



Serpent Newsletter

P.O. Box 954 Mundelein, Illinois 60060 USA

Newsletter for Serpent Enthusiasts

April 1, 2007

A Note from the Editor

I am happy to report that there is lots of good news in this issue. Long awaited recordings are becoming available, a couple of interesting events are on the horizon, there is plenty of serpent activity out there, and all evidence is that there will more to come in the future.

Please pay special attention to the *Where Serpents Gather* section, since there is a new development of great interest mentioned there.

On the recurring concern of available funds, the issue has come to a head. Since the last issue was reduced in size to save money, and I made an appeal for contributions from those who had not made any recently, only a few readers responded. I have decided that it is time to start requiring some form of contribution from newsletter recipients (those in Europe who get their newsletters from Nigel Nathan are already in a subscription system, and can disregard this). Each newsletter that I am sending out this time includes an insert with your current status, so please be sure to take a look and respond as needed.

Paul Schmidt

Where Serpents Gather

- On November 22, 2006, Boston's Handel & Haydn Society, conducted by Jeffrey Rink, gave the first period instrument performance in North America of the finale (fifth movement) of Berlioz's *Sinfonie Fantastique*. The concert, held at Harvard University's Sanders Theater, was part of the Harvard course *First Nights: Five Performance Premieres* led by Dr. Thomas Forrest Kelly. Taking the

form of a lecture-recital, Kelly brought the audience into Berlioz's sound, cultural and political world through spoken commentary and excerpts from the *Sinfonie* played by the orchestra. Specially constructed tubular bells, at pitch A=430, were on hand and the audience was asked to vote on whether they preferred the sound of the bells or that of two pianos which Berlioz suggested was a viable alternative to bells (the bells won in a lopsided vote). The class concluded with a run-through of the entire movement.

Doug Yeo and Jay Krush played ophicleide in the performance and Doug also played serpent in the opening statements of the *Dies Irae*, following Berlioz's original intentions. During Kelly's lecture, Doug also came to the apron of the stage where he spoke a bit on the history of the serpent and then played the *Dies Irae* on serpent with a group of six male singers from Harvard, simulating performance in a French church of the time. Doug played his Monk Workshop serpent (1996, London, walnut, 1 key) and Roehn ophicleide (c. 1855, Paris, in C, 9 keys) and Jay played his Butler and Son ophicleide (c. 1860, Soho, London, in C, 11 keys).

Jay wrote to add that this was a wonderful experience. While he had been called to play the piece on ophicleide with modern instrument orchestras a few times, the opportunity to do it with an entire period ensemble was a new one and very exciting. The orchestra played very well and everyone there had a positive attitude toward the project. Doug and Jay also enjoyed their time working together, with the conversations being almost as much fun as the rehearsals and performance.

text submitted by Doug Yeo and Jay Krush

- Since their inception, the Serpent Newsletter and Serpent Website have been covering opposite ends of the spectrum of serpent information. The newsletter was the

clearing house for transient information, while the website was the repository for permanent information. There was really no intermediate place for serpent aficionados to share casual comments, questions, etc. Now, Canadian serpent enthusiast Richard Cane has, in collaboration with the newsletter and website, set up the Serpent Forum, at <http://serpentforum.informe.com>. The forum has also been linked on the Serpent Website, under the Resources | Links page. While not generally known so far, with a resulting low activity to date, use of the forum is expected to increase substantially with this notice. Based on experiences and problems with other forums, and the collaborative discussions between Richard and Paul Schmidt, the forum was set up to require a fair amount of transparency, encouraging openness, honesty and mutual respect between all users; nobody wants a forum with anonymous writers 'flaming' others. The forum does require registration before a reader can post comments. Already, the forum has conversations going on the issues of leather coverings and methods of attaching and maintaining the threads on bocals. Please check out the new forum!



