

Serpent Newsletter

P.O. Box 954 Mundelein, Illinois 60060 USA

Newsletter for Serpent Enthusiasts

April 1, 2008

A Note From the Editor

This issue is another that wrote itself. So much information came in on a variety of subjects that I did not have to go searching. Unhappily, some of that news relates to the passing of two friends, but with the help of other acquaintances and relatives of the departed, we have been able to provide information that will be of consolation and assistance to the serpent world. Thanks go to Doug Yeo, who has made a generous monetary contribution to help put this newsletter out, without the need to reduce coverage due to printing costs.

Paul Schmidt

Moments of Change in Brass Music from Medieval Wind Bands to Jazz. The following themes are expected to be prominent: Early jazz, the change and continuity in the history of brass playing and its repertoire, changes in improvisational styles and other non-written traditions, key changes in the way brass instruments have been designed, made, distributed and consumed, the relationship between brass playing and the broader social and cultural movements that ran parallel with it, and the reception of brass playing at key moments in history. Activities will include lectures, discussion sessions, informal playing sessions for all brass instruments (cornetto, trombone, natural trumpet, natural horn, serpent, and all 19th century brasses), concerts, instrument makers exhibitions, and social events. Serpent and ophicleide players will be on hand for teaching, socializing and sessions. Contact www.historicbrass.org for more information.

Workshops

- Although a bit early yet for an announcement, the plan is for the 2009 Serpentarium to be held back at Nigel Nathan's B&B, Boswedden House, at Cape Cornwall on the usual May bank holiday weekend, May 22 - 25. And Doug Yeo has written to say that he will finally be able to attend and has begun to make plans accordingly. Doug has volunteered to perform and help coach, but mostly he just looks forward to being part of the gang. For more information, contact Nigel at serpents@boswedden.org.uk, or see his address and phone number in the *About the Organization* section of this newsletter.

- The Historic Brass Society will host its 25th Annual Early Brass Festival on July 24 - 27 at Loyola University, New Orleans. The HBS, for the first time, has selected New Orleans as the festival site, and this has inspired it to take as its theme *Moments of Change: Zorzi to Armstrong - Key*

Where Serpents Gather

- Erhard Schwartz has been appearing in a stage-performance project titled *Strangers* (www.5strangers.de), where his ophicleide plays together with a string-quartet, a clarinet and an accordion. The music is taken from Romantic operas with well-known strangers: *Carmen*, *Madame Butterfly*, *Rigoletto*, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (*The Abduction from the Seraglio*) and *Othello*. The play is a contemporary music theater collage over present-day migration issues contrasted with clichés about foreigners in association with western opera history. The reality and theatrical fiction of contact and relationships between westerners and strangers is examined. In the hopeless waiting-room of a German authority, 12 people of very different origins, cultures and moral concepts meet, and the only things they seem to have in common are their immediate surroundings and situation. Simultaneously, the *Strangers* are five known foreigners from opera and their seven-member instrumentalist retinue. The characters of the black general Otello (Verdi), *Madame Butterfly* from Japan

(Puccini), Rigoletto (Verdi), the gypsy Carmen (Bizet) and the Turk of Osmin (Mozart) from these Italian operas, each in different stages of their stories are confronted with the present-day migration office. Because there are only five singers the musicians have to play and act on stage. Erhard writes that, "after five successful performances we are asked to do more, so there are at least three more in March and maybe much more because we all love this project."



*Erhard Schwartz performs on ophicleide in Strangers
photo by Benjamin Krieg*

Erhard Schwartz also performed on ophicleide with the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin in their New Year's Day (January 1, 2008) performance of Mendelssohn's *Elias* (Elijah). The performance was broadcast on the radio as well as the Internet, and was recorded by several serpentists worldwide.

- Doug Yeo wrote to say that he will be performing on both serpent and ophicleide with the Boston Classical Orchestra on November 22 & 23 of 2008. The centerpiece of the concert, to be held in Boston's historic Faneuil Hall, will be the world premiere of Gordon Bowie's *Old Dances in New Shoes* for serpent and strings. Also on the program will be the recitative and aria *O Ruddier Than the Cherry* from Handel's *Acis and Galatea*, performed on ophicleide. More information can be found on www.bostonclassicalorchestra.org closer to the performance date.

- Keith Ryder, an archaeologist and player of trumpet, cornetto and other brasses, has recently become an ophicleidean. He writes, "I'm the proud owner of a nine-key ophicleide in C with the tuning slide in the bocal, a small bell, a couple of negligible dents, good springs, and marked COLLIN * A PARIS. It plays nicely; several pads have lost their white leather, but the white felt seems to work just fine. I'm surprised at how well-behaved it is."

Keith goes on to write, "I feel the need to inform someone (and you're the victim) that among the zarzuelas composed in 1867 by Emilio Arrieta (1821-1894) of Madrid is one

entitled *El figle enamorado*. 'Figue' is 'ophicleide', so this may be an operetta about 'The ophicleidist in love' (or is it idiomatic Spanish and has nothing to do with the ophicleide?)."

A friend who is an expert on Spanish history volunteered that the authoritative *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española* shows 'figle' as an instrument, not a person, but the Spanish Wikipedia adds that the person who plays the instrument is also called a 'figle'. She also noted that many references available to her state that the ophicleide was regularly used in Spanish musical theater in the 19th century. She concluded with the information that the zarzuela is an operetta of greater substance that comes close to being an opera, although many were only a single act in length.

