

Addendum to *Beginnings of Concertina playing in Ireland, 1834-1930*

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A few significant items relating to the history of the concertina in Ireland have cropped up in the last few months, subsequent to publication of the 'Beginnings' article. Rather than revise the article, I have attached them to this Addendum. They are of two types: A) a few additional advertisements of early instrument sales and concerts; B) a brief pen sketch of an early 20th century Irish concertina player, found within a political writing in a liberal English magazine of that period.

A. Period advertisements

One of the concertina's first public proponents was Italian-born Giulio Regondi (1822-1872), a classical guitarist and child prodigy who began performing on the English concertina in 1834. Regondi was a frequent visitor to Ireland over the period 1834 to 1861; the following image advertized his appearance in Belfast in November 1835. It is from *The Belfast News-Letter* of Tuesday, November 10, 1835. More on Regondi's Irish visits can be found in the main article, as well in some of the references cited there.



MASTER REGONDI,
The Celebrated Performer on the
Guitar and Concertina,

PREVIOUS to his leaving the North of Ireland for Dublin and England, will have the honour of giving a **FAREWELL CONCERT** in Belfast—the day and other particulars will be duly announced in future Advertisements.

SIGNOR REGONDI will assist his son both in the Vocal and Instrumental parts.

Terms for instruction on the Guitar and in Singing, during his short stay here, may be known at his residence, No. 39, UPPER ARTHUR-STREET. Belfast, 9th Nov. 1835.

It has been somewhat of a struggle finding documentation of the existence of *German* concertinas in Ireland before 1860, as was mentioned in the main article. Here are several items from the 1850s that help pinpoint the development of a market in Ireland for these cheap imported instruments, which were eventually to become a mainstay of Irish music.

John Bray was one of the earliest sellers of English concertinas in Ireland; several advertisements of his shop are included in the main article, and those dating as far back as 1860 list German concertinas as well as English system ones. This advertisement shows that Bray was in business in Dublin as early as 1852, selling English system concertinas (no mention yet of German ones). His next door neighbor was Joseph Scates at 28 Westmoreland. Scates was a resident there from 1850, according to Stephen Chambers' examination of Dublin street records. It is a bit of a puzzle that Bray is selling, amongst other items, Scates' London made English system concertinas even while Scates has set up shop next door. Later advertisements contained in the main article clearly show that the two men were competitors in the Dublin musical instruments trade.

This advertisement came from the liner notes of the book *Three Days on the Shannon*, by W.F. Wakeman, Hodges and Smith, Dublin, 1852.

**Harp, Pianoforte, Military Musical Instrument, and Music
Warehouse,
26, WESTMORLAND-STREET.**

J. BRAY

RESPECTFULLY informs the Nobility and the Public that, having finished the Improvements making in his Establishment, he invites an inspection of his Stock of Pianofortes, principally Collard and Collard, Broadwood, and other respectable London Makers, with extended Keys in Treble and Bass, and all the recent improvements, which he will dispose of, with every engagement to satisfy Purchasers, at the London Manufacturers' Prices.

J. B. has also imported some splendid Harmoniums, with the Patent Percussion, invented and manufactured by Alexander of Paris, having the power of an Organ, and not requiring tuning; Concertinas on improved principle, by Wheatstone, Scates, &c.; Cornopeans, by Besson and others; Violins, Guitars, Flutes, and every Musical Instrument; and the newest Music constantly on Sale, 25 and 30 per cent. under the marked Price, genuine Editions, at

26, Westmorland-street (near Carlisle Bridge).

The earliest mention I have yet found of the soon-to-be favored *German* concertina in Ireland is the attached advertisement for Symond's German concertina tutors, found in the *Freeman's Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser* (Dublin), Tuesday, November 1, 1853. This indicates that these imported instruments were available in Ireland at least by that year; perhaps more information on these earliest vendors will eventually surface. In London, tutors and instructors for the German concertina were available as early as 1846, and the young boy who played on the London ferryboats, interviewed by Mayhew in 1856, indicated that the instruments were widespread in that city by 1853 (see discussion in main article).

