standing up. This is desirable in mission work where he might be responsible for leading all aspects of a meeting: preaching, prayer and singing. It also allows him, through gestures with the concertina, to conduct others in a way which would be denied the organist or pianist.

Since his retiral from the print industry, Peter visits people too ill or disabled to attend gospel meetings. He finds the concertina ideal in this on account of its modest size and volume and he is quick to point out the special qualities of a former companion who undertook similar work in the past:

Now Lawrence was a great man... he could play it so softly when people were actually on what they call a “death bed”. They would send for him and he played the concertina so soft they would always ask for him to come and play. He had a habit... a way of his own. Nobody could do it the way he could do it. Everyone has their own way.⁶⁶⁷

When interviewed in 1984, Peter saw himself as one of the last players active in a dying tradition which he worked to keep alive by organising gatherings of surviving players and keeping in touch with older, often infirm, players.

One such player was David Haxton (1900-1991). David’s life was closely tied to the mission and gospel hall traditions of the East End of the city. He became an engineer but maintained many close links with the major evangelical institutions; his brother was the Superintendent of one of the largest halls in the city and his wife was the daughter of the Superintendent of another. Many of my informants, including several from outwith the sphere of sacred music, have described David as one of the most outstanding concertinists in Scotland in the inter-war period.

When I recorded David (Figure 9.2) during the early 1980s, he was suffering from advanced deafness and had some difficulty in holding his heavy, yet favoured, 64 keyed English instrument. Nevertheless, he welcomed the opportunity to play, particularly when other mission hall musicians were present. Despite his old age, he

⁶⁶⁷ Peter McCabe: Eydmann 84.02.B6.

tempo $\text{♩} = \pm 76$
slower

The image shows a handwritten musical score for the hymn "The Old Rugged Cross". The score is written on eight staves. The first staff contains the melody, starting with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (B-flat), and a 3/4 time signature. The tempo is marked as $\text{♩} = \pm 76$ and the word "slower" is written above the first few notes. The accompaniment consists of seven staves, with the word "slower" appearing on the fourth, sixth, and seventh staves. The music is written in a simple, clear hand, with various note values, rests, and chordal textures.

Example 9.1 The Old Rugged Cross.

Source: Composed G. Bennard (1913). As played by Peter McCabe, transcribed by Stuart Eydmann from tape Eydmann 86.07.A7.



Figure 9.1 Peter McCabe 1984.
Source: Author's Collection.

Figure 9.2 David Haxton 1985.
Source: Author's Collection.

Figure 9.3 Jimmy Lindsay 1985.
Source: Author's Collection.

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displayed outstandingly precise and dexterous fingering, combined with a careful handling of the bellows.

David's approach to music making was quite different from that of his friend Peter McCabe. During the 1920s, he attended evening classes at "The Athenaeum", now the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, in order to develop his knowledge of musical theory, harmony and sight reading and this was reflected in his repertory and style. Fully familiar with the gospel music canon, his musical taste also embraced many other forms including much from the Victorian concertina publications, popular music from the brass band and music hall traditions, Scottish dance music and a wide range of music for other instruments, especially piano music re-scored by himself for the concertina. David was a good sight reader and in his 20s and 30s had given recitals with another player, Sandy McGibbon (who later emigrated to the United States) and he would tackle the most complex arrangements. His approach was therefore more concerned with "precision and snap"⁶⁶⁸ in music than Peter McCabe's functional, yet personal, settings. His own arrangements displayed his knowledge of harmonic theory, as illustrated in Example 9.2, a Sunday School Christmas song, "No Room for the Baby".

David was quick to stress that the use of the concertina in mission and gospel work in the first half of this century was just one facet of a wider popularity enjoyed by the instrument and he was sure that it was the Salvation Army which was most influential in exploiting the potential of the instrument in the religious field. He admitted to having been affected by the high standard of concertina playing within the Salvation Army and acknowledged a debt to the organisation for much of his repertory, including a large number of band marches. On the other hand, he expressed a fond admiration for the music of the great players of the music hall and variety theatre, such as Alexander Prince and Walter Dale, from whom he learned not only a range of popular music, but also a sense of musical fun for which the concertina is highly suited. He was pleased by the rediscovery of the concertina within post-war folk revival but somewhat amused by the self-conscious and almost exclusive interest in traditional dance music and simple song accompaniment which contrasted with his own complex and demanding arrangements of music from a wide variety of sources.

Between the wars, David was an active member of "The Tent Hall Orchestra" (Figure 9.4), a band of five concertinas and two violins which performed at the principal meetings at Glasgow's largest mission hall. The orchestra was often expanded to include over 12 concertinas for Saturday night services which could attract up to 2000 people (Figure 9.5). He was responsible for teaching a large number of other players of sacred music.

David died in December 1991. His son carries on the family tradition by using the concertina in prison mission work.

⁶⁶⁸ Gammon and Gammon, "From 'Repeat and Twiddle...'"

Handwritten musical score for "No Room for the Baby". The score is in 3/4 time with a tempo marking of 80. It consists of eight staves of music. The first staff is the melody, starting with a treble clef and a 3/4 time signature. It includes dynamic markings like *p.* and *mp.*, and tempo markings like *slower*. The second staff is a vocal line with lyrics. The third staff is a piano accompaniment line. The fourth staff is a bass line. The fifth staff is a piano accompaniment line. The sixth staff is a bass line. The seventh staff is a piano accompaniment line. The eighth staff is a bass line. The score ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

Example 9.2 No Room for the Baby.