Cliff Bevan's PHD dealt with an aspect of 19th century Spanish opera, and he kindly volunteered even more background on this subject. He wrote that "in many respects, Spanish orchestral practice was influenced by the French, and ophicleides were widespread in both Spain and Italy (linked by dynastic factors as well as geographical position). As this zarzuela was produced in 1867 the ophi would have been the familiar lowest of the brass in the typical Spanish" orchestra. "<Antonio> Pascual Emilio Arrieta y Corera, incidentally, studied at the Milan Conservatory so was rather more under foreign influences than many of his Spanish contemporaries. His first opera was actually in the Italian style. It seems to me that *El Figue Enamorado* would probably translate as 'The Ophicleide In Love' or 'The Infatuated Ophicleide'; there is no reference here to a player. I'm intrigued to see that the first (only?) performance was on Christmas Eve and I wonder if it may have been some sort of magical Christmas show (compare with English pantomime). I've just taken down and blown the dust from one of the two dissertations I had to do for my first degree. This was on the Zarzuela (the other was on the ophicleide!) and here is a short quotation from it which could point to some aspects of this particular piece, assuming that it was of the lightest type, genero chico, which was possibly at its height of popularity at this time; *Running through them like a common thread was the quality of sal (salt) - a distinctive and much appreciated style of wit. It was less than subtle (rather like Spanish B-films of the present day)*. And then there is a quotation from one by the composer Oudrid: *A typical piece of sal from this work occurs when the hero, shortly before the end, has tried to commit suicide and is on his way to hospital. 'Am I going to the hospital for the mad?' he asks. 'No, for the stupid,' is the reply. Interesting!*

- Wolf-Dieter Rase wrote, "I just received the new issue of the Serpent Newsletter. I enjoyed most the reports about the Serpentarium and the ophicleide summit at Berlin. Erhard Schwartz tried to talk me into attending both events, but I

was not able to take part due to professional engagements in my bread and butter life. I will be retired when the next Serpentarium will take place, so I have a better chance to come to England in 2009. At the moment my main priority is to become proficient on the ophicleide, with a little help from Erhard Schwartz from time to time. The serpent has to wait until retirement. The antique ophicleide I bought in France last year has severe shortcomings, even for a novice, for instance keys not closing properly, or minuscule holes in the body due to corrosion. I had the opportunity to play the prototype of the new ophicleide designed by Benedikt Eppelsheim, mentioned in the Newsletter. The instrument is much better than my antique one, and I hope to get one of the first pieces built as soon as possible.”



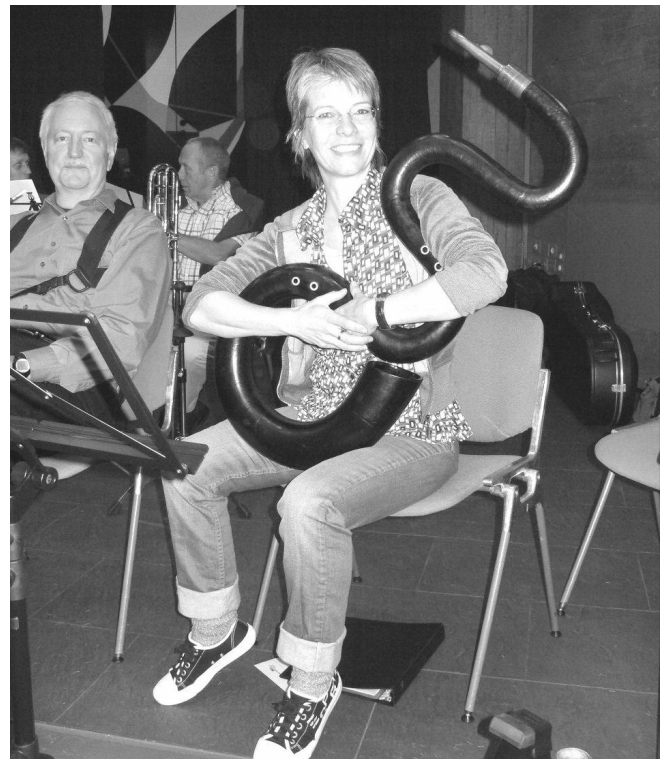
Gareth Craik performs on serpent with the Band of the Coldstream Guards. Photo from The British Bandsman, used by permission

- The January 26 issue of The British Bandsman contains an article entitled *Letter from America: 20 January 2008*. Major Graham O. Jones of the Band of the Coldstream Guards writes about the combined tour of his band with the Pipes and Drums of the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards through eight American states early this year. Paraphrasing Jones' report, one of the highlights of the tour was the 18th century band, resplendent in their period uniforms. In addition to two clarinets and a bassoon, the brass players have elected to play period instruments, with Lance Corporal Nick Stones and Lance Sergeant Phil Wood on natural horns, Gareth Lancaster on natural trumpet, and Gareth Craik on serpent. LC Stones is quoted, “I knew the

task of running the 18th century band would not be an easy one...my initial choices of music turned out to be totally unsuitable for the instruments at our disposal. After finally finding and arranging a suitable piece, I discovered that I had chosen keys that were impossible for the natural trumpet and serpent. Once I had the keys right, it then became apparent that the arrangements were unworkable whilst marching. Although the UK has a vibrant early music scene, its field of expertise doesn't extend to marching skills and our team had to learn the boundaries of what these instruments could cope with as well as evolving a marching style.” Linda Yeo, Doug's daughter, is attending Wheaton College and saw the band on their tour. She reports that the serpent played in tune and did a great job.....but she needed earplugs for the bagpipes.

