

The Accordion's Ancestry: Origin and Development

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channels, the reeds vibrate freely, very much the same way as the reeds inside of an accordion.

The Concertina

The development of the concertina in 1829 by Sir Charles Wheatstone was for the purpose of improvement over the earlier accordions built by Buschmann of Berlin (1822) and Danian of Vienna (1828). In its beginning stage of development, the early accordion had very few buttons or keys, whereas the concertina made more notes available to the performer. Resembling in shape with flat buttonboards on both sides, the player's left and right hands were kept in place with leather-like straps. A much wider dynamic range was also available on the concertina.



Concertina

NOTE: The English Concertina by Wheatstone, produced the same note on the push and pull of the bellows (double-action), whereas the German Concertina produced different notes on the push and pull (single-action).

The German Bandoneon (1840)

Similar in shape to the concertina, all notes change on the push and pull of the bellows, similar to the harmonica and the German concertina. The bellows are wider and longer and is generally played on both knees close together. There are no pre-set chords on the left hand; single notes only. This instrument became extremely popular in Argentina — up to the present time.



Modern Accordion

The Modern Accordion

In final review, the origin and development of the accordion has ancestral findings in many areas throughout history. From the invention of the Chinese Cheng to the bellows of the Middle Ages, I would like to add that the piano keyboard type of accordion (known as the piano-accordion),

originated in Europe during the second half of the 19th Century and later was to appear for the first time in America by famous accordionist and pioneer, Pietro D'Amico in 1909. Since then, vast improvements were made; register switches added, larger keyboards, various types of reed configurations of all kinds from chromatic to diatonic, to free bass systems, etc.

In closing, the purpose of this article was to familiarize the reader with the accordion's origin, its ancestral background and development leading up to the 20th Century.

It is apparent that the accordion in its present modern-day image, remains to be a fairly young member of the musical instrument family, even though it's ancestors and origins date centuries back in history.