THE cheapest and most approved **MUSICAL INSTRUCTION-BOOKS** are **DAVIDSON'S**, each containing 80 pages for Half-a-Crown:—Jousse's Pianoforte, enlarged and modernized; West's Singing; Spobr's Violin; Forrestier's Cornopean, edited by the Distins; Nicholson's Flute; and Davidson's Accordion—Also, a Book of Accordion Music, 2s. 6d. In Music Folio, Davidson's English Concertina Tutor, 2s. 6d.; Pianoforte Tutor, 2s. 6d.; Czerny's 101 Exercises, 2s.; Czerny's *Étude de la Velocite*, 3s.; all strongly bound. Symonds's German Concertina, 1s.; Abridged Books for the Pianoforte, Flute, Violin, or Accordion, 1s. each.

DAVIDSON'S OPERATIC GEMS.—The most favourite Operas, arranged for the Pianoforte, without Words, 1s. for each Opera. Another Series, with Words, Italian and English, 1s. each Opera, or 2s. "L'Elisire d'Amore," "Les Huguenots," "Don Juan," "Norma," "Le Prophete," "La Figlia del Reggimento," "La Cenerentola," "Der Freischutz," "Fra Diavolo," "Il Prodigio," "Masaniello," "The Barber of Seville," "Gustavus," "The Magic Flute," "Lucia," "La Gazza Ladra," &c. **DAVIDSON**, Peter's Hill, London; and sold in Dublin by **J. WISEHEART**, 23, **SUFFOLK-STREET**.

The following item from 1854 is the oldest advertisement for the *sale* of German concertinas I have yet found in Ireland; the vendor is Joseph Scates. It is possible that future research will push this date back a bit further. Scates mentions the Dublin ('Ireland') Exhibition, which occurred the previous year of 1853, and where he exhibited several English system instruments of his own and Wheatstone's manufacture (see main article)...but no German concertinas were mentioned on that occasion.

The advertisement is from *The Belfast News-Letter*, Wednesday, December 13, 1854. The rather high price mentioned for a 'good German concertina', twenty shillings, was to drop precipitously in coming years and decades. It is of interest that Scates was shipping these to all parts of Ireland.

MUSICAL CHRISTMAS GIFTS.
Concertinas, Guitars, Musical Boxes, Accordions,
Flutinas, Cornepeans, Sax Horns, Flutes, Violins, &c.

JOSEPH SCATES, 26, COLLEGE-GREEN, invites attention to his Concertinas, with the complete semi-tonic scale and double action. They are the same as performed upon by him in Ireland's Great Exhibition, and have recently gained the American Prize Medal, also honourable mention in the Paris Exhibition.

He also offers the largest assortment of best Paris Flutinas, Accordions, German Concertinas, Organic Flutinas, with keys like the Pianoforte, &c., from Seven Shillings to Twelve Guineas each. On receipt of a Post-office Order for Twenty Shillings a good German Concertina, with self-instructor, will be forwarded to any part.

Every kind of Musical Instrument tuned, repaired or exchanged.

JOSEPH SCATES,
26, COLLEGE-GREEN.
(Opposite the Bank.)

Lessons for both English and German concertinas were to be found in Belfast by 1859, when the following advertisement appeared in the *The Era* (London, England), Sunday, May 15, 1859. This instructor targeted a middle class clientele.

M U S I C .

Mr. C. D. GORDON, 30, Fleet Street and 5, York Street, Belfast, Organist of the Parish Church, Bangor, begs to inform his Friends and the Public that he continues to give Tuition upon the Pianoforte and Singing, Violin, Guitar; also the English and German Concertina.

Mr. G. attends Dromore each Wednesday.

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By the 1860s, use of the concertina had spread throughout Ireland, even to rural folk in Clare (see main article). There were enough players in Belfast by 1869 to field a concertina-playing contest, as shown in the report below, from *The Belfast News-Letter* of Friday, April 2, 1869. This and similar such events in Dublin in the 1860s and in the following decade (see main article) indicate its widening popularity with the middle class, who increasingly favored the less expensive German instruments. This situation closely mirrors that reported for England and Scotland by Stuart Eydmann. Most such accounts mention popular music hall songs and sentimental ballads as key material for the instrument, and that is borne out in the tables of contents of the printed tutors of the day.