- Andrea Sauer in Germany writes, “I did it! On October 3rd I played serpent in Lingen with the Orchestra Sinfonia da Capo, conducted by Gert Feser, on Wagner's *Rienzi Ouverture*. It worked, perhaps I became real better, or the others got used to my bleat ;-)...(The tuba player behind me said, it would have been tactics, I would have blown intentionally false from the beginning...mean!!! I practiced two months for one hour a day.) The running gag was, “What's the name of a female serpent-player? Serpentine” (double bend).....

Andrea also wrote to tell about another project. “I have a nice job at the opera in Nürnberg. The conductor, Christian Hutter, a friend of mine, has arranged the opera *Orpheus and Eurydice* (aka Eurydice) by <Christoph Willibald>



Andrea Sauer with her serpent in Lingen

Gluck for my serpent and flute, guitar, piano and accordion. Now we are shocking children in 'hell' and follow them with music, while they are trying to find a lost cuddly toy named 'Tiedsche' (like Eurydike). And I have to play the melody from *Che Faro senza Euridice*, the nicest piece of all, I think....a very funny think!"

• Leonard Byrne writes that in Spokane Washington, Allegro has been presenting its Royal Fireworks concert annually since 1978. In addition to Handel's masterpiece, music includes compositions written for outdoor occasions and celebrations during the baroque period. The performing ensemble, Allegro's Royal Band, is brought together each year to perform the Royal Fireworks Concert. This is the oldest established wind band of its type in the nation and is made up of instruments specified by Handel when his *Royal Fireworks Music* was premiered in 1749. Allegro's Royal Band has included a serpent doubling the contrabassoon line since 1990; Leonard plays serpent with the band. The concerts are on the last Sunday in July. For more information see <http://www.allegrobaroque.org/fireworks.php>

The Spokane Symphony will be presenting a concert using serpent for the first time October 23 and 24. A Harmoniemusik version of the *Allegretto from Symphony 7* by Beethoven will be on the Chamber Soiree program with Leonard Byrne on serpent covering the contrabassoon part. This concert will be broadcast on October 29 on KPBX, broadcasts of which can be heard over the internet at www.kpbx.org. An ophicleide has occasionally been heard at Spokane Symphony concerts over the last 25 years, the most recent sighting being May 1, 2007 on Mendelssohn's *Midsummer's Night Dream*.

• Remember the *figle*? Around the beginning of the 20th century Enrique Peña of Havana, a cornetist, founded his band Orquesta Típica. By 1908 it included some of the best musicians available in Cuba at that time; Felix González on



Felix González with his figle with Orquesta Típica

ophicleide (the figle), José de Los Reyes on tympani, José Belén Puig Sr. and José Urfe on clarinets, and Julian Barreto on violin. Tangos and other dances were the group's specialties. A popular recording on the Edison cylinders of the period was the band's *La Gatita Blanca*.



excerpt: La Conversion d'Henri de Joyeuse (see page 10)

Getting Serpents

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

Christopher Monk Instruments
(c/o Jeremy West)

Since the death of Keith Rogers,
contact phone & fax:
+44 (0)1388 526999
<www.jeremywest.co.uk/cmi.html>
<jw@jeremywest.co.uk>

(serpents)



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

Kaiser Serpents
<http://www.kaiserserpents.com/>

(fiberglass serpents after Baudouin)

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 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

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>

New Materials

- Serpentist Peter Hackston's group, The Madding Crowd, has released a CD of authentically performed West Gallery Christmas music titled, *Hark, Shepherds, Hark*. It is published by the group as catalog # TMC-002-CD, and may be obtained from the group's website, <http://www.maddingcrowd.org/> (you may also email to cd@maddingcrowd.org).

The Madding Crowd specializes in the research and performance of church and country music from Georgian times. Their performance focus is on authenticity, and as such their music embodies an immediacy and earthiness that takes the listener back in time. The sound has a bumptious, rural quality that specifically does not recall performances of polished professionals. In this case, this quality is a good thing.

This CD is a selection from the group's Christmas repertoire. Historically, the holidays presented such groups a fine opportunity to make music in the church, in West Gallery tradition, and to make the rounds of the village, visiting every cottage to tell the good news in carols. Many of the selections recorded here are taken from an undated manuscript found by the group in a used bookshop, and their research has placed its contents in the vicinity of 1837 Dorset, and many of the carols found within are not known elsewhere.

The selections include *We Singers Make Bold* with its West Country tune, *Hark the Glad Sound* (ca. 1800), *Awake Ye Heavenly Choirs and Sing* (early 19th C), the Cornish *Seraphic Minstrels*, *Great Was the Joy Displayed Abroad*, the Charles Burney version of *Hark the Herald Angels Sing*, *Come Let Us All With Heart and Voice*, *O May We All Rejoice* which at times seems almost Handelian, the mid-18th C. *Anthem for the Nativity St. Luke Chapter 2*, *Angels From the Realms of Glory* in its Thomas Merritt setting, *Anthem for the Nativity*, *When Jordan Hush'd His Waters Still* (ambitious for West Gallery), *Shepherds Rejoice*, the lilting 6/8 *A Saviour Sinner*, *Glad Tidings*, *Bright Angels* with its opening 'symphony', the titular *Hark Shepherds Hark*, *Arise and Hail*, the tricky *Me Think I Hear a Soft Still Voice*, the Victorian carol *Be Merry All*, *Hark Those Hallelujahs Pealing* which spans from the Nativity to the Passion and Second Coming, and finally *While Shepherds Watch'd*, here with a different tune setting for every verse, none of which are familiar today.

