

## Serpent Newsletter

P.O. Box 954 Mundelein, Illinois 60060 USA

Newsletter for Serpent Enthusiasts

April 1, 2006

### A Note from the Editor

In this issue, I first want to take note of the 30th anniversary of The London Serpent Trio. I know that all serpent enthusiasts will want to congratulate them on three decades of ground breaking work with our favorite instrument, and to wish them continued success as they go forward. I have been advised of another URL for the LST, [www.londonserpenttrio.co.uk](http://www.londonserpenttrio.co.uk), but have found that it merely mirrors to the older address [www.whitecottagewebsites.co.uk/lst/](http://www.whitecottagewebsites.co.uk/lst/); in any event the site is still active.

Serpent maker David Harding wrote to say that he is effectively ceasing serpent making activities, and handing over production of instruments to The Early Music Shop, Bradford. David has made serpents for many years, using the garden workshop behind his house, where it is cold and damp for much of the year. For health reasons, working in such conditions has become too difficult, hence his decision. He anticipates that the EMS will not have instruments ready until well into 2006; as of this writing, their website pricelist does list his instrument design with prices. David wishes to stress that he is still here, and is happy to help with any inquires that serpentists might wish to make. I will include his contact information in the Getting Serpents section of the newsletter.

Please take note of the very exciting brass symposium taking place in Northfield, Minnesota this July. It is a combined effort of the Historic Brass Society and other organizations, will be longer than most early brass festivals, and will feature many performances by guest historic brass groups. More information appears in the Workshops section of this newsletter.

Don't forget to send money. Enjoy.

Paul Schmidt

### Workshops

- The most recent Serpentariums have been held in extreme southwestern England at the Cape Cornwall home of Nigel Nathan. This has been an excellent location for many reasons: adequate space for sessions & concerts, isolation from others who might grow tired of the sounds, convenient accommodations for the participants, and of course an enthusiastic and knowledgeable host. However, some feel that the location is sufficiently remote as to deter them from making the journey to attend. Accordingly, Nigel has asked that this newsletter pose the question about alternate locations for at least some future workshops. For the other workshops to be considered, they must at least have the attributes of space, lodging, freedom from worry about bothering others, and reasonable accessibility for traveling participants. Since the majority of Serpentarium participants in the past have come from Europe, any new location should be in that area. Please contact Nigel if you might be able to suggest or host a future workshop (see About the Organization).

While on this subject, it might be a good time to see if there is sufficient interest in having an American serpent workshop sometime in the future (unfortunately, there are relatively few active serpentists in other areas). For this, please contact the newsletter at the PO Box address or related email.

#### • *Early Brass Festival*

This year the Historic Brass Society's Early Brass Festival will be in partnership with the International Society for the Promotion and Investigation of Wind Band Music (IGEB). The event will take place in and near the campus of St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota (USA). This International Wind Music History Conference will be held from July 27 through 31, and will include over 40 outdoor

concerts by 15 historical wind music bands. The addition of a public music festival and informal playing sessions will connect this event to a wider audience, serving as an introductory forum for students and other musicians into the sphere of historically informed period instrument performance.

The general timetable for the conference will include the presentation of research papers, lectures, demonstrations and informal playing sessions. The festival will add public performances of historical wind music groups (such as American Civil War saxhorn bands, 18th Century European harmoniemusik ensembles, and ethnic bands), and a marketplace for sheet music, instrument, books, and recordings. Attendees will include many of the world-renowned performers and experts in wind instrument musicology, representing worldwide research and professors and students from major colleges universities in the United States and Canada.



The City of Northfield, Minnesota is situated along the banks of the Cannon River in the rich agricultural region of southeastern Minnesota and stands as a prominent example of a pioneer town that has thrived for over 150 years. Located within a 45-minute drive from the Minneapolis and St. Paul, Northfield's population is 16,663, which includes 5,000 college students in winter. Northfield is home to Carleton College and St. Olaf College, both being driving forces in the community. Northfield has an unusually active arts community and a lively historical society, both of which are enthusiastically supported by its citizens.

The conference website is [www.vintagebandfestival.org](http://www.vintagebandfestival.org). Registration for this event is through the Vintage Band Festival website, and replaces the normal HBS (or IGEB) registration; the website includes a downloadable registration form. For more information about Northfield, please visit these websites: [www.visitingnorthfield.com](http://www.visitingnorthfield.com), [www.ci.northfield.mn.us](http://www.ci.northfield.mn.us), [www.northfieldchamber.com](http://www.northfieldchamber.com).

Currently scheduled performing bands include The First Brigade Band, The Dodworth Saxhorn Band, The Ameriikan Poijat Finnish Brass Band, Oktetten Ehnstedt Efr. (Stockholm Home Guard Octet), Passion des Cuivres (Berlin), The Chestnut Brass Company, The Sheldon Theatre Brass Band, Newberry's Victorian Cornet Band,

Newtonburg Brass Band (Wisconsin), Federal City Brass Band, Brassworks Band, and bands from Minnesota: Meier Grove Town Band, Carlisle Town Band, Faribault Band Shell Brass Band, Chatfield Brass Band, New Ulm German Band.