Tim Barringer, Paul Mellon Professor of the History of Art at Yale University with Doug Yeo

- Doug Yeo played ophicleide with the Boston Symphony Orchestra in performances of Berlioz's *Damnation of Faust*, James Levine conducting. Levine asked if the original instrumentation of one ophicleide and one tuba could be used, so with Doug and BSO tubist Mike Roylance the music was restored to a higher level of authenticity in the performances given in Symphony Hall on February 8, 9, 10 and in Carnegie Hall on the 12th. The vocal soloists included tenor Paul Groves as Faust and bass José Van Dam as Mephistopheles, and the chorus was comprised of the Tanglewood Festival Chorus and Pals Children's Chorus. The BSO program notes state, "Berlioz regarded the ophicleide, his standard bass instrument (and which will be used in this performance), as essential but vulgar, so it serves perfectly for the drunken chorus in Auerbach's cellar, alongside the tuba which was just coming into service in those years. Even in heaven, where a blanket of harp sound might be regarded as a mere cliché, Berlioz's taste and imagination could hardly be bettered."

- On October 22, 2006, a musical benefit concert was held in the Chicago area to raise funds for New Orleans musicians displaced by hurricane Katrina. Dubbed *Tubapalooza!* by the organizer, Chicago area tubist Howard Prager, the near capacity audience made donations at the door to hear the diverse group of performers who had in turn donated their services. The acts included visiting New Orleans poets, storytellers, musicians, and local groups and instrumentalists. There was a Klezmer-jazz combo, folk groups, duets, a traditional jazz ensemble, a Dixieland band, and a tuba quartet (two players per part). The tubists included CSO tubist Gene Pokorny, his wife Beth Lodal, and Paul Schmidt (who variously played tuba, euphonium, serpent and ophicleide). In the middle of the quartet's set, Paul was asked to give a brief presentation and demonstration. Paul chose the French folksong *Une Jeune Fillette* for both instrument demonstrations, and this was well received by the other performers and the audience.

- On December 12, 2006, Doug Yeo gave a presentation at the Yale Center for British Art, as part of the *Art and Music in Britain: Four Encounters, 1730 - 1900* lecture/concert series. In addition to the regular lectures and concerts, there were four *Art in Context* informal gallery talks and performances, presented by Yale staff, faculty and visiting scholars, and Doug's presentation was one in this series. The presentation included the *Dies Irae, Etude 8* by Métoyán, *Etude 1* by Schiltz, and an excerpt from Handel's *Music for the Royal Fireworks*. Doug played the university's military serpent (English, 19th Century, by D'Almaine & Co, Soho, London, four keys), and his Monk (after 1810 Baudouin).

Doug writes, "The exhibition...featured four rooms of artwork that explored the relationship between art and music in Britain and included display of paintings,

engravings, music and musical instruments. The entryway to the exhibition featured Yale's four key military serpent by D'Almaine & Co. (20 Soho Square, London, c. 1812). In fact, the serpent came to symbolize the entire exhibition, as buttons promoting the exhibition showed an image of the serpent. The first room of the exhibition focused on *Handel's London: Vauxhall Gardens*. In addition to the serpent, an early edition of the music for Handel's *Music for the Royal Fireworks* (I. Walsh, c. 1749-59) was on display. The room also had a listening station with five musical excerpts including Douglas Yeo and Craig Kridel performing the London Serpent Trio's arrangement of Handel's *March from Scipio* (from the CD *Le Monde du Serpent*) and Boston Baroque's performance of the *Overture to Handel's Music for the Royal Fireworks* [Telarc], on which I play serpent). The large audience that filled the gallery heard me discuss the history of the serpent, the differences between French church and English military serpents, and I performed several etudes and some chant taken from methods of Metoyen and Schiltz. A question and answer session followed. The Anglo-centric audience also had some requests and I obliged by playing *Rule Britannia*, *Jerusalem* and *God Save The Queen*."

- There are many playing and presentation opportunities for serpent and ophicleide players, mostly less prominent than those listed here. Nevertheless, they are worthwhile and all players are encouraged to seek them out and enjoy!

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

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.



Doug Yeo and Jay Krush during the first period-instrument performance in North America of the Berlioz "Sinfonie Fantastique"



Workshops

- Serpentarium

The biennial serpent extravaganza will take place as scheduled in Oxford, England, from Friday May 25 through Monday the 28th. Organizer Andy Lamb has provided the following information for attendees. There will be light refreshment breaks ad-lib. Timings are approximate.

