

## **“A concertina is not a piano”**

Since not long after starting into writing this manual, with its central notion of intuitive learning, I've been troubled by the fact that there is so much *writing* in the first pages, before the reader gets to playing actual tunes.

About two thirds into the writing, during a long and well-earned night's sleep, I dreamt a dream. I was in a library, a lovely, special kind of library, in which children were encouraged to leave pieces they had written, for others to read and enjoy. Among the many essays and articles spread out and available to read, there was one piece which naturally enough grabbed my attention. I only had time to read the front page, in large, colourful letters, before I woke up. On the front page were the words: “A CONCERTINA IS NOT A PIANO”. I awoke; and I lay and thought about my dream. And true: a concertina and a piano share in common the ability to play different notes, and to play different scales; but there the similarity ends.

There are many differences between a concertina and a piano, not least their size and heft, but below are the four that seem important to me in relation to this manual, and to my concern that it has to have introductory chapters with so much writing and so many diagrams:

1. A piano is *linear*: one note follows another, as day follows night. That isn't so with the concertina, where the notes are, apparently at least, all over the place.
2. With all due respect to pianos, “*Meet one and you've met them all*” applies, in the sense that the layouts are always the same: white keys interspersed with groups of two or three black keys. Expensive or cheap, upright or grand, always the same layout. Not so with concertinas, which may have all kinds of different layouts in terms of which buttons play which notes.
3. A piano layout has one – and one only – key which you strike in order to play any given note. No repeats. With the 30-button Anglo concertina, on the other hand, you can often obtain the same note from using two or even three different buttons, so that the different combinations of buttons that can be used to play a given sequence of notes are many and varied.
4. A piano never, ever, runs out of air, or has too much, whereas a concertina may suffer from both kinds of ‘wind’-associated problem.

This is by no means to disrespect the piano, which is an incredibly difficult instrument to play well; but it *does*, I hope, help to explain why there's a need for a few opening chapters full of words and diagrams in this otherwise intuitive-learning manual. Those chapters are necessary in order for us to delve a little into the significance of the differences between a concertina and a piano.

And I hope you will realise the benefits to be gained by sitting quietly and reading and digesting these opening chapters, before you start into trying the tunes. That quiet reading and thinking time is necessary if you're to start playing with a grasp of why the tunes are laid out as they are; I firmly believe it's an investment of time that you'll find worthwhile.

I wish I hadn't woken up when I did. I keep wondering what I would have read had I been able to read more of what the child had written. What wisdom might I have gained?

A concertina is, indeed, not a piano. A very special instrument, it's there, waiting for its secrets to be revealed.