This festival promises to be an unprecedented event, so register now!

---

## 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.

(United Kingdom & European continent)

Nigel Nathan  
Boswedden House  
Cape Cornwall  
St. Just-in-Penwith  
PENZANCE  
Cornwall TR19 7NJ  
England

Phone & Fax:  
+44 (0)1736 788733  
email:  
<serpents@boswedden.org.uk>

(USA, Canada, other countries, Editor, Treasurer)

Paul Schmidt, editor  
Dick George, treasurer  
  
Serpent Newsletter  
P.O. Box 954  
Mundelein, IL 60060  
USA

phone (no fax): 847-356-7865  
email: <ocleide@earthlink.net>  
webpage:  
[www.serpentwebsite.com](http://www.serpentwebsite.com)

Suggested minimum contribution for non-European subscribers is \$15 for 4 issues (2 years); these subscriptions are by voluntary contributions, not formal subscriptions, but those who manage to receive the newsletter without contributions are doing so entirely at the discretion of the regional representative. Rates for the UK are £5 for 2 years, for Europe £6 or 10 Euros; in these cases the handling of subscriptions is more formal.

---

## Where Serpent Gather

- Nigel Nathan received a request for a prop serpent for use in a production of Gilbert & Sullivan's *The Sorcerer*. Nigel passed the request along to other serpentists in the UK, and luckily Gregg Butler lived only 10 miles from the production venue and was willing to lend an instrument. Gregg writes: "The serpent starred in Marton Operatic Society's 75th Anniversary production of G&S's *The Sorcerer*, as part of the Ploverleigh Village Band. I lent them my crepe-bandage-reinforced-plastic 5-keyed serpent of 1971 vintage - as it bounces a lot better than the Monk. Thinking it might give the poor thing stage fright I stayed away from the performance - but I'm sure I need not have worried. In the event it came back very sleek and polished and had evidently been well-kept. It was however smirking a bit, which may hint at indiscretions at the last night party - but nobody has complained!"

- We have a new serpentist in Germany, Wolf-Dieter Rase (wolf-rase@t-online.de). He has been busily trying to obtain every book and reference on the serpent, and has written to advise about Benny Slucin's new edition of the Metoyen method. Wolf writes that he plans to play with a large recorder ensemble at the local music school, providing the deep register on both serpent and double bass. As so many serpentists know, it is this kind of playing opportunity that helps a player get a grip on how to manage the instrument. We hope he is able to soon join in with more varied groups and perhaps a Serpentarium.

- Phil Humphries has written to tell us about some of his serpent related dates that are coming up....

THE LONDON SERPENT TRIO will be performing at:

- Horniman Museum, South London, Sunday May 7th, afternoon performance, Tel: 02086 991872 ex 133
- Sidmouth and District Music Club, Thursday May 18th, 8 PM, www.seatonmusic.org, tickets available from Windsor Books and Cards, Tel: 01297 21025

CRAIG KRIDEL AND PHIL HUMPHRIES SERPENTS, St. Etheldreda Church, Ely Place, London, Mass by Henri DuMont (1610-1684), conducted by Peter Wilton, Sunday May 21st, morning, Tel P. Wilton: 01628 781901

THE LOST CHORD, Dave Townsend on concertina and Phil Humphries on serpent, Thomas Hardy Society Conference, Wednesday June 28th, evening, Tel: 01305 251501

THE MELLSTOCK BAND will be performing at:

- Ringwood Folk Club, Tuesday May 9th, evening, Tel: 01425 673713
- Three Choirs Festival, Monday August 7th & Tuesday August 8th, Tel: 01452 501908
- Wantage, Oxfordshire, Saturday August 26th, 7 PM, Tel: 01235 762975
- Milton Abbey Festival, Dorset, Monday August 28th, Tel: 01305 852489

- We have a new player in Australia, Dr. Naham Warhaft (nwarhaft@bigpond.net.au). He is an amateur tubist, playing in the Australian Doctors Orchestra and a local brass band. He also plays traditional jazz on Sousaphone at a weekly jam session. In May of 2005 he was on holiday in Paris and saw an ophicleide in the Marais antique instrument shop and bought it - seemed like a good idea at the time. Once home, he took it to the local music store for a neck strap, and was told about Sue Bradley. From Sue, Naham also got the bug to play serpent. He joined Sue on 2nd ophicleide in Melbourne's Stonnington Symphony performance of the Berlioz *Symphonie Fantastique*, and they played ophicleide duets at their brass band 'AGM' in October. Naham is 66, lives in suburban Melbourne, and

was an anesthesiologist until he retired five years ago. These days he runs the state program for sick and impaired doctors. He is still looking for a serpent, so please contact him if you know of one for sale.

Sue Bradley also wrote with a similar report of the Stonnington Symphony performance, adding that Naham played a B-flat instrument while she played her C, and it all felt just right after years of her playing the piece on every pitch of tuba possible.