Friday evening

5:00 PM (17.00) Convene at the Bate Collection, informal welcome, light refreshments, and opening vivarium.
8:00PM (20.00) Concludes - off to the pubs.

Saturday

10:30AM - 12:30 Vivarium - Faculty of Music
12:30 - 2:00PM Lunch at pubs and cafes in Oxford
2:00 - 5:00PM Vivarium - Faculty of Music
5:00 - 7:00 Break
7:00 - Meal and informal playing at local pub

Serpent Newsletter

Sunday

10:30AM - 12:30 Vivarium - Faculty of Music
12:30 - 2:00PM Lunch
2:00 - 3:00PM Meet the Instruments - Bate Collection, hands on session with some of the historic!
3:00 - 5:00PM Vivarium
5:00PM - Music sessions in central Oxford for those so inclined.

Monday

9:30 - 11:00AM Vivarium - Bate Collection
12:00 - 2:00PM Concert - Holywell Music Room
2:00 - 3:00PM Lunch
3:00 - 5:00PM Informal playing at the Bate
5:00PM - Concludes

There are no extra charges, but contributions towards light refreshments are welcome. Persons wishing to consume alcoholic beverages may do so in the Music Faculty, but doing so in the Holywell Music Room is strictly forbidden.

The Bate Collection celebrates the history and development of musical instruments of the Western Classical tradition from the medieval period until the present day. The Collection is made available for study and judicious use by scholars, students, makers, and players, so as to enhance and increase the knowledge of the history of music as well as the enjoyment of historic performance for all.

The Bate Collection is housed in the Faculty of Music buildings between Christ Church College and the police station on St. Aldate's street, Oxford. A collection of historical woodwind, brass and percussion instruments; over a dozen historical keyboard instruments; a complete bow-maker's (William Retford) workshop and a collection of bows. The Bate Collection Archive includes the Philip Bate, Blandford, Morley-Pegge, Chatwyn and Retford papers and also many original instrument Tutors. The Archive and Library are available for consultation by prior appointment.



Faculty of Music at Oxford University

The Bate and the Faculty of Music are located at the junction with St. Aldate's street and Floyd's Row (where TV's Inspector Morse drives down as if he is going to park around the back of the police station). Most of the weekend's events are located there. The Music Faculty houses the practice rooms and the Bate Collection. There is also a Common Room which has snack machines. It is reasonably close to all the facilities of central Oxford and there is a good coffee bar just across the road. There are no facilities for long-stay parking within the Faculty of Music, but there is a central car park within casual walking distance. The address is:

Bate Collection
Faculty of Music
St. Aldate's
Oxford
OX1 1DB

You can inspect an online map of the area at <http://www.ox.ac.uk/aboutoxford/maps/mus.shtml>. If you view the initial map that appears on this website, the Bate is located at the bottom by the red letter C. St. Algate's is the road that runs top to bottom next to the Bate's red C. Speedwell Street intersects with St. Algate's by the Bate, and just a short distance away Thames Street does the same. Speedwell and Thames intersect to the left as you view the map, becoming Oxpens Road. A car park is adjacent to the intersection, and another is further along off of Oxpens. The large Christchurch Meadow is just behind the Faculty of Music. You can also download a PDF file of the Oxford map from the above listed website, and this allows you to zoom in for a better view and more details. If you do so, the Faculty of Music is also marked with a yellow number 38.

Editor's Note: While not included in Andy Lamb's information package, it appears from various maps that most attendees driving in to the Oxford area may find the A34 highway suitable. If coming from the south, there is an interchange for A4074, and if this is taken a short distance to the east, it will intersect with St. Algate's, and this can be followed up to the north, and after crossing the river, the Faculty of Music should be on the right. If approaching from the north, one could exit the A34 on the A420 (Botley Road) and head eastwards into the city. After crossing the first of the multiple branches of the river, the railway station will be on the left, and shortly after this you should see Oxpens Road on the right, and this can be followed to Thames Street, which will intersect with St. Algate's close to the Faculty of Music. Beyond these basic instructions, you are on your own!