The choir's instrumental accompaniment consists of fiddles, cello, flute, oboe, clarinet and Peter's serpent. Happily, this CD includes quite a lot of serpent, often in prominent lines and sometimes taking the melody. The serpent playing is energetic and competent, making this a good serpent demonstration recording.



- Jean Renoir's classic film *The Golden Coach*, starring Anna Magnani, Paul Campbell, Duncan Lamont and Riccardo Rioli, takes place in an Spanish colony in 18th Century Central America. An actress in a traveling theatrical troupe tries to decide between three men; the local viceroy, a bull fighter, and an army captain, and the eponymous coach figures into her dealings. The serpent appears as part of the band that accompanies the troupe; when it is being 'played', the sound is a baritone saxophone. Look at 8:30 (8 minutes and 30 seconds into the film) as the actors arrive in town, at 11:30 being played, at 12:40 being held incorrectly by the player, at 17:50 in the band, at 44:00 - 45:40 in the fight scene, and at the ending.

- A new CD recording of *Die Könige In Israel* (The Kings in Israel) by Ferdinand Ries was released in late 2007, and includes Erhard Schwartz on cimbasso and ophicleide. The performance is by the Rheinische Kantorei accompanied by the orchestra Das Kleine Konzert, as conducted by Hermann Max. CPO # 777 221-2, Obtained from JPC Shallplatten, www.jpc.de.

Ries was a student of Beethoven who first made a name for himself in London as director of the Philharmonic Society for a decade starting in 1813. After returning to Germany he established a new career including substantial work as a composer and directorship of the Aachen Music Festival. After the Düsseldorf Music Festival Committee's great success with the commission of Mendelssohn's *Paulus* in 1836, Ries received a comparable assignment in Aachen to compose a new oratorio for the 1837 season. Working with librettist Wilhelm Smets, they conceived of a romantic treatment of the story of the first two kings of Israel, Saul

and David, based on the biblical First Book of Samuel. Besides the titular characters, there are five other major characters plus the unusual feature of dual choruses, one for the Israelites and another for the Philistines. Ries gives the Israelite chorus hymn-like material which is in contrast to the more rhythmic and animated sounds of the Philistine ensemble. The orchestra shares much with the sounds one would expect from Mendelssohn, and features plenty of percussion and brass for an often gripping effect. Hermann Max's own historically informed performance groups add up to a tight and energized sound, and the recording is clean and full. This is a fine and not often heard piece of music, although this is not a showcase for the ophicleide; its sound is nowhere apparent but this is a typical use for it in a suitable historic situation.

- One of our alert readers has located another appearance of the serpent in popular television. The British TV mystery series *Midsummer Murders*, based on the dramatized novels of Caroline Graham, features the adventures of a rural detective. In the episode *Death and Dreams* the serpent appears repeatedly and prominently in the home of the village 'chemist' & amateur bandmaster, Gordon Leesmith, but it is never played. The curious viewer can check out this episode on DVD Set 6 Volume 2.

- Michel Godard appears with his serpent in two newly released CDs, *Songs for Sad Women* with Rabih Abou-Khalil (Enja # ENJ-9494 2) and *DEEP*: with Gavino Murgia (Schott Music & Media / Intuition # INT 3415 2). Both recordings obtained from Amazon.

Songs for Sad Women was announced long ago and was anticipated long ago in this newsletter, only to be assumed as abandoned by the studio after due dates came and went. Happily, this enjoyable recording has finally been released in late 2007, and is well worth the wait. This is really a project of Rabih Abou-Khalil, with all selections composed by him and featuring his oud. Godard's serpent provides the very middle-eastern bass line, Gevorg Dabaghyan adds accompaniment on his duduk, an ancient double reed woodwind of Armenian origins, and percussion is by Jarrod Cagwin, primarily on finger drums and bass drum. *Mourir pour ton décolleté* (To die for your neckline) is mournful and heavy on the oud with the serpent doubling the duduk's parallel lines. *How Can We Dance if I Cannot Waltz* is a serpent solo with oud backdrop, and *Best If You Dressed Less* is a series of solos, first on duduk then serpent, followed by oud and wrapping up with an energetic ensemble. *The Sad Women of Qana* features fascinating bass improvisations by Godard, while *Para O Teu Bumbum* is a feverish dance with serpent lead. *Le Train Bleu* (The Blue Train) is, as the name suggests, a driving and rhythmic piece with blues influence, and the album wraps up with *A Chocolate Love Affair* is another syncopated piece that

belongs in a Lebanese terrace and makes you long to light up a shisha water pipe and sit back, taking in the funky patterns of the serpent and oud.

DEEP: is a totally mesmerizing encounter between two profound sound sources, the bassy throat singing of Gavino Murgia and Michel Godard's tuba and serpent. The eleven tracks alternate between those 'composed' by Godard and those attributed to Murgia, although these are clearly collaborative improvisations. Sardinian Murgia regularly appears in avant garde jazz situations, and his voice has been described as a 'gravelly bass that can be reminiscent of a Jew's harp, a deep shawm, or the chirping of a cicada in Sardinia's scorching heat', although it also embodies the tradition of Tuvan throat (aka Overtone) singing. The voice is used here always as an instrument, sometimes with scat type syllables and other times with just the drone. Godard primary uses the serpent here, although he brings the tuba out for a trot when Murgia gives his vocal folds a rest and plays soprano saxophone. Although there are but two performers, Murgia usually has two or three lines going and Godard seems to also employ multiple parts that include the embrochure as well as the voice. The overall effect is surreal and needs to be experienced, and one could argue that there have been few more interesting examples of serpent used with the human voice. It would be hard to describe this album as exciting, but rather more accurately as meditative and trance inducing. It is a fine showcase for Godard's brand of virtuoso serpent performance.