- Doug Yeo sent in a report of the *P.D.Q. Bach 40 Year Retrogressive* concerts in New York City on December 27 through 29 of 2005. He also added a very informative page to his website [www.yeodoug.com/articles/pdqbach/pdqbach.html](http://www.yeodoug.com/articles/pdqbach/pdqbach.html) with photos and other goodies. He wrote, "The week with PDQ Bach has finished and what a week it was. Craig [Kridel], Steve [Silverstein] and I had a wonderful time with Peter Schikele and crew. All three concerts in Symphony Space were sold out. The performance of *O, Serpent* was a huge success, and after we played it on Thursday, a cry was heard, "More serpent!", which may have been once of the nicest



*Cellist Armen Ksajikian with 2 serpents*

compliments the instrument has heard in 400+ years! Craig asked Steve and me to prepare the Seiber *Foxtrot* just for fun. At the rehearsal with Schikele, he said, "Why don't you three do the encore!" What a surprise, and thankfully we had something prepared. It was not lost on us that Wednesday was Christopher Monk's birthday. The icing on the cake as a Thursday review of the concert in the New York Times, complete with photo. It was a special day and a special time and a good time was had by all."

The concert handouts included not only programs, but also airsickness bags labeled "In case of cultural discomfort". The three serpentists appeared under the banner of American Serpent Players (ASP !), a name used famously during the 1989 Serpent Festival in South Carolina. *O, Serpent* requires not only three serpentists, but also a trio of singers; Robert Isaacs, Peter Schickele and David Düsing did the honors. A photo of the performance, taken by Richard Termine, appeared in the New York Times; it may be viewed on Doug's website at the page address listed in the paragraph above.

Doug continued, "Since we only played two short pieces on the program, there was plenty of time back stage to interact with the other artists. Hai-Ting Chinn, who is Schickele's daughter-in-law in addition to being a fine singer, took an interest in the serpent and asked to play my instrument. I happily obliged, giving her some mini-lessons as she played with Steve Silverstein and myself looking on.....Hai-Ting...is a former trombone player and took to the serpent very quickly! Among the many pieces on the program was P.D.Q. Bach's *String Quartet in F major "The Moose" (S. Y2K)*, performed by the Armadillo Quartet. Cellist Armen Ksajikian asked if he could have two serpents for a minute, a pose which called to mind Polyphemus' famous line from Handel's *Acis and Galatea*: "Bring me a hundred reeds of decent growth, to make a pipe for my capacious mouth". (The photo, taken by Doug and with Craig reflected in the mirror looking on, appears in this newsletter.)

- Since the last newsletter, Doug also played serpent in performances of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* and the Haydn's *St. Anthoni Divertimento*.
- Ophicleidist Erhard Schwartz wrote about his antique brass group Passion des Cuivres coming to Northfield for the brass festival, where he is hoping to meet with other ophicleide players. Let's have a good turnout for this!



London Serpent Trio 30th Anniversary Party  
(L-R) Cliff Bevan, Phil Humphries, Stephen Wick

## 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  
(Keith & Kathryn Rogers)  
Perkwood  
Station Road  
Yaxham  
Norfolk NR19 1RD  
England

Phone & fax:  
+44 (0)1362 691198  
<www.jeremywest.co.uk/ cmi.html>  
<ktwoagain@btopenworld.com>

(serpents & historical oboes)

[ for cornetts, contact Jeremy West at  
<j.west@jc.ac.uk> ]

David Harding (by EMS Bradford-  
order here)

The Early Music Shop  
38 Manningham Lane  
Bradford  
West Yorkshire BD1 3EA  
England  
Phone: (44) 01274 393753  
<www.e-m-s.com>  
<sales@earlyms.demon.co.uk>

**NEW!**

David Harding (information only, not  
for ordering)  
56 Netherton Road  
Appleton  
ABINGDON  
Oxon. OX13 5JZ  
England

**NEW!**

<david@chimeracrafts.fsnet.co.uk>  
Phone: +44 (0)1865 863673

+ Build an experimental serpent from  
plans via <www.serpentwebsite.com>

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

Phone: 626-447-1904  
<oldbrass@altrionet.com>

(ophicleides, bass horns)

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

Phone: +44 (0)1727 866080  
(early cimbasso, bass horns)

Derek Farnell  
82 Crumpsall Lane  
Manchester M8 5SG  
England

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

Matthias Wetter  
Musikinstrumentenbau  
CH-8475 Ossingen  
Switzerland

**NEW!**

Phone: 0041 (0) 5231 73184  
<wetter.m@bluewin.ch>  
<www.wetter-instrumente.ch>  
(communication in English may  
be difficult)

(alphorns and serpents)

## New Materials

- *Geschichte der Salzburger Blasmusik "alla turca"/History of Salzburg "alla turca (Janissary)" Wind Music*; Magistratsmusik Salzburg, Joseph Seidl directing; Bruce Holcomb, serpent. Educational CD produced by the Salzburger Museum Carolino Augusteum, no catalog number; order by email [cornelia.auernig@smca.at](mailto:cornelia.auernig@smca.at). This CD is an excellent introduction to Janissary music and the instruments used for playing it. The serpent is featured in a 10 minute lecture, in both German and English, on Janissary music, then on demonstration scale, and finally on three musical selections; *Allemande Nr. 9* and *Marsch Nr.*

11, both attributed to A. Fendt of the Salzburg military band of 1812, and *Salzburger Studentenmarsch vom Jahre 1777*. Serpentist Bruce Holcomb was a tubist in the Mozarteumorchester Salzburg, now reportedly retired and living in Finland. Thanks to Randy Cabell for discovering this item.