David Harding suggested that one of the guest houses that still has rooms in the city is www.gables-guesthouse.co.uk.

● The 23rd Annual Historic Brass Society Early Brass Festival will take place on August 3 - 5, 2007, at Converse College in Spartanburg, South Carolina. In addition to the lectures, concerts and social events, there will be playing sessions for Cornetts, Sackbutts, Natural Trumpets and Voices on the music of Hammerschmidt, Natural trumpet ensemble on music of Philidor, Natural horns, and 19th Century brass ensemble. The 19th C. ensemble will be directed by Henry Meredith using instruments from his collection, and players are encouraged to bring their own as well. There will be a special visit to the Joe and Joella Utley Collection, lead by Sabine Klaus of the National Music Museum. If you have not already registered, go to www.historicbrass.org for a registration form. The fee is \$40 for HBS members, plus an extra \$30 if made after June 15. Dormitory housing and meals are available on campus for an additional charge; register for rooms at time of arrival.

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>
<see insert for new email address>

(serpents & historical oboes)

[for cornetts, contact Jeremy West at
<j.west@ic.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>

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

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

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
224 North Street
Luton
LU2 7QN
England

Phone: +44 (0)1582 457 992
(early cimballo, bass horns)

Derek Farnell
82 Crumpsall Lane
Manchester M8 5SG
England

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

Matthias Wetter
Musikinstrumentenbau
CH-8475 Ossingen
Switzerland

Phone: 0041 (0) 5231 73184
<wetter.m@bluewin.ch>
<www.wetter-instrumente.ch>

(alphorns and serpents)

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



Photos from the "Damnation of Faust" performances by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, with Doug Yeo on ophicleide, next to Mike Roylance on tuba. The director, seated, is James Levine, and tenor Paul Groves, as Faust, is standing. Photos © 2007 by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, courtesy Michael Lutch. All rights reserved, used with permission.



New Materials

● Erhard Schwartz's 19th century brass quintet, Passion des Quivres, has released their first CD, *Victorian Christmas*. It is scheduled for general release in the Fall, and you can view the details on the publisher's website <http://www.orfeo-international.com/pages/c689061a.html>. At the time of this writing, one of the few places accepting and filling orders seems to be the small German distributor www.jpc.de, and they delivered the copy used for this review in slightly more than one week. Passion des Quivres includes two cornets, a simple F horn and narrow bore trombone, dating from the late 1800s and early 1900s, plus Erhard's ophicleide on the bottom part. In addition to the instruments, this CD includes the vocal talents of soprano Constanze Backes. The CD includes many of the most well known Christmas carols, mostly sacred with a few secular, plus several by Arthur Sullivan. The publisher is Orfeo, catalog number C 689 061 A, playing time 64 minutes.

Sullivan's pieces include an opening pealing of the bells of St. Andrews Church in Sonning, then segueing into *Christmas Bells at Sea*, "There is a legend amongst sailors, that when a vessel is out at sea on Christmas Eve, the usual peal which on land ushers in the great Christian Festival from every church steeple is sometimes heard, however far from land the ship may be, and is an assured sign of a prosperous voyage". His pieces continue with *Hearken Unto Me, My People*, his setting of *It Came Upon a Midnight Clear*, and the rousing *Care is All Fiddle-De-Dee* from the Christmas extravaganza *The Miller and His Man*. Handel is represented by the *Overture (Sinfony)* and *He Shall Feed His Flock* from the oratorio *Messiah*, with vocals on the latter. The ophicleide gets a fine solo opportunity in *O Ruddier Than the Cherry* from Handel's *Acis and Galatea*. The recording also includes standards in 19th Century arrangements, Gauntlett's *Once in Royal David's City*, Sandys' *God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen*, Mendelssohn's *Hark the Herald Angels Sing*, Redner's *O Little Town of Bethlehem*, Wade's *O Come All Ye Faithful*, Leontovich's *Carol of the Bells*, Purcell's *Evening Hymn*, Adam's *O Holy Night*, Mason's *Joy to the World*, Holst's *In the Bleak Midwinter*, Cornelius' *The Three Kings*, plus *The Coventry Carol* and *O Come, O Come Emmanuel*. The recording concludes with another setting of Sullivan's *Christmas Bells at Sea*, ophicleide playing the melody this time, before segueing into more pealing bells. There are additional vocals on parts of other tracks, and the ophicleide gets good exposure on many selections. This is a very nicely played and recorded album, and as enjoyable as it is in general, it is also a fine example of 19th Century brass playing and an excellent way to hear ophicleide playing both solos and tuba style accompaniments.



