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# Introduction

## Collins: A Thumbnail Biography

(William) Wilkie Collins was born in London on 8 January 1824.<sup>1</sup> His father, William Collins, was a well-known artist and a member of the Royal Academy, while his mother, Harriet (née Geddes), though bent on a theatrical career, worked as a governess before her marriage.<sup>2</sup> Collins's formal schooling was somewhat helter-skelter, already interrupted early on by a two-year, culturally rich family sojourn in France and Italy (September 1836–August 1838) with extended stays in Naples and Rome.

After returning to England, Collins attended a private boarding school for a time, leaving in 1841 at the age of seventeen. Apprenticed to a London tea merchant, it was while he suffered at that “prison at the Strand” (as he called it) that Collins published his first short stories during the summer of 1843.<sup>3</sup> He soon, however, turned to the legal profession, gaining admittance to the bar in 1851; though he never practiced law, the subject (always meticulously researched) would figure prominently in a number of his works.<sup>4</sup> Finally, with respect to the 1840s, it was the death of Collins's father in 1847 that prompted his first full-length publication: *The Memoirs of the Life of William Collins, Esq., R. A.* (1848), the favorable reception

of which launched his career as a writer. (An earlier work, his first novel, *Ioláni*, set in Tahiti and completed in 1844, was rejected by publishers and remained lost and unpublished until 1999.)

The 1850s brought both success and recognition—sometimes critical, sometimes “popular,” sometimes both. In addition to four new full-length novels—among which *Hide and Seek* (1854) provides this songbook with five pieces, surpassed only by *Armada* (1866) with seven—it was on 12 March 1851 that Collins first met Charles Dickens, a meeting that turned into a close friendship and professional relationship that lasted until Dickens's death (9 June 1870) and altered the course of Collins's career.<sup>5</sup> First, it afforded Collins entrée to two weekly journals founded and edited by Dickens: *Household Words* (1850–59), where he soon became one of the “regulars,” and its successor, *All the Year Round* (first series, 1860–68). In these magazines he published many of his short stories, journalism, and serial versions of some of his major novels.<sup>6</sup> Second, it was with Dickens that Collins collaborated in mounting some of his own

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1. Though called “Willie” as a child, he dropped the name William upon reaching adulthood; see Catherine Peters, *The King of Inventors: A Life of Wilkie Collins* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 2 and 21 (it was the publisher Richard Bentley who dubbed Collins “King of Inventors”). For a photograph of him at about age fifty, see plate 1.

2. Wilkie had a younger brother, Charles Allston Collins (1828–73), who, like his father, was an artist and enjoyed an informal association with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. In 1860 Charles married Kate Dickens (1839–1929), Charles Dickens's youngest surviving daughter; as Dickens predicted, it was not a happy marriage, and she remarried within months of Charles Collins's death.

3. Long thought to be his first publication, “The Last Stage Coachman,” issued in *The Illuminated Magazine* for August 1843, has ceded that honor to the recently discovered “Volpurno—or the Student,” which had appeared one month earlier in the New York-based *The Albion, or British Colonial, and Foreign Weekly Gazette* on 8 July 1843. On the discovery, see Daniel Hack, “Volpurno—or the Student: A Forgotten Tale of Madness by Wilkie Collins,” in *Times Literary Supplement*, 2 January 2009, 14–15; see also the entry at Andrew Gasson's *Wilkie Collins Information Pages*, <https://www.wilkie-collins.info/volpurno.htm>.

4. See, for example, the discussion of no. 26 (“We're Gaily Yet”).

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5. The occasion was a rehearsal by Dickens's amateur dramatic company, in which Collins became an active participant.