- Copies of Phil Palmer's doctoral dissertation, *The Serpent: An Historical Survey of the Instrument and its Literature, Performance Practice and Problems, and Past and Present Uses*, have been somewhat difficult to locate in the past. Connie Palmer has now agreed to make a copy in her possession available to the Serpent Newsletter for loan to interested persons. For the time being, she has asked that the copy be loaned but not copied. Those wishing to study this paper should contact the newsletter in writing at the PO Box address listed in the About the Organization section of this newsletter.

- Volny Hostiou has written an article *The Serpent in French Churches: Historical and Iconographic Course (Le Serpent dans les églises Françaises: Parcours Historique et Iconographique)* for the publication *Musique Images Instruments* (CNRS Édition), volume 8, March 2006, Paris. The article is also mentioned on Volny's website, <http://serpent.instrumente.free.fr/>

- The Serpent Newsletter is trying to include reviews of the following serpent related recordings: *Villancicos*, featuring Les Saqueboutiers de Toulouse with Bernard Fourtet, Ariane # ARI 152, *A Renaissance Noel*, featuring The Chestnut Brass Company with Vocal Ensemble Vox, Polygram # 314520341-2, and *Franz Joseph Haydn: 6 Feldparthien, Hob. 11: 41 - 46*, featuring the Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra, Jeklin # 4407-2 / Spectrum # SR149. If you have a copy of any of these, or have knowledge of the recordings, please send a message to the newsletter editor. Any copy loaned will be promptly returned after review; even though these are out of print, the discography is not complete without knowledge and confirmation that only comes from listening.

- Visual humorist Don Stewart has created a serpent related illustration that he calls *Medusa*. Doug Yeo writes, "Don has a way of taking ordinary objects and infusing them with new meaning by re-defining them as composite images. [His] *Trombones* drawing got me thinking about what [he] might do when his mind started to wander over old instruments. I contacted him and asked him if he might someday consider doing a drawing featuring the serpent. After several years (the creative mind sometimes needs time to percolate...) Don told me his newest image had finally come to fruition. When he sent it to me I nearly flipped out of my chair. Any student who remembers learning about Greek mythology in high school will recall that Medusa was a monster who had snakes for hair and

was so horrible that anyone that looked at her would turn to stone. She was finally slain by Perseus, who looked at Medusa by her reflection on his shield. Don has taken that image - of Medusa with her hair of snakes - and woven a complex image of historical brass instruments. While dominated by serpents, one can also see English bass horn, buccin (the French form of trombone with zoomorphic bell), cornetto, shofar, cornet, horn, ophicleide and posthorn. The more you look at *Medusa* the more you are transfixed with the complexity of the imagery. Fortunately while doing so you don't turn to stone!" While Don has given permission to reprint *Medusa* in this newsletter, he is asking \$30 plus \$5 shipping for a signed copy, suitable for framing. Contact him at: The Visual Humor of Don Stewart, DS Art Studio Gallery, 2805 Crescent Avenue, Homewood, AL 35209 (USA), phone 1-800-372-7864, or online at [www.dsart.com](http://www.dsart.com).



Don Stewart's "Medusa"

- Benny Slucin has edited Jean-Baptiste Metoyen's *Serpent Method* in a stunning new edition, combining both of Metoyen's methods in a very nice presentation. Included is both French and English commentary, with most subsequent text in French. The musical examples and studies are newly engraved. The publication is available through many online sources; Doug Yeo reportedly obtained a copy through Hickeys Music Center in New York; [www.hickeys.com](http://www.hickeys.com).

- The award winning documentary film *Born Into Brothels*, by Zana Briski, may include serpent on the soundtrack. Steven Silverstein writes, "The composer John McDowell asked me to bring a zillion horns to his studio one late night to watch some clips and play tones and improvise with him for "Born into Brothels". I was to be

invited to a local showing last season with 20 or so of his other friends. It didn't happen, [and] subsequently went out of sight and out of mind except for queries from two people who have seen it. I guess it is time for me to see the results." This editor has viewed the DVD twice, and can hear nothing that sounds particularly like a serpent on the soundtrack. As is so often the case, not all recorded sounds make it into the final mix. Still, this is a fine and moving film, and you can imagine that Steve's serpent is there somewhere adding to the emotional impact.