cover of the new *Passion des Cuivres* CD

- Garry Crighton has prepared a manuscript edition of part of the Serpentschule portion of Joseph Fröhlich's *Vollständige theoretische-praktische Musiklehre für alle bei dem Orchester gebräuchlich Instrumente, zum Gebrauche für Musikdirektoren, Lehrer, und Liebhaber. (Bonn, 1810-1811)*. Garry produced these serpent exercises, having transposed them from serpent in Eb (the little known brass band serpent?) to serpent in C. His transcription places the music in easier keys, reduces the difficulty of the highest notes, and spreads the crowded original out for easier reading. Garry writes that he is a serpent beginner, playing for three years so far as part of the Münster University "Posaunenchor" (trombone choir). He has made these available through the newsletter, so write or email for a copy.

- Nick Byrne has completed his solo ophicleide CD project, previously mentioned in this newsletter. Nick writes, "The CD has been completed, finally, and is being printed/copied at this very moment for a late May/early June release. The label is an Australian Boutique label specializing in lesser known and undiscovered works, primarily from the 19th Century. The label is Melba Recordings which is available worldwide or can be found at www.melbarecordings.com.au. The CD is titled *Back from Oblivion*, and contains works by all the ophicleide composers, Kummer, Klose, Demersseman, Dagnelies as well as transcriptions from Elgar (*Bassoon sonata*), Handel, Rachmaninov and Greig, finishing with Piazzolas' *Oblivion*, hence the title. The Simon Proctor is the 2nd movement from an incomplete ophicleide concerto and is a wonderfully atmospheric piece that tests the player over more than 3 octaves. It is a really attractive, well crafted work that emphasizes the instrument's strengths. I really look forward to the outer movements." You can read more about this CD on Nick's website, www.ophicleide.com.

- Jay Krush, tubist, serpentist and ophicleidist with the Chestnut Brass Company, writes "Last Summer the Chestnut Brass Company played in Korea and helped to judge a biennial brass competition. The winners get to do a concerto with the local orchestra. Bass trombone was a separate category for the first time and a Japanese bass trombonist actually won the grand prize. The problem was that when discussing repertoire for the next competition, both the tuba and bass trombone committees chose the *Ewazen Concerto* as there were so few choices (plus of course it's a great piece), and much debate ensued. I thought, 'Wow, bass trombonists need concertos even more than tuba players!'" Jay started thinking about ideas for a concerto, and one thing led to another, with Jay producing his concerto for use by the US Army Orchestra at the Eastern Trombone Workshop in March. Although not a serpent or ophicleide piece (maybe it can be played on ophicleide?), we all wish Jay's piece great success.

- A new recording of Wagner's *Der Fliegende Holländer* (*The Flying Dutchman*) opera has been released, based on the original 1841 Paris version, and recorded using original instruments. The group is Cappella Coloniensis, with Bruno Weil conducting. The two CD set is produced by Deutsche Harmonis Mundi, catalog number 82876 64071 2. The soloists are bass Franz-Josef Selig (Donald), soprano Astrid Weber (Senta), tenor Jörg Dürmüller (George), contralto Simone Schröder (Mary), tenor Kobie van Rensburg (Donald's steersman), and baritone Terje Stensvold (The Dutchman). The choir is comprised of the WDR Runkfunkchor Köln and Prager Kammerchor. Making this CD of particular interest to serpentists, Marc Girardot appears playing the ophicleide. The ophicleide's timbre can be heard well in the overture, at 0:11 with the trombones, in a soft chorale with trombones 2 and 3 at 2:53, and in the opening of track 2 at 0:23. Thanks to Doug Yeo finding this recording.