Source: Sunday school song from the playing of David Haxton, transcribed by Stuart Eydmann from the tape Eydmann 86.07.A6.



Figure 9.4 Tent Hall Orchestra c1935.
Source: Peter McCabe.

Figure 9.5 Tent Hall Congregation c1935.
Source: Peter McCabe.

Figure 9.6 Evangelistic March, Glasgow c1960.
Source: Peter McCabe.

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Jimmy Lindsay (Figure 9.3) was a close friend and musical companion of David Haxton in his youth, a relationship which he was able to rekindle on his return to Scotland after a long period of emigration to North America. Although he played only sacred music on concertina, he also performed a wide range of popular secular music on violin. Jimmy supplied many reminiscences of music in mission hall life and offered vivid descriptions of how the concertina was used in meetings, services and rallies. Here, for instance, he tells of the musical accompaniment to public marches:

Well, we used tag march along. Goin' from the Bethany Hall ye marched right along London Road tag Bridgeton Cross. See, every once a year at New Year time a' the different evangelistic associations (there was about five of so different big halls in Glasgow), and they would all come down to the Tent Hall and, eh, they'd eh' be two or three thousand people on the march and they wid maybe, maybe 12 or 14 concertinas and they'd be the Lambhill Silver... Band and they would be leading the march. They were in the front and whenever they played for a wee while and stopped, whenever they stopped, then a' the concertinas would start and we used tae march right through the city right up tag the B.T.I.,⁶⁶⁹ that used tae be in Bothwell Street, and they dispersed there. And, eh, there was a conference on in the B.T.I.. But, eh, well there used tae be marches through the city, you know, wi' two or three thousand people and eh, the bands, 'know, 12 or 13 or 14 concertinas leading it.⁶⁷⁰

A photograph of one such march is given in Figure 9.6. The march for 2 January 1936 was announced:

Christian Workers from North, South, East and West of the City. The MARCH along Argyle Street will be led by the Hallelujah Band, Motherwell; Grove Street Institute; Lambhill [brass bands]; and concertina bands.⁶⁷¹

Jimmy had a vast repertory of evangelical songs and marches which he played from memory, although a little pocket book of titles was used as an aide memoire. He expressed a particular liking for the hymns and songs composed by local evangelists including John Moore, Gardner Hunter and Duncan McNeil. The latter writer was a Baptist minister known as "The Scottish Skylark" who sang accompanied by his sons on piano and concertina. A major part of McNeil's appeal was his use of the vernacular language of Central Scotland in such compositions as, "Jesus kens it a",

⁶⁶⁹ The Bible Training Institute, a centre of evangelical activity.

⁶⁷⁰ Jimmy Lindsay: Eydmann 86.03.A4.

⁶⁷¹ Tent Hall Christmas and New Year Services (1935/36) Handbill in possession of Peter McCabe, Glasgow.

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“The Best Freen o’ a’”, “Tak a’ yer cares to Jesus”, “There’s nane like Jesus” and “In spite o’ them a’”. McNeil made a number of successful gramophone records.⁶⁷²

David Galloway was also an evangelical player but moved in different circles. Aged 70 years when I interviewed him at his home in Shettleston, Glasgow, in March 1986, he was still a regular performer on the concertina at the Zion Hall Pentecostal Church, Shettleston Cross, where he would play along with the organ and piano. David, who had been a member of a the Glasgow English Concertina Band during the 1930s, played only from music and his favourite source of was the book Redemption Songs.⁶⁷³ The form of service followed in his church encouraged the adhoc communal pooling of musical talents in praise. He also played the piano accordion but preferred concertina for religious work.

The concertina was also used by evangelical musicians in Edinburgh, particularly those associated with the Carruber’s Close Mission in the High Street. It was also found in smaller towns. Jimmy Dickson grew up and still lives in Galashiels, where he is active in the local Baptist Church. He took up the concertina in 1944 because “it just appealed to me as an instrument that was very handy, very portable and I rather liked the tone of it as well”.⁶⁷⁴ He was self- taught but drew upon the experiences of playing the melodeon as a child and active service in the town silver band as a youth. He performs from memory but learns tunes from the large evangelical song collections of Moody and Sankey and others. Jimmy’s main use of the concertina has been in Sunday School work where:

They thought it was a wonderful instrument altogether. I don’t say that they thought it [i.e. I] was a wonderful concertina player but they certainly were taken on with this instrument that could be so easily carried and brought almost out of nowhere and, eh, as a lead to the singing of choruses... They thought it was marvellous.⁶⁷⁵

He has also used it at annual boy’s camps held in the remote Yarrow valley. At these he led popular campfire songs as well as evangelical choruses and I have encountered a young folk revival concertina player in Glasgow who acknowledges a debt to Jimmy’s playing at one of these events as his first introduction to the instrument. Typical of Jimmy’s repertory is the chorus, “Wide, Wide is the Ocean”, a song common to several of my evangelical informants. His version is given in Tape Item 9.2.

⁶⁷² His use of the concertina could be seen as another conscious attempt to present a vernacular and therefore accessible angle to his work. Another such “star” was William McEwan of Bridgeton, Glasgow who recorded for Columbia.

⁶⁷³ (London, n.d.).

⁶⁷⁴ Jimmy Dickson: Eydmann 86.08.A1.

⁶⁷⁵ Jimmy Dickson: Eydmann 86.08.A5.

