



Serpent Newsletter

P.O. Box 954 Mundelein, Illinois 60060 USA

Newsletter for Serpent Enthusiasts

April 1, 2002

A Note From the Editor

Here is the latest edition of the Serpent Newsletter. It's existence is due primarily to a few readers who made generous donations since the plea for funds in the last issue. This income has put the account in the black, but the margin will remain critically low unless more funds come in. The database reveals that about half of the readership is in arrears to one degree or another. This is getting to sound like a public radio/TV fund raiser, but you folks know who you are! The newsletter cannot continue to exist as a hardcopy publication without at least periodic donations from all readers. Since the newsletter is cataloged by numerous libraries, I feel that it should continue to exist in hardcopy, and I believe that most readers still want it that way too. Come on, kick in a few bucks!

This issue is a bit smaller than usual. This has nothing to do with the above financial concerns. Instead, it reflects a dip in the incoming flow of information. I had hoped to stuff this issue with several reviews, but none of the promised recordings were actually in my hands in time for publication. Editing this publication is much easier when readers submit odds and ends that they encounter during their various activities. Don't be shy, drop us a note or an email.

Since the last issue, my email address has changed to ocleide@earthlink.net, so please change your records. Also, as predicted in the last issue, the old Serpent Website has finally gone away. Only the 'new' one exists now (it is more than a year old already), and I am trying to get the various search engines to revise their databases. Any links you might know of that begin 'wwa' or 'shoga' are no longer valid.

Paul Schmidt

Where Serpents Gather

- Mark Jacobs of Oregon gave a successful performance of Cliff Bevan's *Variations on The Pesky Serpent* for serpent and piano. The performance was part of the 2001 Northwest Big Brass Bash, held at Central Washington University at Tacoma. Mark has a website that includes serpent and ophicleide pages; markejacobson.tripod.com
- Doug Yeo recently completed two concerts, December 31 and January 1, and a recording session on January 2. For these, Doug played serpent with the Boston Baroque, Martin Pearlman conducting, and the program was Handel's *Music for the Royal Fireworks*. The orchestra included 4 oboes, 2 bassoons, 1 serpent, 3 trumpets, 3 horns, strings, harpsichord, timpani and field drum. Doug says that they tuned to A=415, and he used a short bocal on his serpent in C. Since he transposed the part from D to C, it worked out perfectly, and he was able to give a full bodied low D with all holes closed.

The recording session was at Mechanics Hall in Worcester, Massachusetts. The CD, to be released on the Telarc label, will be filled out with the complete *Water Music*. Doug expects the recording to appear in stores sometime during the summer. He made some new connections with the bassoon players, and hopes that this will lead to more harmonic music opportunities for the serpent.

- Also hailing from the North American west coast, serpentist Bodie Pfost writes that he had his senior recital in Fulkerson Recital Hall on the campus of Humboldt State University, Arcata, CA. The first half of the program was dedicated to Bodie's trombone playing, but the second half was given to early brass music. He played *La Hieronyma* by G.M. Cesare on tenor sackbut with guitar and bass continuo. Next came *3 Duos from Munich*, *Bayerische Staatsbibliothek* by Antonio Gardane, with Bodie playing serpent and Dr. Gilbert D. Cline playing lizard. Last came *3 Fantasias a Tres* by Esteban Daza, originally for Vihuela, arranged by

Marco Katz for three trombones, and performed on alto sackbut and two tenor sackbuts with guitar and bass continuo.

- Doug Yeo became the first person to play ophicleide with the Boston Symphony since its founding in 1881. For the opening night concert of the 2001-2002 season, music director Seiji Ozawa chose the complete incidental music to Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The performance featured singers Dawn Upshaw and Susan Graham with Blythe Danner reading excerpts from Shakespeare's play. Ozawa warmly acknowledged Doug's ophicleide performance at the end of the concert.

- Dr. David Loucky, professor of trombone at Middle Tennessee University, has been active with the ophicleide. David obtained his instrument to give demonstrations in low brass lectures, something he does often. Recent lectures include the Tennessee Governor's School for the Arts, the Southeast Tuba/Euphonium Workshop, and as part of the pre-concert lecture series held before St. Louis Symphony's performance of *Symphony Fantastique*. He likes to have a tuba player prepared to play orchestral excerpts before or

after his ophicleide reading, to show the stark contrast in the timbre and volume/ Sometimes David performs the 'modern' reading on euphonium.

David plans to perform on ophicleide for an April recital of low brass doubles; all sizes of trombones, euphonium, bass trumpet and ophicleide. The recital local is the Renaissance Center in Dickson, Tennessee. David may be emailed about his lectures and demonstrations; dloucky@frank.mtsu.edu, or by phone at 615-898-2474.