- Two new recordings of Charpentier's *Te Deum* include serpent. First is *Te Deum & Grand Office Des Morts* by Les Arts Florissants with William Christie directing and Stephen Wick on serpent, Virgin Classics # 7243 (5 45733 2) 3. The second is *Te Deum & Messe pour plusieurs instruments (au lieu des orgues)* by Choeur de Chambre de Namur (the choir) and Les Agremens (chamber orchestra on *Te Deum*) and La Fenice (chamber orchestra on *Messe*), with Jean Tubery directing and Volny Hostiou on serpent, Ricercar # RIC 245. Both are expert and fine sounding recordings, and the serpent part is clearly audible on both. The former CD is readily available from retailers and online from distributors such as Amazon. The latter CD is a bit harder to find; you can try the website [www.amg-records.com/www/Ricercar/Ricercar.htm](http://www.amg-records.com/www/Ricercar/Ricercar.htm), or failing that consider the online retailer Crotchet at [www.crotchet.co.uk](http://www.crotchet.co.uk) which is known to carry this recording. The mass of the Ricercar CD may be translated as *Mass for Several Instruments*; Volny writes that, "You will hear two rare instruments in the mass - the serpent that plays the cantus firmus and sustains the plainsong, and the crumhorn as played by J. Papasergio", and the effect is mesmerizing. The CD booklets on both albums are informative, although the Ricercar disk has a cheap cardboard package that rips.
- Doug Yeo writes, "The Royal Army and Military Museum in Brussels, Belgium, owns one of the most interesting military serpents in the world. By an anonymous maker (France, c. 1815) it features a compact shape and a well preserved zoomorphic head of metal. A color photo of the instrument is featured on the cover of *Les Instruments de Musique a Bruxelles et an Wallonie - Inventaire Deescriptif*, ISBN 2-87009-489-2. The museum has recently produced an audio guide which features a performance of a serpent duet by Roze, performed by [myself] and Craig Kridel. The duet *Staccato*, found on page 14 of the 1814 serpent method *Methode de Serpent Adoptee Parle Conservatorie Imperial de Musique Pour le Service du Culte et le Service Militaire* (available as a 1974 Mikkoff reprint, ISBN 2-82266-0369-8) was recorded [for inclusion in my] CD *Le Monde du Serpent*, but did not appear on the disc due to length constraints. As a duet with a military character, it fits well with the audio description of the Brussels military serpent." More information about the museum can be found on its website [www.klm-mra.be](http://www.klm-mra.be).

- Hans Rudolf Ischer-Protzen writes, "An acquaintance of mine, Monika Zuber, wrote her final project in music studies (brass instruments) on the serpent, entitled *Der Serpent: Seine Spiel-und Verwendungsweise im Orchester anhand Eines Bekannten Werkes (The Serpent: use in the orchestra based on a well known piece)*." Monica is a final year student of music and the tenor horn at the Bernese University of Art and Music in Switzerland. She used works by Handel, Haydn, Berlioz, Mendelssohn and Wagner to illustrate the use of the serpent in an orchestra. For her lecture, she used an instrument made by David Harding (subsequently sold to Hans-Ruedi). Monika and Hans-Ruedi are hoping to borrow a wooden serpent made by Matthias Wetter, so that they can compare its playing characteristics with the Harding. Monika is very interested in the serpent and will hopefully become one of the very few serpentists in Switzerland. For more information, email Hansruedi at [changeability@tiscali.ch](mailto:changeability@tiscali.ch).

- Erhard Schwartz writes that his group, Passion des Cuivres, is recording a Victorian Christmas CD which will be released in October of this year. Hopefully more information on this project will be forthcoming.
- While on the subject of pending CDs, Nick Byrne writes to say that his solo ophicleide CD recording project is still underway but, "It is such a difficult and important project that I won't release anything until it projects this maligned instrument in a positive light." Check his website [www.ophicleide.com](http://www.ophicleide.com) for updates.
- The serpent has appeared in more films, some not previously reported here. The Channel Four Films 1997 production of Thomas Hardy novel *The Woodlanders*, starring Rufus Sewell, Emily Woof and Cal MacAninch, and directed by Phil Agland, includes Phil Humphries' serpent with The Mellstock Band. The serpent is audible but not visible in two brief scenes; at about 19 minutes into the film during the dinner party at Giles' home-DVD chapter 3- playing *Enrico*, and at about 46 minutes at the post-honeymoon party-DVD chapter 7-playing *Redolia Polka*. This is not a particularly good example of serpent in film, as the instrument cannot be seen, and what can be heard is not distinct enough. The 2005 BBC TV mini-series (Warner Vision International # 5046678370-2 [DVD-PAL Region 2 only]) of *Casanova*, starring Peter O'Toole, David Tennant, Laura Fraser and Rose Byrne, and directed by Sheree Folkson, also includes Phil Humphries with The Mellstock Band. The serpent is present in one scene at about 35 minutes into the film during the first of the three episodes. A brief glimpse of that scene appears at the start of the second episode. Unfortunately the ball room scenes elsewhere in the film use modern instruments. The classic 1933 movie *The Private Life of Henry VIII*, starring Charles Laughton, Merle Oberon, Wendy Barrie and Robert Donat, and directed by Alexander Korda has a serpent that

is visible but not audible in two brief scenes; at about 31 minutes into the film during the dinner song *What Shall I Do For Love?*, and at about 64 minutes at the after dinner scene. The serpent is a heavily-keyed English military type and is clearly visible in the front row of the band on the balcony overlooking the dining hall. Unfortunately, the actual music heard from the band consists only of a flute and some sort of stringed instrument. The film tells about how King Henry VIII came to have so many wives. It is a combination of history and comedy, and is one of the few well-known films to feature Wendy Barrie, a relative of the 'Peter Pan' author, and reportedly the first non-fictional girl to be named Wendy.