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Although he has always felt somewhat isolated, having no contact with other concertina players, he does recall visits to Glasgow for sacred music festivals when he would hear David Haxton and others play at the Tent Hall. Jimmy prefers playing in the flat keys which he finds more “melodious”, and suggests that he may have developed this preference through playing in the town band. While he makes full use of chords in his playing, he states that he is not conscious of selecting his harmony according to any rules but over the years has come to fingers the notes automatically, his hand seeking patterns which “seem logical”.

Victor Kersley was almost 77 years old when I interviewed him at his home in Hawick in the Scottish Borders, in July 1986. His earliest recollection of the concertina was his father’s playing at temperance meetings he attended as a boy. Although Victor’s father died when he was very young, his interest in the instrument was rekindled later:

It was only on hearing someone leading a congregation with a concertina who was an excellent player and, you know, he could get the thing going, that I took the interest in it and went home and picked up this concertina and started to go from there. I taught myself on it.⁶⁷⁶

During the late 40s and 50s, he was associated with a group called “The Border Quartet” which specialised in singing sacred songs. Visits to perform in different parts of Scotland brought him into contact with other musicians and made him aware of other evangelical concertina players.

His family home always offered accommodation for visiting evangelists, many of whom were concertinists, and therefore family evenings of sacred music were inevitable. However, apart from occasional performances at home with his sister, who is a pianist active in the Salvation Army, he now plays for his own entertainment only and has no contact with other concertina players. His repertory comprises “more or less any church music” and includes a large element of music from the Moody and Sankey and Redemption song books. Songs from the former he finds:

Really easy to play, for on most of Sankey’s hymns (there is) very often a sustained bass note over a few bars, you know, which simplifies things greatly.⁶⁷⁷

Victor also plays secular music from a personal library of concertina music. In the period just after the last war, he was an active member of the International Concertina Association and visited their meetings and the homes of individual members in London. One of his visits is recorded in the Newsletter of the Association:

⁶⁷⁶ Victor Kersley: Eydmann 86.04.A3.

⁶⁷⁷ Victor Kersley: Eydmann 86.04.A18.

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He plays a good deal of gospel music, reading the hymn scores in treble and bass, and playing them in open harmony as written. This... calls for some extraordinary dexterity of fingering, but the effect is excellent, and he gives some lovely renderings. The tone of the instrument is very good and Mr. Kersley has a fine range of expression and balance of tone.⁶⁷⁸

Like David Haxton, Victor draws attention to the influence of the principal users of the concertina for evangelical purposes, the Salvation Army.

The Concertina and the Salvation Army

At the graveside, in the sickroom, aboard ship, in the homes of the rich and poor, in meetings large and small, in difficult corps where bandsmen were few and of course, in the open air meetings, the concertina has made its contribution and helped spreading the truth.⁶⁷⁹

The Salvation Army was formed in 1878 from the Christian Mission, which William Booth had founded over a decade earlier to undertake evangelical work in the East End of London. From its earliest days, music was employed in the Army's activities as a means of spreading its message, seeking attention in open air campaigns and as a form of religious expression in itself. Contemporary popular song formed the basis of the tunes of much of the repertory and instrumental music was relatively informal, using the skills available. Each member was obliged to develop some musical ability which could be drawn upon in "the fight" and in only a short time music making became highly integrated into much of the Army's work.

Musical instruments, including those of the free-reed type, were employed in the "aggressive" outdoor work of the army's early work. Bramwell Booth played the flutina, an early accordion, in this early mission work,⁶⁸⁰ and, having recognised the value of instrumental music during its formative period, Army leaders made a call in "The War Cry" on 27 March 1880:

Whereas, during the great Welsh and Cornish Councils, and before that time at Plymouth, Nottingham, and elsewhere, we have proved the great utility of musical instruments in attracting crowds to our open-air and indoor meetings, we do here express our desire that as many of our officers and soldiers generally, male and female, as have the ability for so doing, shall learn to play on some instrument. And as in many

⁶⁷⁸ "South of the Border" *NICA* 8 (September/October 1955) p.3.

⁶⁷⁹ Munday, Col. Thomas "The Army's Second Official Organ" *The Musician of the Salvation Army* (11 November 1961) p.765.

⁶⁸⁰ Collier, J. *The General Next to God* (London, 1965) p.69.

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instances the obtaining of an instrument is a difficulty, we shall be glad if any friends who may have such instruments lying idle will consecrate them to this service, and send them to Headquarters. This includes violins, bass viols, concertinas, cornets, or any brass instruments, drums or anything else that will make a pleasant sound for the Lord.

The General's appeal was heeded immediately and all manner of instruments were brought together in adhoc ensembles. Bands of single instrument types, such as the Fry brass players of Salisbury or the Haddow family of Highland pipers of Bellshill, Lanarkshire, were not uncommon but most early ensembles consisted of whatever instruments and performers were available. Before long, however, the Army bands became more organised and, although string, flute, mandolin and guitar bands were not unknown, there developed a preference for the use of the brass family, the concertina and the tambourine, in Army campaigning and praise. By the turn of the century, music was central to all Army activities but was becoming highly formalised and institutionalised with consequences for repertory, standards of performance, musical training and application.