PROFESSOR MILLAR.—The programme issued by Professor Millar of his entertainment to-night in the Ulster Hall is sure to attract a crowded audience. Apart from the very tempting list of valuable prizes, and the rich amusement which the contests in singing, dancing, concertina-playing, and conundrum-making are sure to provoke, Mrs. Millar's vocal performance is in itself a most enjoyable treat. Her voice, while it is powerful, and of more than ordinary compass, is peculiarly sweet and pleasing in tone and quality. Taken for all in all, the performance is likely to be a very attractive one.

B. A pen sketch of an early Irish player

The following description of an Irish concertina street musician was found in a period liberal English magazine entitled *English Review* (September 1917, London). The article, of which I have copied only the first two pages here, was a political attack on the British authorities then in charge in Ireland. Little political dissent was tolerated in those last days of British rule, and this piece decries the silencing of a crippled old concertina player who favored some Irish national airs. Several such reprimands of early Irish concertina players from both nationalist *and* Unionist persuasions were documented in the main article. What this adds to the pot is a charming although brief pen portrait of a street musician and his concertina, written by a sympathetic English visitor during turbulent times. Of particular interest is the 'softness' attributed to his playing on an instrument which was not known, at the time, for subtlety.

Ireland

By Austin Harrison

It was an evening of almost Eastern beauty, and as we sat on the verandah of our hotel, watching the gathering night curiously punctuated by a shaft of light which struck across the tops of a row of houses on the hill like a bar, we could have wished for no more peaceful spot in Europe than the little town of Kilkenny. We had gone there to see a Sinn Fein election, to witness, we were told, a fight, yet all that day we had walked about and found nothing eventful, and, but for the tricolour flag and the usual signs of electioneering activity, it would have baffled even the inventiveness of an Irish military collector of statistics to discover anything sinister or suspicious. Save, perhaps, for one thing—the police. Poses of Irish constabulary stood with their fine straight backs holding, as it were, the strategic points of the town, and they walked in couples, and I could not help wondering why there were so many of them or what it was exactly they were stationed there to do. Otherwise Kilkenny, once a flourishing town of forty thousand, but now reduced by emigration to about eleven thousand, presented no untoward aspect whatever, and I had begun to wonder how I was to pass the time in such calm surroundings till the day of the poll came round, which was to decide whether Cosgrave or the local man was to be "up" (as they say in Ireland).

While I was so cogitating there shuffled past us a picturesque figure with a concertina. A man in rags yet with the allure of a poet, his head finely poised, the eyes ardent and mystic, and as he began to play that truly awful instrument with a softness not generally associated with it, we called upon him to give us some Irish airs. He played "The Soldier's Song" and, at the request of an Irishman who had not visited Ireland for thirty years and was feeling sentimental, "The Wearing

of the Green” and other melodies, whereat suddenly a couple of policemen appeared before us and ordered him to desist. We protested. We had asked him to play. But authority would hear no excuse. “The man knows he is not allowed to play those tunes,” we were told. For a second there was a tension. One or two men standing near groaned; the musician threw up his arms and slunk away; we returned to our coffee disturbed, not understanding, ashamed.

I say ashamed deliberately. Was this Ireland? Was this the civilization for which we declare we are fighting in the name of liberty and nationality? A cripple bard not allowed to play Irish national airs on a concertina! This, in the British Empire! We sit in silence. We speak of Parnell. I think somehow of Yeats in a velvet jacket in London drawing-rooms. Ah, how little do we Englishmen know of the truth of Ireland! We go there to hunt; to shoot; to “do” Killarney, the “King’s” tour; to amuse ourselves. We do not go there to observe: to think: to realise.

My friend cannot understand. “Are we in Russia?” he questions. The whole difference of race looms up before us. This is oppression, stupid oppression.

An old man in the street we talk to tells us of the former glory of the city. It is gone. The young men are gone. All round the present town the ruins of Kilkenny’s former greatness testify to the decay. Nothing doing. It is the blood-cry of Ireland. All that evening and far into the night we talk of the man with his concertina driven away like a hound for playing an Irish tune. It offends us. As I lie in bed that night I cannot help ask myself why it is that Mr. Lloyd George, the Welshman, does not himself go to Ireland and see on the spot this police government, these Cossack conditions, the pity of it. He would be the first man to cry out against this shame. Why does he not go there and talk to the people, see what it all means, and think—think?

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