6. Serial publication (weekly or monthly) before the appearance of a novel as a whole was the standard procedure at the time, though the process could be stretched to great lengths with authors scrambling to stay on schedule. Thus, *Armada*, Collins's longest novel, ran in the monthly *Cornhill Magazine* from November 1864 to June 1866 (twenty months), while “I Say No” filled an entire year's worth of *London Society* (January–December 1884), and *The Woman in White* ran weekly in *All the Year Round* from 26 November 1859 through 25 August 1860 (and concurrently in the American *Harper's Weekly*). Once the serial run was completed, the publication would appear in book form, usually in a three-volume format known as a “three-decker.” For a reproduction of the first page of the first installment of *Armada* in the *Cornhill Magazine*, see Andrew Gasson, *Wilkie Collins: An Illustrated Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 43. For a fine summary of the publication process and how it related to Collins in particular, see Graham Law, “The Professional Writer and the Literary Marketplace,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Wilkie Collins*, ed. Jenny Bourne Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 97–111, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CCOL0521840384>. For a more general study of the serial, see Linda K. Hughes and Michael Lund, *The Victorian Serial* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991; reissued 2015); and Guinevere L. Griest, *Mudie's Circulating Library and the Victorian Novel* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1970). On the final days of the three-decker, see Richard Menke, “The End of the Three-Volume Novel System, 27 June 1894,” *BRANCH: Britain, Representation, and*

## 2. The Woman in White Valses

Charles H. R. Marriott (1831–99)

Introduction  
Andante moderato

Musical score for the introduction of "The Woman in White Valses". The piece is in 6/8 time and B-flat major. It begins with a forte (*ff*) dynamic. The right hand features a series of chords and dyads, while the left hand plays a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The introduction concludes with a repeat sign and a final chord.

Musical score for measures 5-9. The right hand features a melodic line with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The left hand continues with the eighth-note accompaniment. The music is characterized by a mix of chords and dyads in the right hand.

Musical score for measures 10-14. The right hand continues with the melodic line, featuring a crescendo leading to a forte (*f*) dynamic. The left hand maintains the eighth-note accompaniment.

Musical score for measures 15-19. The right hand features a melodic line with a piano (*pp*) dynamic. The left hand continues with the eighth-note accompaniment. The music is characterized by a mix of chords and dyads in the right hand.

Musical score for measures 20-24. The right hand features a melodic line with a piano (*pp*) dynamic. The left hand continues with the eighth-note accompaniment. The music is characterized by a mix of chords and dyads in the right hand.

## 17. Tom Bowling

Words and Music by  
Charles Dibdin (1745–1814)

**Andantino**

*f* *dolce*

[verse 3]   
[verse 2]   
*f*

5

Here, a sheer hulk, lies

*p* *f*

Red. \* Red. \*

10

*dolce* *f*

poor Tom Bowl- ing, The dar- ling of our crew:— No more he'll hear the

*p* *f*

# 25. Alice Gray

William Mee (1788–1862)

Virtue Millard (d. 1840)

**Allegro moderato**

The first system of music consists of three staves. The top staff is a vocal line in treble clef, 2/4 time, with a key signature of one flat. It begins with a whole rest. The middle staff is the right hand of a piano accompaniment, starting with a quarter rest followed by a series of eighth and sixteenth notes. The bottom staff is the left hand, starting with a quarter rest followed by a steady eighth-note accompaniment.

5

The second system continues the music. The vocal line has a whole rest. The piano accompaniment continues with the same rhythmic patterns. The right hand has a *cresc.* marking. The system ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

1. She's —

9

The third system contains the first line of lyrics. The vocal line is active, with lyrics: "all my fan- cy paint- ed her, She's love- ly, — she's di- vine, ——— But her". The piano accompaniment continues with a *dolce* marking.

all my fan- cy paint- ed her, She's love- ly, — she's di- vine, ——— But her

13

The fourth system contains the second line of lyrics. The vocal line is active, with lyrics: "heart it is an- oth- er's, She nev- er can be mine, Yet". The piano accompaniment continues with a *dolce* marking.

heart it is an- oth- er's, She nev- er can be mine, Yet