The first Salvation Army music was concerned with attracting and holding a crowd and with the accompaniment of song. The earliest songs were firmly within the "evangelical tradition", simple, rousing affairs drawn from a number of sources, but it was a particular feature of the organisation that a large proportion used popular, music hall and traditional tunes put to sacred texts, in what has been termed "divine parody".⁶⁸¹ Instrumental solos "which might detract from the Gospel message"⁶⁸² were not considered appropriate until after 1885. The concertina was well suited to the needs of this early phase. The majority of the founder's family took up the instrument and used it in their "speaking, singing and praying brigades" and Herbert Booth published an instruction book which was "crude but ingenious, merely giving black and white dots in diagram form with the added words for this chord 'push', for that chord 'pull'".⁶⁸³ The concertina's portability made it ideal for outdoor work and its associations with popular musical forms helped break down barriers. Before long, references to the adoption of the instrument were numerous. In 1882, it is recorded that the Army's 17th. anniversary was celebrated at The Alexandra Palace, London, with "the martial blast of many trumpets and thundering of many drums and cymbals and the music of concertinas and fiddles".⁶⁸⁴ In 1887, a Captain Thomas Kyle of the Army was summoned to appear before the magistrates of Torquay for playing in the streets an instrument "not strictly known to the musical profession and called a concertina"⁶⁸⁵ and one player recalled his use of the instrument in the early years of this century:

⁶⁸¹ Scott, *The Singing Bourgeois*.

⁶⁸² Collier, *The General...*, p.68.

⁶⁸³ Burgess, Archie "100 Years of Concertinas" *The War Cry* (8 October 1932).

⁶⁸⁴ Boon, Brindley *Play the Music Play! The Story of Salvation Army Bands* (London, 1966) p.195.

⁶⁸⁵ Wiggins, A. R. *History of the Salvation Army* Vol.4 (London, 1964) p.265 and Boon, *Play the*

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Well, a concertina, a cornet and a drum -that was the complement of the three man band at Bodmin more than 50 years ago. How proudly we marched up Fore Street to our hall with our small following of faithful soldiers!⁶⁸⁶

While photographs⁶⁸⁷ and oral history confirm that the cheaper Anglo-German forms of concertina were in common use in the early period, the English form became more common by the 1920s with a recognition of its versatility and as a reflection of its wider secular following. With the institutionalisation of Salvation Army music came a rationalisation of repertory which embraced many new compositions and songs of a more refined and elevating nature, although many of the early popular forms survived. The developing repertory was matched by new demands on instrumentalists. Formal training, musical festivals and competitions were introduced to spread the use of the concertina in the Army and to set high standards of performance. Lessons for the concertina were published in the Army journal "The Warrior"⁶⁸⁸ and classes were held for trainee officers at the Army college. The repertory became prescribed and came to embrace not only arrangements of Salvation Army songs but also a growing canon of music composed within the Army for its own use, including marches from its flourishing brass band wing.

Many Army players turned to the duet forms of the concertina as these allowed easier playing in parts, particularly of brass band music.⁶⁸⁹ The form most commonly used was the Crane Duet system which was also given the appropriately salvationist title Triumph Duet. Developed in 1896 by a Mr. Butterworth, a piano tuner from Cheshire,⁶⁹⁰ this involved five rows of buttons on each manual with the expected separation into bass and treble manuals and a degree of overlap (Figure 9.7).⁶⁹¹ Although this form was promoted by the Army through sales from its own retail concern from around 1912, and through the publication of a tutor,⁶⁹² oral sources suggest that it was never as popular as the English type which remained the preferred form for everyday work within the mission station.

Music..., p.184.

⁶⁸⁶ Hugo Price "Concertina Cameos" The Musician (17 May 1975) pp.314-5.

⁶⁸⁷ There is a photograph of the early Dunfermline Corps with brass instruments and Anglo-German concertinas in the collection of Dunfermline Public Library. This was reproduced in Bygone Dunfermline (Dunfermline Press, 22 November 1991) p.xvii. A photograph of the Leith Corps c.1910 in the writer's collection shows a similar instrumentation.

⁶⁸⁸ According to W. Bramwell Thornett in "Concertina Cameos" The Musician (21 June 1978).

⁶⁸⁹ it is interesting to note that J.H. Mccann published an arrangement of "Onward Christian Soldiers" in his 1888 tutor for the duet concertina.

⁶⁹⁰ Patent 21730.

⁶⁹¹ See also Dunkel, Bandonion..., pp.94, 173 and Concertina and Squeezebox Vol.3, Nos.1 and 2 (Winter/Spring 1985) p.25.

⁶⁹² The Salvation Army Tutor for the Triumph Concertina (London, 1938). The army also published Bristow, Lieut. Col., The Salvation Army Tutor for the Concertina (London, 1935).

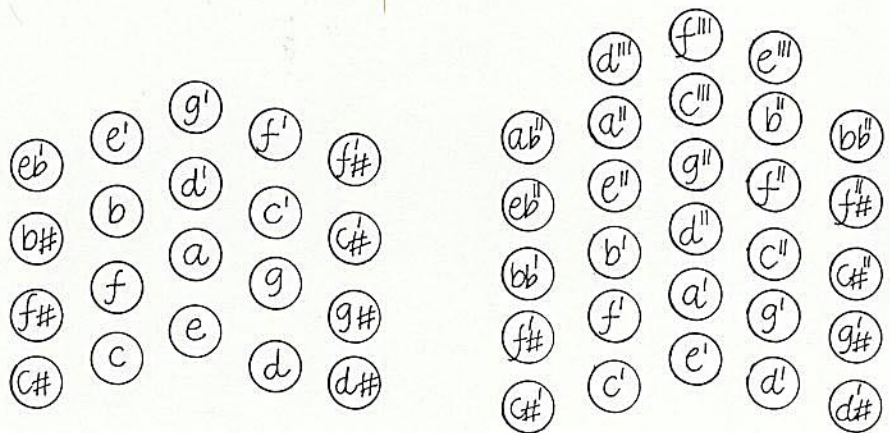


Figure 9.7 Crane Duet Concertina Layout

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The popularity of the concertina in the Salvation Army declined after World War Two. While this reflected national trends, there were also internal reasons, including a conscious drive by the Army to modernise its image and to capture the attentions of the young through the use of guitars, electronic instruments and contemporary musical forms. Many older officers have continued to play the concertina but it is now rarely seen in active campaign work and its use limited to internal Army functions where it is viewed with some nostalgia. Although a full and detailed history of music in the Salvation Army is still awaited, valuable information can be gleaned from Army publications and the oral testimony of officers. Both allow an examination of the factors behind the adoption and abandonment of the concertina within the organisation's activities.