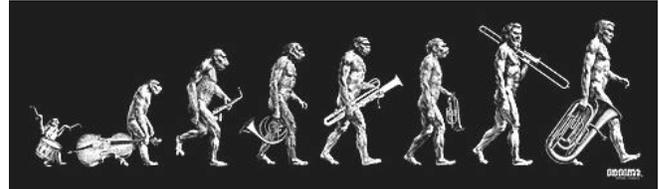
- Serpentist and period music arranger & publisher Randy Cabell wrote to tell about the new CD produced by Lehigh University for the *Jamestown Jubilee 1607 - 2007* (also the name of the CD). Randy was the inspiration, pointed toward most of the music, and encouraged director David Diggs to persist with composer's James Horner organization to get permission to write a suite for band based on Horner's *The New World Symphonic Suite*. Randy also produced liner notes about his own music wanderings through the ages.

The recording features the wind ensemble at Lehigh University, and includes tracks such as Cabell's *The Trumpeter of Jamestown*, Whiddit's *March of the Powhatan Guards*, Sturtevant's *Peacemaker March*, Digg's *The Jamestown Jubilee of 1807* with narration, Casey's *Glory of Jamestown*, Lee's *Jamestown Rag*, Lenox's *Jamestown March and Two-Step*, Carey's *Return of Capt. John Smith*, Mitchell's *Great Waltz*, Horner's aforementioned selection, and closes with Sousa's *Powhatan's Daughter March*. This CD is now available on Amazon and from other sources.

- Doug Yeo discovered an older CD recording (1999 ?), titled *Choro*, Frémeaux & Associés catalog FA 166. This is a two CD set made up of period recordings of famous Brazilian artists performing examples of the choro form, which is Brazil's oldest national form, combining European melody with African rhythms. Besides being a lively and energetic collection, this recording is of interest here because of the inclusion of track #15 on CD 1, *São João Debaixo D'Águá* by Choro Carioca, with an ophicleide solo by Irineu de Almeida, taken from Favorite Records #1.450006 from the year 1911. Irineu really gets around on the instrument. This CD is out of print, but numerous

copies are available from used record sources online at the time of this writing.

- There is a recently produced poster available from www.bigbrass.com that shows a humorous variation on Rudolph Zallinger's classic 1965 *Ascent of Man* drawing, this time with musical instruments from drum to tuba. One of the Neanderthal cavemen in the middle is carrying an ophicleide.



More Exciting News

- Jay Krush wrote a note in response to an inquiry from this newsletter, asking about differences in ophicleide mouthpieces. This was prompted by observations made during various early brass gatherings, where some players seemed to use fairly large mouthpieces along the lines of full sized trombone models, while others seems to use mouthpieces as small as those found on alto horns (tenor horns to British brass band folks), and by comments made by Doug Yeo, Erhard Schwartz, Clark Wolf and others, wondering about the differences they were seeing on the ophicleide mouthpieces of colleagues. Paul Schmidt related how his first mouthpiece, upon obtaining an ophicleide, as a Bach 6-1/2 AL, since it was the only one in the local music store's junk mouthpiece box that was euphonium sized and had a shank that fit the instrument. Subsequently, Paul was able to purchase an original ophicleide



Paul Schmidt playing ophicleide at the Tubapalooza

mouthpiece from Andre Bissonet's shop in Paris, courtesy of serpent newsletter treasurer Dick George, who had visited there. This original had the same diameter of cup and same outer shank as the Bach, but all other aspects were different, including a noticeably funnel shaped cup and wide throat. Paul found this to be a good mouthpiece except for the tendency of certain notes to become unstable, wanting to flip to adjacent notes. Karl Hammond made a compromise mouthpiece that had the rim and inner profile of the Bach with the much narrower outer profile, giving the correct antique appearance but comfortable playing characteristics. While only a snapshot of various mouthpiece situations among ophicleide players, Jay's informative comments are as follows.