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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Keith Rogers

In Memoriam

Keith Rogers

On Monday, January 21, 2008, we received an email from Kathryn Rogers: "My beloved Keith died at 1 AM this morning, very peacefully he went to sleep surrounded by all his girls. I would like to thank all who have written and phoned us during this very hard time. Keith remained very much himself until the last, his sense of humour intact throughout and his care for his family always foremost in his mind. He will be buried in Yaxham, after a funeral service in Mattishall church on Saturday 2nd February at 11 AM."

Many knew Keith as simply the man behind the serpents, or as the mysterious person who had taken over serpent making after the death of Christopher Monk. But Keith was, of course, a full featured man, and it is perhaps best to let some of those who knew him best describe him in their own words. Submittals from Jeremy West, who runs Christopher Monk Instruments, and Doug Yeo, who became a close friend of Keith, have been selected.

IN MEMORIAM: GERALD KEITH ROGERS

1943 ~ 2008

A tribute by Douglas Yeo

Gerald Keith Rogers, serpent maker at Christopher Monk Instruments (CMI), passed from this world to the next on January 21 after a struggle with pancreatic cancer. He was 64 years old. Born in Sussex, England, Keith (as he preferred to be called) studied music at the University of Wales at Bangor, taught in schools in Northern Ireland, and joined CMI in 1992. Having worked at CMI shops in and around London for many years, he lived most recently in

Norfolk, in the little village of Yaxham, with his wife of over 40 years, Kathryn. His workshop, where he made serpents and baroque oboes, was situated in a building behind his home.

Yet these bare details of a life are simply inadequate to describe the influence of such a man as he. After Christopher Monk's death in 1991, the future of serpent making - which in his hands had risen to a high art not seen since the mid-19th century - was uncertain, to say the least. Jeremy West took over the workshop in that same year, and persuaded Keith to join him in April 1992. Keith's expert wood working skills were paired with the fine metal and leathering skills of Nicholas Perry and together they made nearly 100 serpents between 1992 and 2007.

My first contact with Keith came in 1996. Having begun my exploration of the serpent in 1994 on a Harding fiberglass instrument, I concluded that a proper instrument was required. There was no doubt that I would order an instrument from CMI and after my initial contact with Jeremy I was referred to Keith. We began discussion of the type of instrument I would like (church serpent in C, no keys), the wood (we settled on walnut which was rather unusual, but it was a wood that would give the serpent a more robust sound when heard with modern instruments), and some special touches that interested me (Keith informed me that a carved head would not be possible but a two piece engraved bell mount in silver, with bocal and receiver to match, would add to the instrument's distinctiveness). I picked up the instrument at the CMI workshop (then in Greenwich) but missed Keith who was, at the time, visiting family in Australia. The serpent was spectacular in every way, and the next year, I performed Simon Proctor's *Serpent Concerto* with that instrument with the Boston Pops Orchestra conducted by John Williams, the first of five performances I would subsequently give of the piece with orchestral accompaniment.

Keith and I continued our correspondence on matters serpentine. When I purchased the contrabass serpent, "George" (one of Christopher Monk's last instruments, completed in 1990) from Connie Palmer, Keith made a superb mouthpiece in boxwood after the original "Anaconda" mouthpiece. We finally met in 2001 when I brought my church serpent back to England (his CMI shop was by then located in the Forest Hills section of London) for installation of a B natural key and to pick up some mouthpieces I had asked Keith to make.

Yet there was so much more to this man. Yes, we enjoyed a professional friendship based on our shared obsession with the serpent. But Keith and I also shared a vibrant Christian faith and for many years we shared letters, phone calls and email messages in which we discussed points of

theology, and how to work out our faith (in, as Keith often reminded me, “fear and trembling”). We shared sermons and articles we had each written, encouraging each other as we worked to be good stewards of what God had given us.

When Keith went in for surgery in May 2007 – and left the surgical theatre with no procedure being done due to the discovery of the already advanced spread of his cancer – he placed his life in God’s hands. He – and we – prayed for a miracle. Keith’s four daughters – Esther, Sarah, Ruth and Naomi – came to visit frequently. The email messages and phone calls Keith and I shared in the subsequent months showed him to be resolute in his faith and determined to get back to work again. But it was not to be. The relentless march of the cancer and related medical issues took their toll on his energy. The gravity of Keith’s illness came as a blow to all who knew this robust, vibrant, loving man.



I was blessed to have a visit with Keith in September of last year. At the conclusion of a Boston Symphony Orchestra European tour, I drove up to Yaxham to spend two days with him and Kathryn. In those days we shared, Keith seemed to possess a nearly super-human strength as he walked about his garden with me, picked fruit from trees and bushes, and engaged in deep conversations about serpent making, mouthpieces, varieties of wood, music, matters of faith and family, flowers and vegetables, and life in a small English village. He played the piano for me, at which time I learned he is a fine composer. I played his own python skin covered serpent for him and took delivery on an English Military serpent that Keith had made for me – his last instrument. And when I discovered a cracked mouthpiece of *lignum vitae* in his shop and said I would like to purchase it, he unceremoniously marched over to his lathe and turned down its shank so it would better fit the bore. It turned out to be the last time he worked in his shop. To say that our time together was bittersweet inadequately sums up the intensity of the friendship that we shared. As I drove away, I knew that unless there was a Divine miracle of healing, it would be the last time I would see my friend.