Victor Smith, who resides in an Edinburgh retirement home, was born into a Salvationist family around 1910. His father played the Anglo-German concertina "as a hobby" but failed to master a second hand English model which he passed on to his son. Victor is wholly self taught on the concertina but was already a player of the cornet when he first took it up. He did not take the instrument seriously at first but discovered its potential during his first commission when posted to a small rural corps.

During the 1950s, Victor was "Territorial Youth Campaigner" and his work, which took him all over Scotland, involved not only preaching and prayer but also puppetry, film strip performances and chorus singing in the open air at beach resorts or in Salvation Army halls. He has described a typical visit to the Army Hall in Lerwick, Shetland, where, having advertised his visit at the school gates, he found that the response was so great that he had to hire a larger mission hall in the town to play to full houses for a week. In Greenock he had to provide two performances each night to meet the demand. Victor retired from "campaigning work" in 1962 and worked for nine years in Maryhill, Glasgow, where he was closely involved in children's mission work.⁶⁹³ While there, he purchased a concertina which was once the personal instrument of A. Ross who, as will be discussed in Chapter 10, had operated a concertina school in that part of the city during the 1930s. The concertina was put to good use:

In those days I was more or less conducting children's missions and the concertina was an absolute boon for leading children's services...
In those days I used to do school assemblies and the master or the

⁶⁹³ There is a photograph of the Army's Lieutenant-Commissioner A.E. Mingay campaigning in the open-air in the Calton area of Glasgow around that time in *The Musician of the Salvation Army* (6 May 1967) p.325. An account of the Salvation Army's social work in urban Scotland in the mid twentieth century, Gammie, A. *In Glasgow's Underground* (London, c.1945) p.64, states: "Groups -small and large -in the army uniform, preaching the Gospel in their own simple way and giving their personal testimony, are familiar everywhere. The singing is always a feature, whether accompanied by a full band, a blazing cornet or a concertina".

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chaplain would invite me to go and, of course, the concertina was absolutely ideal for that type of ministry.⁶⁹⁴

Victor stresses the importance of the novelty which the instrument had acquired by the 1960s:

Yes. Oh yes. I think really it's the novelty of the concertina. You can go, I've been to places, when you go to a children's service and the children see the concertina, probably never seen before, and they think what is this? And when you start to play it for them and they sing a chorus or two it's marvellous to them really.⁶⁹⁵

He has a vast repertory of song tunes which he has found important in Salvation Army work where different airs can be interchanged with song texts, depending on mood or preference:

I can now choose any hymn. I can play any hymn you wish to suggest... When you're a master of the concertina you don't have to use any music... you've got all the tunes. You can have any tune you like in the Salvation Army repertory and I can play that tune for you with no bother whatever.⁶⁹⁶

A particular favourite is the psalm tune "Stracathro" (Tape Item 9.3).

Victor finds that the English concertina offers portability combined with the flexibility required to allow the selection of pitch appropriate to his congregation:

Of course, on many occasions you are the band. The beauty of the concertina is that you can play it in whatever key you want. Now, for instance, if I go and do an old people's home, now I know those old folk can't reach the top notes. With the concertina I can drop the tune into a key that is more suitable to the elderly folk no trouble whatever.⁶⁹⁷

In retirement, Victor remains attached to his instrument, a tool of his trade which offers security, even when not used: The concertina would really be like a right hand. I never ever now... I may go to a service where I may never use the concertina in that service but I like to know its there if I want it because normally there now you've got the band and you've got a pianist or an organist and you probably would never touch

⁶⁹⁴ Victor Smith: Eydmann 85.04.A5.

⁶⁹⁵ Victor Smith: Eydmann 85.04.A2.

⁶⁹⁶ Victor Smith: Eydmann 85.04.B8.

⁶⁹⁷ Victor Smith: Eydmann 85.04.B1.

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the concertina throughout that service but we have been together so long that I hardly ever go to any service that I'm conducting without a concertina.⁶⁹⁸

Alex Sampson was 64 years old when I interviewed him at his house in Rosyth, Dunfermline, in 1988. He had spent his life within the Salvation Army and had just retired after 12 years as Sergeant Major in the local corps. He expressed pride in a long family history of Salvation Army music in Fife. His father and grandfather were both players as was his aunt Susan ("Sunshine Susie Sampson", fl. c.1910), who was a well known Captain who used the Anglo-German concertina in her Sunday school meetings. Alex gained his first musical experience playing in the brass band of the local armaments factory during the war but is a self taught concertina player. He learned by ear and has accumulated a large repertory of song tunes. He notes that as he learned songs and accompaniment together, he regards melody and concertina accompaniment as inseparable.