"Regarding my mouthpiece, it is an original Courtois from mid-19th century. The ophicleide I use is an 11 keyed English in C, made by Butler and Co. in Soho, London, between 1860 and 1865. I also have a beautiful silver played 9 key B-flat Courtois with original case, mouthpiece and bits which I found in somebody's basement. I mostly use the Butler because I learned C fingerings first, I really like the extra keys, it's a very sturdy horn - good for surviving tours - and it's shorter by several inches than the B-flat, which is a real issue when it came to designing our flight cases.

When I started, I too used a 6-1/2 AL, for the lack of anything better. It was OK, but I was always unhappy with the intonation...it seemed too big for the horn and threw everything off. When I got the Courtois, I tried its mouthpiece and it made a huge difference in both intonation and focusing the sound. As I have always tried to stick with period mouthpieces in the Chestnut Brass Company, I was also happy to have it for authenticity's sake.

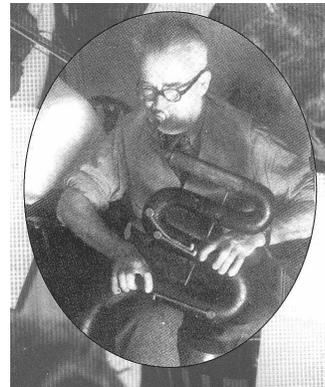
From your description, it is very similar to yours [the one from Bissonet]. Small, thin walled, narrow rim. It feels a bit smaller than a euphonium mouthpiece, but is surprisingly comfortable. My only problem with it is honking out really low notes, and this I think has everything to do with my being a tuba player and nothing to do with the design of the mouthpiece itself. If I were doing a *Midsummer Night's Dream* performance, I'd probably have to use something bigger for the forte low B's.

I liked Doug's mouthpiece and he could play really LOUD on it! I think we have such different outlets for our playing [mostly symphony orchestra versus brass quintet] that our mouthpiece choices have followed accordingly."

● The recent 2006 movie *Amazing Grace*, a period drama about William Wilberforce's efforts in 18th Century

England to abolish the slave trade, includes a brief appearance of a serpent. The hymn tune figures into the story and title because of the involvement and influence on Wilberforce of priest John Newton (played by Albert Finney), a former slave ship captain who wrote the words and music. At the end of the film, on-screen messages relate the main actors and what their characters did after the story ends, and then a Scottish pipe band and a 'period' military band play *Amazing Grace*. In the military band on the left side of a central aisle, one of the players is holding and seeming blowing a church serpent. Unfortunately, only the upper half of the instrument is visible, the soundtrack clearly was recorded by a modern band with tuba on the low parts, and the player is holding the serpent with one hand clearly grasping it at the first bend below the bocal. If the actor or extra enlisted for this task actually blew any notes, it might explain the choice of soundtrack instrumentation!

● Nigel Nathan wrote, "At a dress rehearsal for a concert, there were brochures for a book to celebrate the centenary of the Penzance Orchestral Society. The cover photo featured a one-time orchestral Vice-President playing a serpent. The book won't be published until March 2007 and it will interesting to see if it has anything further to say about it/him, possibly, with a better quality reproduction. Tomorrow is an all day Cornish Carol workshop in Redruth at which I've been asked to play serpent."



● In December, I discovered the need to use up one week's worth of vacation ("use it or lose it"), and needed to use it in between early season Christmas concerts and those closer to the holiday. Taking a whirlwind tour of antique aircraft museums and music museums around the west and southern states, I found myself at March Field museum east of Los Angeles early one afternoon, and decided to see if Robb Stewart might have time to visit in nearby Arcadia. Robb was able to fit in an hour's break between meeting with customers at his shop, and I was delighted to be able to finally visit the source of so many excellent brass instruments. Robb showed me his facilities, his collection of antique automobiles, and we talked shop and antique brasses. It was good to finally meet Robb after so many years of phone calls, letters and emails. - by Paul Schmidt