After our visit, I contacted the world-wide community of serpentists, informing players and enthusiasts alike of Keith’s illness and asking, if they were so inclined, if they would drop Keith a note to encourage him. In one of his last email messages to me, (December 14) Keith commented about the support that had been coming his way, “Meanwhile the continual awareness of great streams of prayer is still a wonder. One of the recent lovely developments has been that I have been getting, out of the blue, letters from CMI customers all over the world thanking me for how much joy the instruments have given them.”

He received messages, cards and letters from serpentists in Britain, Europe, Asia, Australia and America. A few days later (December 17), he wrote again, what would be his last email message to me, “I am going pretty well at present, thank the Lord. My days are of course quiet and not physically active! – but interesting with all the family involvement and such care given to me and thought given to whatever aspect of my life they can make easier; I am truly blessed more than I can say. Still almost every day I hear from someone new – that is, a serpent player who has just heard of my condition. The Lord be with you and yours. I am going pretty well at present, thank the Lord.” This from a man who was but a month from death. Such was Keith’s spirit of optimism. We had several brief phone conversations after that. As a surprise for him, I had arranged his Christmas carol *Dormi Jesu* for brass band, and sent him a score and recording of a performance I conducted with the New England Brass Band; he was deeply touched by the gesture, and that his music was reaching yet another audience. The ongoing outpouring of support from serpent players around the world continued to encourage him. In our last telephone conversation, just over a week before he died, he spoke again of the love and care he had been receiving from so many people (particularly from his family and devoted hospice care workers) and how he had put himself in God’s hands. His voice was weak and frail, but his mind was ever clear.

When Keith passed away on January 21 he received the healing he had prayed for. No longer suffering and now free of pain, he joined the God he loved. It was left to those of us here on earth to mourn his loss and honor his memory. His funeral on February 2 (at All Saints, Mattishall) was a joyous time of remembering Keith as a friend, maker of instruments and servant of Christ; he was buried in the churchyard of St. Peter’s Church in Yaxham. On April 19, on what would have been his 65th birthday, there will be a concert at St. Michael’s Church in Blackheath (London, at 7:00 PM) – where Keith and Kathryn worshipped for many years and where Keith often preached and taught – that will honor Keith by playing some of his music and his instruments. It also promises to be a time of celebration of the life of one we were all blessed to know.

Keith was my friend. And I miss him. Deeply. When I play the instruments and mouthpieces he made for me, I know his hand had lovingly moved over every square inch of them. I remember his smile, our conversations, and our correspondence. And I am the richer for having known this man – husband, father, craftsman, servant of the Lord. And I know many others feel this way as well.

Keith closed his December 14th email message with a characteristic benediction; as I read it, I can hear his voice, “Anyway dear brother, loving greetings from here. The Lord bless you all richly, and in whatever context, I look forward to our next meeting. Love from us here, Keith.”

Of course, Keith knew the context in which we would next meet.

Requiem aeterna dona eis, Domine.

Keith Rogers ~ instrument maker

By Jeremy West

Keith Rogers, cornett, serpent and oboe maker at Christopher Monk Instruments (CMI), died on the 21st of January after a lengthy struggle with pancreatic cancer.

Following a career in teaching, which culminated in the positions of Director of Music at two leading Northern Ireland grammar schools, as well as spending several years as a recorder maker, Keith joined the Christopher Monk

workshops in April 1992. Here, in partnership with the cornett player Jeremy West, and succeeding the late Christopher Monk (founding father of the cornett and serpent revivals), Keith spent the remainder of his life making copies of historic wind instruments. Building on his skills and experience as a recorder maker, he quickly adapted to the demands made by “all instruments that wiggle” (as they are affectionately known at CMI); instruments which are demanding on both player and maker alike. Using the treasure trove of clues and evidence extant in Christopher Monk’s own workshop, Keith picked his way through this mysterious and vexing labyrinth. But it was his unique mix of powerful intellect and enviable manual dexterity that enabled him so successfully to create fabulous wind instruments. Examples of his work live (and play) on and may be found across the world from New York to New Zealand, Aberdeen to Argentina.

An experiment to make an oboe *da caccia* using the same methods employed to manufacture a serpent, lead to a lasting partnership with leading oboe player and authority, Dick Earle. A *da caccia* (eventually built in the traditional way rather than using the method above), along with several models of historic oboe, became available as a result. For more than a decade these beautiful instruments have been sent to appreciative players from five continents.

Keith Rogers was born and brought up in Sussex; he studied music at the University of Wales at Bangor (BA Hons 1st Class 1965), lived in Belfast, then in London and, most recently, in rural Norfolk. He is survived by his wife, Kathryn, four daughters and six grandchildren.

Celebrating Keith

HIS MUSIC - HIS INSTRUMENTS - HIMSELF

7pm, Saturday 19th April 2008

at St Michael's, Blackheath

THE CONCERT IS FREE, AND ALL ARE WELCOME

For further information contact Kathryn.M.Rogers@gmail.com



Dr. Hélène Marie Thérèse Annette La Rue

1951 ~ 2007

Musician, organologist, musicologist, ethnomusicologist, museum curator and friend to serpentists Hélène La Rue died in Oxford 13th July 2007. Born in Croyden, Surrey, 4th December 1951, she was educated at Coloma Convent School, Croydon, and at the Royal College of Music. She studied music at Oxford from 1970 to 1974. As student she developed an interest in organology - the study of musical instruments and their classification - under the guidance of Anthony Baines, first curator of the Bate Collection. She continued to pursue her research widely in the areas of musical instruments and cultures, carrying out fieldwork in Japan, China and Europe. On completion of her doctorate, she joined the Pitt Rivers Museum in 1980, and after her appointment as Curator of the Bate Collection of Musical Instruments at Oxford University in 1995, she divided her time between the two museum collections.