He has a great awareness of Salvation Army musical history, including an understanding of Army appropriation of popular and traditional tunes, and demonstrated this through "Bless his House, He sets me free!", a song which uses Alfred Lee's tune of 1867 for the music hall song "Champagne Charlie". He is particularly interested in Scottish airs put to Salvationist use. For example, "Invarary" becomes "Forth to rescue the Dying" and "Roamin' in the Gloamin'" is used for "Onward, ever onward with a spirit true and free".⁶⁹⁹ Alex has discussed the mixture of nationalistic and sacred sentiments which such songs can bring, particularly when playing abroad, and the benefits of familiar tunes in attracting crowds on Scottish streets.

Alex attended Salvation Army College, London, from 1946-8 and was given his first posting to Brechin immediately afterwards. He did not take concertina lessons at college but soon took up the instrument:

S.E.: How did you get into the concertina?

A.S.: Well, as a Salvation Army officer... They started me as a lieutenant and when you're a lieutenant officer you don't go to a big corner because you haven't got the experience so you always start away. You get sent to a Salvation Army corps and there's not a band there and there may not be any persons musical. You have to conduct services: open air services, indoor services, have people singing the praises and keep them on the tune and without a musical instrument it's virtually impossible... So I decided I would need to try and get some

⁶⁹⁸ Victor Smith: Eydmann 85.04.B13.

⁶⁹⁹ Other adopted tunes include "The Rowan Tree", "The Bluebells of Scotland", "Ye Banks and Braes" and "Annie Laurie". See Boon, *Play the Music...*, p.120.

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means of support then with the music. Now, the concertina was just the ideal thing. It's simple to play, some people just play chords and that would be just enough to get by, keeping the people in tune.⁷⁰⁰

After Brechin, he spent time in a number of other Scottish locations and made good use of the concertina:

I must confess that it's the only instrument that I can pick up and if I hear a chorus I'll be able to play. If I know the tune at all I'll be able to play. I just seem to know which key to hit initially to get what I'm after, but that's the instrument.

Its very serviceable, the beauty of it. You can see how the Salvation Army adopted it.⁷⁰¹

Alex accepts, but laments, the changes in Salvation Army music in the mid-twentieth century and regards the adoption of modern popular instruments and styles as an unfortunate development:

A guitar is for people who are already part of the concern, more a sort of dampening down of their beliefs. I don't mean a dampening down of their beliefs but possibly a more sophisticated way of expressing their faith, whereas the more strident notes of the cornet and the concertina are meant to attract a crowd and hold a big congregation and out door people. The guitar is when you've got the old mikes up there and the young boy or girl can come along and croon a nice soothing thing to someone or other. It's a solo thing.⁷⁰²

He sold his concertina in the early 1970s but soon regretted this as he was stimulated to take it up again under the influence of the folk revival.

Alex's wife, Mary, from Dysart, near Kirkcaldy in Fife, trained at Salvation Army college and served in Carrickfergus, Omagh, Strabane, Belfast and elsewhere in the North of Ireland before returning to Scotland. Although not a concertina player now, she had once played "enough to get by" and used the instrument to support her own voice as a solo singer. She offered valuable information regarding Salvation Army teaching methods:

⁷⁰⁰ Alex Sampson: Eydmann 88.01.A3.

⁷⁰¹ Alex Sampson: Eydmann 88.01.A6.

⁷⁰² Victor Smith: Eydmann 88.02.A1.

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When you're going into the Salvation Army college one of the things on your list was a concertina... and at that time, in the 1940s a concertina was really essential and I got learning on it at the college. But it was really, it was great because you could sing a solo, playing chords.

I bought it in Kirkcaldy. In fact very few of us did not have a concertina. It was the done thing. I had a friend in Dunfermline that was at the college with me and she had one as well, 'mean we all had them. And they sort of trained us and if you couldn't play, eh, maybe the whole thing you could play chords which was enough to keep you on the tune for playing outside so that in these far off days it really was a great asset.

Well, they gave us, we had big charts with the layout of the concertina and where all the eh, chords were, that sort of thing... It used to make some noise I can tell you. We were put right down the bottom floor of the college... They would get us all playing the different chords.⁷⁰³

The Salvation Army produced a number of outstanding players of the duet concertina. W. Bramwell Thornett, who was born in Dundee in 1905, was regarded as one of the best. His parents, who had been stationed in Glasgow just prior to that time, were both players of the Anglo-German concertinas but Bramwell preferred the Crane Duet system because "it is suited to chord work". Resident in Felixstowe, Suffolk, in the mid-1980s, he counted himself as one of the "very few players remaining, in or out of the Army I fear".⁷⁰⁴ He credited the introduction of the Crane system into Army use to Brigadier Archie Burgess, an "artistic soloist in his time".⁷⁰⁵ In addition to formal religious performance, he was always in great demand as a soloist at secular events such as keep-fit classes, disabled persons meetings, old people's groups and children's parties, where he played music from "Acker Bilk to Beethoven", including novelty numbers such as the imitations of bells and bagpipes. He always preferred to perform with a pianist or, when an accompanist was unobtainable, with backing tapes of piano or additional concertina parts prepared by himself.

Bramwell lamented the abandonment of the concertina by the Army and in an article⁷⁰⁶ published in 1974, around the same time as folk musicians were beginning to rediscover the instrument, he called for a revival of "part playing" on the "classical concertina". His recommended repertory included popular and light "classics" with

⁷⁰³ Mary Sampson: Eydmann 88.01.A16.

⁷⁰⁴ Personal communication with the writer, circa 1986.

⁷⁰⁵ For a memory of this influential Army concertinist see Wiggins, Lieut-Commissioner Arch. R., "Makers of Army music and song: Brigadier Archie Burgess" *The Musician* (28 December 1968) p.872.