- Release of Michel Godard's new serpent CD, Rabih Abou Khalil's *Song for Sad Women* on the Enja label, has yet to appear in the stores. It was scheduled for February of this year, but the Enja site still does not list it, and retailers have not been able to find it. Hopefully we will be able to hear it soon!
- Many years ago, a few button pins were made up, in parody of the ubiquitous Merry TubaChristmas pins given out at those events; they have a line drawing of an ophicleide and the text reads, "Merry OphicleideChristmas". Some are still being used (Sue Bradley recently wrote that she still uses hers when taking her ophi to those seasonal events.) This newsletter still has the pattern somewhere and the button making machine and supplies are secure in a box in a closet. A few more of those buttons will be made up shortly, for any reader who wants one. Please inquire by email to [ocleide@earthlink.net](mailto:ocleide@earthlink.net).

---

## Monstres in the Attic

by Paul Schmidt

Following up on my brief article on Monstre ophicleides in the September 2005 edition of this newsletter, I have come across more information and would like to share it here. While there is only one historic contrabass serpent known to exist, there are several contrabass ophicleides, or "monstres", still in museums. The previous article resulted in a small flurry of letters, sparked additional research, and I have boiled it down as follows.

First, I realized too late that Cliff Bevan's indispensable book *The Tuba Family* had much of the information on the Prospère Monstre that I labored to find out elsewhere. I had forgotten his coverage of this unique instrument, largest of all Monstres. Happily, the information I located on my own is reinforced and confirmed by Cliff's previous research... a big relief!

Secondly, brass instrument maker Robb Stewart corresponded several times with me regarding his own knowledge of Monstres, where others might be found, and

he also corrected an assumption I had made in the previous article. It had been my understanding that on brass instruments with flared bells, the standing wave ended somewhere just inside the end of the bell. Robb wrote, "I also wanted to point out a practical issue in figuring air columns mathematically. In the case of brass instruments the air column extends beyond the bell rim to varying lengths. I have never known a way of calculating this, so there is always a certain amount of trial and error in designing an instrument (for other reasons as well). For example, the air column of a B-flat trumpet figured mathematically is 58" but most B-flat trumpets and cornets are 52 to 54" long. A generality about this is that the wider the final flare of the bell, the further the air column extends beyond the rim, so a flugelhorn is shorter than a trumpet of



Contrabass "Monstre" ophicleide in F by Andreas Barth, Munich, ca. 1850

Photo by Wolf-Dieter Rase during a visit to the Deutsches Museum, Munich - photo crudely retouched by editor to remove reflections and other elements

(print copies of this newsletter had a higher quality "official" photo of this instrument)

the same pitch....[consider] why installing a mute that extends out of the bell will sharpen the pitch! Along these lines is the fact that an echo bell on an echo cornet has to be much longer than an open bell because the energy is being reflected by the metal stuck on the end.” This would account, to some degree, for the high calculated pitch of the MIM and Prospère Monstres, although they would still remain high pitched compared to modern instruments. However, the bell presumably only participates in defining the wave length when the first hole is closed. Accordingly, I remain unable to calculate the pitch of these instruments exactly, but that was never my point...all I really needed to do was establish their pitch to the nearest note, and prove that they were true contrabass instruments.

Robb also provided accurate dimensions for the air column of his reproduction Monstre, made for Phil Palmer. I had overestimated the length by about 10 inches, not a deal breaker on an instrument this large!



Contrabass “Monstre” ophicleide in F by Georg Saurle (sohn), Munich, ca. 1850

Photo from museum photos included in Herbert Heyde’s catalog, reprinted here by permission of the author and the Karl Marx University Music Museum, Leipzig