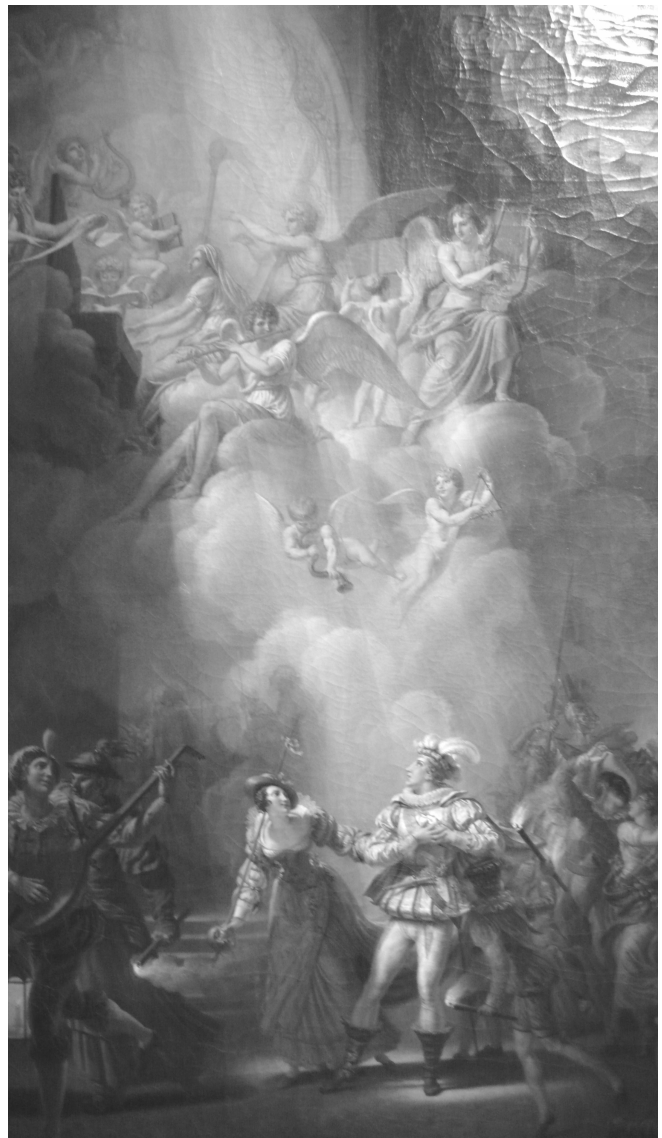
As a financially struggling student without grants to support her education, she worked part-time and applied energetically to foundations, charities, businesses, and anyone who might help. As a result, she became an accomplished fund-raiser, a skill she subsequently applied to any number of good causes. Among her friends, she displayed a wicked sense of humor and a facility for language; she was reportedly a dedicated and fluent punster.

As director of The Bate Collection, she carried on with the intentions of museum founder Philip Bate, who stipulated that the collection be maintained as a teaching and playing collection. She encouraged students to use the resources of the Bate, and her lectures in organology and ethnomusicology inspired many to explore the riches of historical and world instruments.

She was a person of many talents, a skilled lacemaker and embroiderer, and player of Northumbrian smallpipes. She loved making her own clothes, had a passion for hand-made shoes, and collected classic children's books. She directed the Anglican choir at her church. She owned a 1955 black Morris car and was a member of the Morris Car Society. Her publications include *Museums of Music: A Review of Musical Collections in the UK* (1933, with Kate Arnold-Forster) and many articles for scholarly anthologies and the *New Grove Dictionary of Music*. She was frequently heard on broadcasts of the BBC on Radio 4.

A requiem mass held in her honor took place at Blackfriars in Oxford on July 24, after first overflowing the originally scheduled venue of St Benet's Hall. She was laid to rest in the family cemetery in Surrey.

Condensed and paraphrased from information found in obituaries written by Susan Wollenberg, 'The Independent' newspaper, and various Oxford papers found online.



La Conversion d'Henri de Joyeuse by Jean Tardieu

The Future of Serpent Manufacture

With Keith Rogers no longer the go-to maker of quality authentic serpents, the question must be asked, "What do we do now for new serpents and repairs to old ones?" In an effort to address this critical issue, the following notes have been compiled.

- Jeremy West wrote, "I spent last week at Keith's home and workshop with Kathryn and with Nicholas Perry. Nicholas has now completed his first serpent (that is to say the pieces are all cut and together in one piece, prior to being finished and the whole prior to being leathered and keys fitted). This serpent is one that Nicholas started making with advice and guidance from Keith during the last months of his life. Keith's wisdom was poured out from his armchair in the sitting room (this an utterly uncanny echo of the situation in 1991 during Christopher Monk's decline, when I would visit him by his fireside at Stock Farm in

Surrey for advice and guidance). Nicholas is encouraged by this first instrument; by the way he is getting the hang of Keith's copy router (the big Bridgeport cutter from Christopher had to be sold when we moved out of commercial premises in London to go to Norfolk); and he is (cautiously) expressing interest in carrying on serpentine work for the next generation. It is still too early to say how, or even if, this will happen, but the preliminary signs are promising.