⁷⁰⁶ Thornett, W. Bramwell "Rediscovering the Salvation Army's Second Official Organ" *The Musician* (20 July 1974) p.368.

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some mid-nineteenth century concertina music added for impressive solo performance:

Canzonetta from Concerto in D	Tchaikowsky
To the Spring	Grieg
Sheep may safely graze	Bach
On Wings of Song	Mendelssohn
Violin Sonatas	Haydn
Liebeslied	Kreisler
Romanze op40	Beethoven
Melodie d'Amour	Engelmann
Serenata	Braga
Jesu, joy of man's desiring "for devotional meetings"	Bach
Czardas	Monti
Light Cavalry	Suppé
"for contrast, revealing the more brilliant style of playing the concertina"	
Simple marches	Various
"but requiring restraint and artistry"	
Concertina Arrangements	George Case

The Salvation Army journals contain a large amount of material relating to other outstanding players such as Brigadier W.G. Friend who, aged 81 years in 1973, had originally commenced playing the Anglo-German concertina in 1913:

Simply to accompany congregational singing, especially where there was no band. Furthermore, I knew it would save me from straining my voice, and this has really worked as now, at eighty-one years of age, I can still sing reasonably well!⁷⁰⁷

On taking up the duet system he re-scored band music to suit, recalling how the concertina once allowed him to effortlessly lead a 10 minute "chorus session" with 2,600 singers.

Lieut-Colonel Ernest Ripley purchased his first 35 key Triumph concertina for £35 in 1930 and learned to play through the course published in the Army journals and at

⁷⁰⁷ Brigadier W. G. Friend "The Concertina is a Rewarding Instrument" The Musician (6 October 1973) p.634.

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training college. A few years later he acquired a 56 key instrument which he used at beach rallies from his base at Blackpool Citadel:

It is equally at home whether it is witnessing in hospital ward, at open-air gatherings, in prisons, on the beach, in the hall or in cottage meetings... I have often visited small corps where there is no band or pianist -how glad I am that I have such an instrument.⁷⁰⁸

The integration of the concertina into Army life, and its intensity of adoption in the late nineteenth century and early years of this century, led to its use in bands. The first recorded Salvation Army concertina bands were at Battersea in 1882 and Bristol Citadel in 1884, although it can be assumed that these were informal, adhoc affairs typical of the burst of enthusiasm which accompanied the foundation of the Army. By the first years of the present century, more organised ensembles were being formed. The first issue of the Army music journal, The Bandsman and Songster, published in April 1907, carried an article⁷⁰⁹ noting that their formation was being actively encouraged by the Army authorities and suggesting that new groups should be formed and existing bands reorganised on “musical lines” as in the secular bands currently enjoying favour. The writer recalled how:

It has been my privilege and pleasure to listen to a properly arranged Concertina Band of some twenty six instruments. Playing classical music, the Band was largely composed of colliers and working men who might be regarded as not having particularly fine standards. The effect was splendid. With such a combination I could see that almost anything could be accomplished in the way of indoor music... Such music could not fail to produce an excellent effect in holiness meetings, prayer meetings, and even on the march itself, where, with the addition of a light bass and a side-drum, the effect would indeed be stirring.

He suggested a band of sixteen English concertinas:

4 Trebles in C
1 Soprano in F
3 Tenors in F
5 Baritones in C
1 Bass in F
2 basses in C

⁷⁰⁸ Ernest Ripley “Concertina Cameos” The Musician (19 April 1975) p.251.

⁷⁰⁹ Hay, James “About Concertina Bands” The Bandsman and Songster (6 April 1907) p.5.

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although twenty players was thought preferable. The description of the instruments suggests that they would be specially tuned to allow reading from brass band scores. It was suggested that one advantage of such bands would be that “these instruments are, on the whole, easier to learn than either brass or stringed instruments” and that:

Women are not debarred, either from physical or other considerations; indeed, some will do much better than men. A Women’s Band would be a special attraction.

Alex Sampson makes a similar point:

As opposed to the brass it gave the women folk a chance because some bandmasters were chauvinistic and they would not let women in their band... So the women hit back by having a concertina band.⁷¹⁰

Brigadier W.G. Friend recalled setting up such a band:

When stationed at the Durham District Headquarters I had a concertina band of some twelve players. I had to think again how to arrange the music so I got some early [brass band] journals and deputed the parts in a simplified way as follows:

1st. and 2nd. cornet
1st. and 2nd. baritone
Solo euphonium
Bass

My task was to get each player to play his own part only -they were all so used to putting their fingers on all the keys! However, after a few practices success was achieved.⁷¹¹

As with Salvation Army brass bands, the concertina ensembles used only arrangements of music officially sanctioned and published by the Army authorities.

By 1930, around 50 formally organised Salvation Army bands had been formed,⁷¹² including those at Doncaster, Plymouth Congress Hall, Weston-Super-Mare, Sheffield Citadel, Grimsby, Coventry City, Hull Icehouse, Scarborough, Loughborough Junction, Belfast Citadel and Attercliffe.⁷¹³

⁷¹⁰ Alex Sampson: Eydmann 88.02.A8.

⁷¹¹ “The Concertina...”, p.634.

⁷¹² Woodcock, R., letter to the editor *The Musician of the Salvation Army* (2 September 1972) p.546.