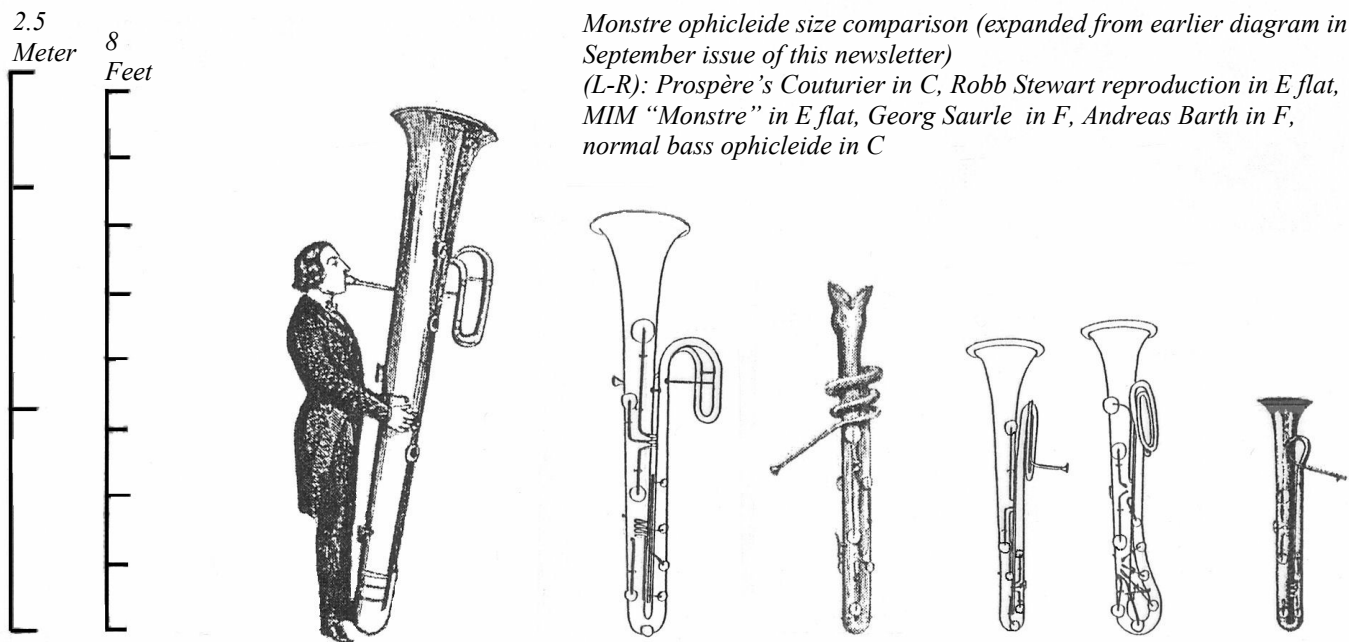
Finally, Robb pointed out that the MIM Monstre was not the only one to be found in a museum, and this led me to additional research, the results of which follow.

A contrabass “Monstre” ophicleide in F by Andreas Barth, Munich, resides in the Deutsches Museum of that city, in their gallery of brass instruments, catalog number 46304. This instrument was made in the end of the first half of the 1800s, well after the introduction of the tuba, and as such is a bit of a throwback like the original Anaconda (contrabass serpent). Barth also made modern brasses, and the bell section of this ophicleide is almost certainly from a tuba (a trick also used by Robb Stewart when making his reproduction monsters). Indeed, it has been suggested that the exaggerated bottom bow, atypical for ophicleides, might hint at the use of a modified tuba bow section. Closer inspection of the photo shows an unusually sloppy layout for the bocal loops, further suggesting that Barth may have not spent as much effort on this special instrument as he might have with a production horn. The museum catalog’s entry on this instrument mostly describes ophicleides in general, and has very little information on this example, its reason for being made, or its use. Museum curators were not able to shed any more light on these issues either, but did grant permission to reprint their official photo in this newsletter (electronic and web versions of the newsletter will, by agreement, replace this photo with one taken by a visitor through the display case glass). Heinrich Seifer’s catalog of the collection includes the information that the instrument stands 1377mm (54.25”) tall, has 11 keys, has a range from E<sub>1</sub> (below the fourth ledger line below the bottom of the bass staff) up to b (the note below middle C), and still has the original mouthpiece. The curator says that the instrument was bought by the museum in 1918, and was acquired from a charity store (where people would donate used things for sale to raise money for charities).

Erich Tremmel’s catalog *Blasinstrumentenbau im 19. Jahrhundert in Südbayern, Augsburg 1993 (Wind Instrument Makers in 19th Century Southern Bavaria)* shows that Andreas Barth was born in 1797 and died in 1868; this ophicleide was obviously made late in his career. He started out as a general manufacturer, turning to the manufacture of wind instruments in or around 1835. As with Boehm, Barth turned to instrument making under a sort of privilege-license. Barth instruments in museums include various trumpets, signal horns, both valved and keyed flugel horns, ophicleides, jager horns, and trombones. Since the tuba was already well known at the time, it is my guess that Barth made this unique instrument as a special contract. If anyone has more information on the circumstances of this horn’s creation or use, please write to the newsletter. Thanks to Dr. Wilhelm Füßl and Dr. Silke Berdux, curators of musical instruments at the Deutsches Museum, Munich, for their help.

Another contrabass “Monstre” ophicleide in F by Georg Saurle (Jr.), Munich, resides in the Karl Marx University





*Monstre ophicleide size comparison (expanded from earlier diagram in September issue of this newsletter)  
(L-R): Prospère's Couturier in C, Robb Stewart reproduction in E flat, MIM "Monstre" in E flat, Georg Saurle in F, Andreas Barth in F, normal bass ophicleide in C*

Music Museum, Leipzig, catalog number 1605. The museum is currently renovating and this instrument is in storage at the time of this writing. The instrument was made in about 1850, and as such is a close contemporary of the Barth Monstre. Saurle was a competitor of Barth and his company made the same kinds of instruments. As with the Barth, the bell section of this ophicleide is almost certainly from a tuba. Unlike the Barth firm, Saurle company documents indicate that they spent a great deal of time and effort on the design of this contrabass instrument. The traditional bottom bow section shape, which is more difficult to fabricate than a bow with a wider curve, is testament to this. Closer inspection of the photo shows a reasonably traditional key layout as well, something that is not as true with the Barth. The museum does not seem to have a detailed catalog, and their curators referred me to the independent catalog by Herbert Heyde (which includes the museum's photos). The entry on this instrument suggests that this F<sub>1</sub> contra, as well as another pitched in E<sub>1</sub>, were made by Saurle for the military band of Passau. Heyde's catalog of the collection, *Musikinstrumenten Museum der Karl Marx Universität Leipzig, Volume 5 "Hörner und Zinken"*, states that the instrument stands 1278mm (51.31") tall, has 10 keys, and has the same range as the Barth. Both this catalog and the curator say that the instrument is in a condition making it unsuitable for display. Once it has been restored and a new gallery is available, they plan to display it again.