- In November 2001, the Boston Symphony performed the overture to Richard Wagner's first opera *Das Lieberverbot*, which calls for an ophicleide. Guest director Gennady Rozhdestvensky was enthusiastic about having a real ophicleide play its part. He and Doug Yeo had a long conversation during the intermission of a rehearsal, where Gennady lamented the fact that when he conducts the overture, he always hears it on a bass tuba, which is "just the wrong sound!" Doug volunteered to play ophicleide, and the resulting performance became the first time, and hopefully not the last, the director had heard it on the correct instrument.



Recording session for Boston Baroque's "Music for the Royal Fireworks", January 2, 2002, Mechanics Hall, Worcester, MA
Martin Pearlman, director

Horns, L - R : Robert Marlatt (corno 3), Jean Rife (corno 2), Richard Menaul (corno 1, behind Doug Yeo)

L-R: Doug Yeo, serpent, Marilyn Boenau (bassoon 2), Andren Schwartz (bassoon 1)

Peter Sykes, harpsichord

Photo by Julian Bullitt, submitted by Doug Yeo

Getting Serpents

Here is the list of Serpent makers who have made themselves known to us. Both Monk and Harding instruments are available through dealers, and all makers will deal directly with individual customers.

Christopher Monk
Instruments
(Jeremy West)
Workshop 4
30-32 Devonshire Road
Forest Hill
London SE23 3SR
England

Phone & fax:
+44 (0)2082 916900
www.jeremywest.co.uk/ cmi.html
<cmi@jeremywest.co.uk>

David Harding
56 Netherton Road
Appleton
ABINGDON
Oxon. OX13 5JZ
England

Phone: +44 (0)1865 863673

Robb Stewart Brass Instruments
140 E. Santa Clara St. #18
Arcadia, CA 91006
USA

Phone: 626-447-1904
<oldbrass@worldnet.att.net>

(*ophicleides, metal serpents, bass horns*)

Nicholas Perry
20 Queen Street
St. Albans
Hertfordshire AL3 4PJ
England

Phone: +44 (0)1727 866080
(*early cimballo, bass horn*)

Derek Farnell
82 Crumpsall Lane
Manchester M8 5SG
England

Phone: +44 (0)1617 407778
(*ophicleides*)

New Materials

- A new CD recording project devoted to the serpent will soon commence. Doug Yeo is gearing up for the first recording session, where he will record three original duets for serpents (with Craig Kridel), Simon Proctor's *Serpent Concerto* with piano accompaniment plus bells, and Cliff Bevan's *Variations on The Pesky Serpent*. The session will take place in Boston's Symphony Hall. Other planned sessions will record choral music such as Bevan's *Les Mots de Berlioz* for choir, serpent, ophicleide, buccin and bassoon and Drake Mabdry's *Quatre Tanka* for soprano and serpent. The new Bevan piece was commissioned by Craig's Berlioz Historical Brass group. Doug plans to use his old Baudouin serpent and Craig may use the serpent formerly played by Alan Lumsden in the London Serpent Trio. There might also be an overdubbed tribute to the LST.

- A new CD recording with Michel Godard has been released on the Altri Suoni label, #AS101, titled *Deux*. It may be ordered online at www.altrisuoni.com. A copy was ordered for review in this issue of the newsletter, but Altri Suoni emailed to inform that the first production run was faulty and there would be a delay until more were manufactured; hopefully there will be a review in the next issue. If you choose to order a copy in the meantime, note that the website layout is a bit odd. The prompts suggest

that you need to login, but there is no place to actually do this! It turns out that login is required only for retailers, who enter the site via a different URL. So, just click on the AS101 link on the first page of the site, then click the shopping cart icon below the album photo, and proceed to checkout.

- The long-awaited glass music CD with serpent enthusiast and glass music artist Dennis James, singer Linda Ronstadt and the Emerson String Quartet, has been released on Sony Classical. Dennis performed on the Glass Armonica for the premiere of Simon Proctor's *A Snake in the Glass*, and subsequently participated famously in a popular recording with Linda. She loved the glass music sound, and this collaboration came to pass. The CD is called *Cristal – Glass Music Through the Ages*, #SK 89047. Dennis uses three different kinds of glass instruments; the Seraphim, the Armonica and the Cristal Baschet. In the 18th century, Benjamin Franklin took an interest in the music being made in Europe using water filled goblets, but realized that the glasses could be “disposed in a more convenient form, all within the reach of a person sitting before the instrument.” He called his resulting invention the “Armonica”, derived from the Italian word for harmony; it arranged different sized crystal bowls concentrically on a spinning shaft. In the 20th century, French brothers Francois and Bernard Baschet developed the “Cristal”, which used tuned glass rods and plastic resonators.