⁷¹³ The Army Journals contain much relating to concertina bands including early photographs. See, for

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The only band I know to have been active in Scotland was that formed at Dumfries in late 1916.⁷¹⁴ According to local tradition it was established by women members due to the absence of large numbers of male brass players serving in the Great War. For a considerable period, it was under the leadership of Sergeant Secretary Mrs. Margaret Main who assumed her post “at a time when women leaders of musical sections were almost unknown in the Army” and it is noted that “to equip herself for the task she had to master every instrument and make herself familiar with full scores”.⁷¹⁵ The band was still active in the late 1960s with fourteen players, some of whom were founder members⁷¹⁶ but it went out of active service when flooding at the corps hall damaged the instruments. These have now been repaired and the band is now resuming activity on a limited scale.⁷¹⁷ Most other bands disappeared during the inter-war period although two, at Plymouth and Doncaster, still exist.

The Salvation Army did not limit its activities to the British Isles but became a major force in foreign missions. This, and the activities of other organisations, inevitably helped introduce the concertina to other cultures.

The Concertina in the Foreign Missions

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the rise of foreign missions was a major stimulus to commercial production of free-reed instruments. This encouraged the use of not only those of the organ type but also the hand held versions. However, it is difficult to discuss this area of concertina adoption in any great depth on account of the lack of primary evidence.

The English Cylopædia of c.1854 recorded that the accordion was in use by missionaries associated with the Roman Catholic Church⁷¹⁸ and I have already noted that from an early time concertinas were made with reeds of special alloys which would allow them to tolerate the conditions of the tropics. Scholes⁷¹⁹ claims that David Livingstone, Scots explorer and missionary, carried such a concertina with him on his campaigns.

example, The Musician of the Salvation Army (15 April 1972) p.231, (17 August 1974) p.444, (20 September 1975) p.579 and (7 August 1976) p.502.

⁷¹⁴ “Scotland’s Sole Concertina Band” The Musician of the Salvation Army (March 1967) p.401. It has also been suggested that there was a band at Ayr but I can find no evidence for this.

⁷¹⁵ “Mrs Margaret Main” Musician of the Salvation Army (15 January 1972) p.45.

⁷¹⁶ Two photographs of the band, one taken shortly after formation and another contemporary were published in The Bandsman of the Salvation Army (March 1967) p.401. Figure 9.8 is an undated postcard photograph of the band.

⁷¹⁷ In late 1991 the ensemble consisted of four players from the same family (father, mother and two daughters) playing with “enthusiasm rather than precision”. Information from Steven Sutcliffe, Glasgow.

⁷¹⁸ “Accordion” in Charles Knight (ed.) The English Cyclopædia Vol. 1, (London, 1854).

⁷¹⁹ TOCTM, p.117.



Figure 9.8 Salvation Army Band, Dumfries c1920.
Source: Author's collection.

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David J. Beattie⁷²⁰ relates how one, R.W. Porteous, used the instrument in his work with the China Inland Mission early this century and that this proved invaluable in entertaining and leading praise with fellow prisoners after being captured by brigands. A similar story is told by Victor Kersley of Hawick who recalls how he obtained his most treasured concertina which once belonged to a family friend:

He was sent to China as a missionary with the Salvation Army and, eh, at the time of the war with Malaysia he was sent to Singapore and was only there for a relatively short period until the fall of Singapore and he was a prisoner with the Japs at Changi prison, a notorious place in Singapore, for four years... During that time the concertina, his concertina which he had made specially to go to China, was hidden in Singapore. So, on his release he returned home, of course, with his concertina which had not suffered to any extent at all. It was remarkable... On his death I got the concertina from his widow.⁷²¹

I have examined this instrument which appears to have lacquered reeds to prevent oxidation and gauze behind the grilles to keep out insects.

As an international organisation with a strong interest in foreign missions, the Salvation Army made great use of the concertina. Army journals have frequently reported players throughout the world and make occasional reference to the use of the instrument as a principal teaching tool at missionary stations in places such as Nairobi and Mombassa.⁷²²

The Army's use of the concertina in foreign missions helped spread the instrument's popularity in both sacred and secular music. Kjellström, for example, illustrates a Salvationist concertina player on the streets of a Swedish town in 1975⁷²³ and, during the course of writing this dissertation, I have encountered the English concertina in use within a Salvation Army family in rural Piemonte, North Italy.

Decline and Abandonment

The use of the concertina in the mission halls suffered a number of blows in the post 1945 period. Many missions became institutionalised and took on the trappings and practices of the modern church, including organs, typical repertory, choirs etc. Jimmy

⁷²⁰ Beattie, David J. *The Romance of Sacred Song* (London, 1954) p.119.

⁷²¹ Victor Kersley: Eydmann 86.04.A11.

⁷²² There is a photograph of blind pupils with concertinas in Nairobi in *The Musician of the Salvation Army* (28 March 1970) p.195 and the same journal of 29 January 1972, p.67 carried an urgent call for a concertina for use in the Salvation Army Training College in the same city. The journal of 2 March 1968, p.156 carried a photograph of a band of blind pupils with concertinas at Mombassa.

⁷²³ *Dragspel*, p.70.

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Lindsay recalls how the Tent Hall in Glasgow could not resist a benefactor's offer of an organ to "improve" the congregation's music, even though it was to render its many concertina players redundant and reduce participation and spontaneity.⁷²⁴ The general decline in evangelistic work was hastened by comprehensive urban redevelopment in many of the inner city areas where it had flourished. In the words of David Haxton:

You understand, Stuart? These places are finished... That work
doesna go on now.⁷²⁵

⁷²⁴ Jimmy Lindsay: Eydmann 86.02.A11.

⁷²⁵ David Haxton: Eydmann 84.03.A20.

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