Tremmel's catalog shows that this Georg Saurle was the son of the more famous father of the same name, and along with an uncle and brothers was part of a Munich instrument

making dynasty. Records show that even as a young man he was a very proficient wind instrument maker. He was born in 1799 and died in 1859. Due to the demand for brass wind instruments, he was granted a privilege-license to make them in 1835. If anyone has more information on the circumstances of this horn's creation or use, please write to the newsletter. Thanks to museum curator Dr. Eszter Fontana, curators Drs. Andre Larson and Margaret Banks of the National Music Museum (The Shrine of Music Museum), and Dr. Herbert Heyde of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, for their help.

## More Exciting News

- Swiss alphorn-cum-serpent maker Matthias Wetter has started a website [www.wetter-instrumente.ch](http://www.wetter-instrumente.ch).
- Randy Cabell, publisher of so many fine collections of early American band music, has changed his email address to [RCabell@TheLodgeOnSlateRidge.com](mailto:RCabell@TheLodgeOnSlateRidge.com). Randy is also looking for an eastern Pennsylvania area serpentist to play in a performance situation; please contact him for details.
- Clark Wolf, a philosophy professor at Iowa State University, and hopefully-so-to-be-ophicleideist, attaches the following to his outgoing emails: And as to our expected fate - Virginia Woolf writes, "...and his uncle who tried to commit suicide by shutting his head in a carpet bag, and his father who played ophicleide and died insane as they all do..." (Virginia Woolf, *Selected Letters to Vanessa Bell*, 1916)

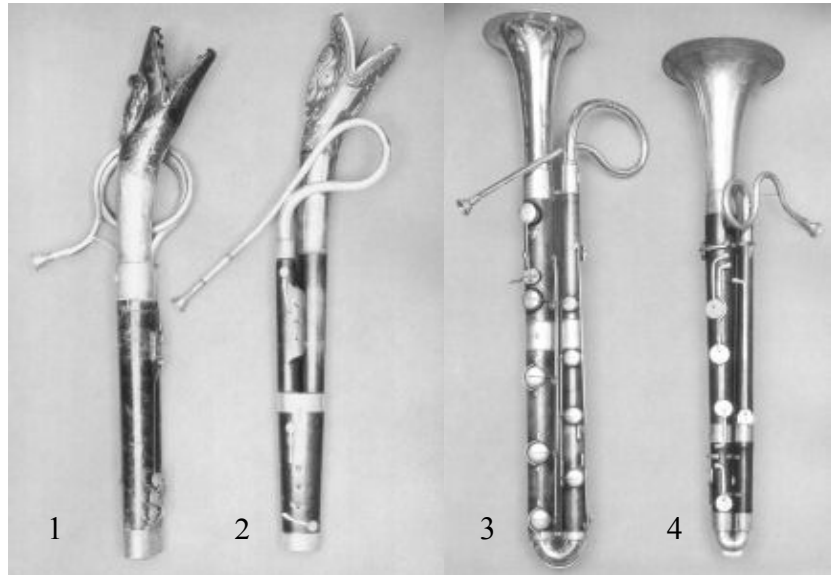
**Photo Gallery from the Karl Marx University Music Museum, Leipzig**  
*(photos used by permission - these also appear in Herbert Heyde's catalog of the museum)*

1) Russian Bassoon (Nr. 1591)  
Lyon, France, ca. 1815

2) Russian Bassoon (Nr. 3049)  
ca. 1820

3) Chromatic Basshorn (Nr. 1600)  
Jeremias Siering, Magdeburg  
ca. Late 1850s

4) Chromatic Basshorn (Nr. 3933)  
Gotthelf (?) Finke, Dresden  
1846



5) Contra Basshorn (Nr. 1599)  
Jean Baptiste (?) Coëffet  
Chaumont-en-Vexin  
ca. late 1830s  
"[combination] basshorn, serpent, and tugboat" (Bevan, *The Tuba Family*, 2nd Ed. pp 82)

6) Serpent (Nr. 1574)  
maker unknown, Bavaria  
ca. late 1780s

7) Serpent (Nr. 1578)  
anon. French, Lyon (?)  
(6 holes, not visible here)  
ca. 1810

8) "Violoncel-Serpent" (Nr. 1586)  
Ludwig Embach, Amsterdam  
13 holes, all with keys  
ca. 1825  
*(apparently an attempt to make a more compact serpent in the transitional period between serpents and ophicleides)*