The tracks include *Irish Lullaby* on Seraphim with chamber ensemble, Garry Eister's *Quintet for Glass and Strings* on Armonica with string quartet, David Apell's *Non Temere Alma Immortale* on Armonica with vocals and harp, Joseph Aloys Schmittbauer's *Allegro for Armonica*, Frederich Schnaubelt's *Caprice* on Cristal Baschet with chamber ensemble, and Faure's *Pavane Op. 50* on Cristal Baschet plus vocals, chorus and chamber ensemble. It continues with Johann Schultz's *Largo in G Minor* on Armonica, Scarlatti's *O Cessate di Piagarmi* on Armonica plus vocal, Mozart's *Adagio in C Major K.356* on Armonica, Mozart's *Adagio and Rondo in C Major K. 617* on Armonica with string quartet, Johann Adolf Hasse's *Cantate “L'armonica” (excerpts)* on Armonica with vocals and chamber orchestra, and Schnaubelt's *Petite Impression* on Cristal Baschet.

- Another Michel Godard recording was scheduled to be released this Spring, but was not available at the time this issue of the newsletter went to press. In the next few months, you might want to check your record suppliers for *Katchinas*, Label HOPI # 200031. This will be reviewed in these pages once we can obtain a copy.

- Composer Robert Steadman has a new website, robertsteadman.com, where are listed his works for serpent. All his serpent related music is published by Vanderbeek & Imrie Ltd., 15 Marvig, Lochs, Isle of Lewis, Scotland, HS2 9PQ.

- All back issues of the Serpent Newsletter and its predecessor Newsletter for United Serpents are now available as PDF (Adobe Acrobat) format files for downloading from the Serpent Website. New issues will be added approximately 6 months after publication and distribution to subscribers. Back issues are available at no charge. www.serpentwebsite.com/backissues.htm



Gennady Rozhdestvensky and Doug Yeo

About the Organization

The Serpent Newsletter is distributed according to two regions, each with its own representative. All financial contributions and new subscriptions should be sent to the proper regional representative. Announcements, editorial items, comments and photographs should be sent to the editorial address.

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NEW!

Suggested minimum contribution for non-European subscribers is \$10 for 4 issues (2 years). Contact Nigel Nathan for European subscription rates. While the newsletter is supported by voluntary contributions, not formal subscriptions, those who manage to receive the newsletter without contributing are doing so entirely at the discretion of their regional representative.

More Exciting News

- A rap group called The Avalanches has a music video called *Frontier Psychiatrist*, which was shown via MTV. In the video, they have various colorful caricatures of psychiatrist types, offering repeated rhythmical incantations on a particular boy being insane. An old crone with too much makeup plays a funky drumset. And, for no apparent reason at all, there is a chorus line of three dudes wearing lederhosen and alpine hats, gyrating in unison as might a standing sax section in a big band. Did I mention that the three dudes are playing serpents (horizontal grip, nonetheless!) Alas, the actual sound of serpents is nowhere to be heard. One can hear an electronic trumpet whenever they are 'playing', so perhaps they are merely holding serpents. If you want to take a look for yourself, point your web browser at www.modularpeople.com/avalanches/

This should bring up a page that mentions the video, with a hand shaped button labeled Got Flash. Clicking this should cause a download of about 1 minute, bringing up a page for the group. In the upper right corner of the image there should be a clickable phrase Play Video, which in turn should cause RealPlayer to buffer and play the video (most computers already have RealPlayer installed). Presumably most modern personal computers with recent software will behave pretty much the same way as described here.

- The Serpent Website now has a filmography page, listing all known movies that include serpents and/or ophicleides. Please take a look and see if you know of any films that should be on the list. Specialized documentaries that would not be generally available will not be considered; this includes videos of college recitals, home movies, etc. www.serpentwebsite.com/filmo.htm

- Judith Gibbons of Coventry, England, is doing some family research and is interested in the name Fusedale. She has reason to believe her past relatives of that name might be associated with early instrument makers, including the serpent. She has found one particular reference, to John Fusedale, 1789, London. If any readers happen to know of this serpent maker, or have any relevant information they are willing to share, please contact her via our UK representative Nigel Nathan.

- Rolf Miezitis, of the Glenorchy City Council, writes to inform the readership that in an episode of *The Goodies*, a British TV comedy show of the 70's and 80's, Bill Oddie plays the theme tune on the serpent. *The Goodies* was a show that had close ties to Monty Python's *Flying Circus*, and cast members included Tim Brooke-Taylor, Graeme Garden and Oddie. The serpent reference is at the start of an episode called *Rome Antics (number 44)*, from series 5. Rolf is trying to obtain a copy of the episode, and we might be able to add it to the archives.