Meanwhile, Kathryn and I succeeded in making two new resin cornetts, the first resins to have been made since Keith was diagnosed in May last year. This was very exciting. And I started, with much help and guidance from Nicholas, to make mouthpieces (cornett mouthpieces of course!!). Mouthpiece making is something I have wanted to do for decades but, with Keith my partner at the workshop, and Christopher and other friends before that, it seemed a rather futile exercise. Better late than never though and I enjoyed the learning experience greatly.

It was a tremendous moment last week when Nicholas triumphantly raised the completed serpent above his head, and I played a new resin cornett on a buffalo horn mouthpiece made by myself!

During Keith's tragic and unforeseen demise, I envisaged the entire Christopher Monk Instruments project as a huge and intimidating mountain, hidden in the main part by heavy storm clouds. To find a way up it was, and remains, a daunting prospect. We do now, however, have a small team to go climbing and our feet are on the low slopes. Please feel free to publish anything that I wrote.... but I would, respectfully, draw your attention to the (very deliberate) "It is still too early to say how, or even if, this will happen...". In other words, Nick has his toe in the water and he finds the water interesting. But he not making promises yet that he either will or will not carry on the work.

Regarding enquiries, for now I think its best if they go to me at this email (j.west@ic.ac.uk). And I must redirect the CM website to do this too. I'll keep interested people interested whilst we are in the process of making our plans. This is exactly what I am having to do for the cornetts, so I'll be happy to do it for the serpents too.

- Michel Godard wrote about his collaboration with Matthias Wetter of Ossingen, Switzerland (<http://www.wetter-instrumente.ch/n2n/page.php>). "Just to let you know that the serpent *fac similé* from the Musée de la Musique in Paris (made by Matthias Wetter and Stephan Berger), is now ready and it is a fantastic instrument, with sound just like the original. I will do a concert at the *cit  de la musique* on March 14 to present the instrument to the public (concert with Sebastien Marcq: recorder, Marie Ange Petit: percussions and G rard Marais: guitar). The serpent we did choose from the Paris collection is very similar to

mine, probably the same maker, anonymous, probably 18th century (we'll know it for sure soon), lighter than a Baudouin. The facsimile just sound like mine, even better, with a rounder sound, intonation is the best I ever get, C, G,Bb and high E are on the spot! We started to work together two years ago on this instrument and I'm really glad that we get such a good one. While Matthias and Stephan will work together to make more instruments, they are not sure yet how much it will cost."



Matthias Wetter & Stephan Berger study serpents in their shop

Besides the current work of Wetter and the possible future manufacturing by West and Perry in the arena of wood - and - leather, aka "authentic", serpents, there is the availability of the various plastic serpents, very useful for beginners and as alternate instruments for those who already own wooden examples. Russ Kaiser continues to make very nice instruments ultimately based on the Baudouin design with some generous advice from Keith Rogers. (<http://kaiserserpents.com/>) His latest versions are fiberglass with a finish that mimics leather, and recently several were snapped up by experienced serpentists who found them to play quite agreeably, thinking they would come in handy as spare instruments or ones to use while traveling. The Early Music Shop also continues to manufacture the plastic foam resin serpents designed by David Harding, and these have a long history of satisfied owners. (<http://www.earlymusicshop.com/>)

More Exciting News

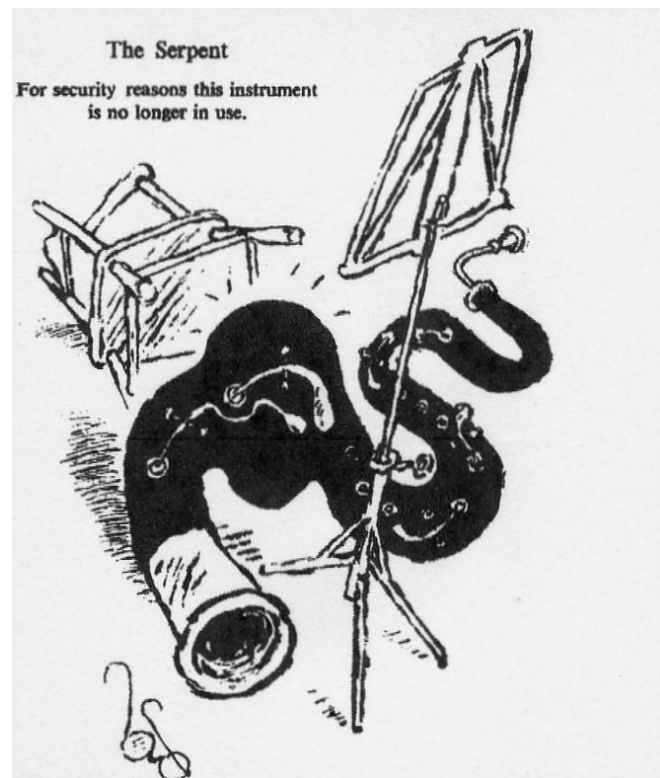
- The Worshipful Company of Musicians in the UK wish to draw your attention to their annual award £1000 for the benefit of students, encouraging research into organology. Rules and application forms may be obtained from clerk@wcom.org.uk. The award was established in 2004 and winners have been for medieval bone flutes (2005), acoustics of saxhorns (2006), and Lotz the maker in the context of 18th century makers (2007). Both the 2005 and 2007 winners have made replica instruments or parts of instruments to inform their research. The judges are particularly interested where students have undertaken experiments and/or practical making to inform archival research.

● Years ago, Keith Ryder ran across a website which contained information about the first municipal band in Elkhorn, Wisconsin (for readers outside of the USA, Elkhorn was and is a major seat of wind instrument manufacture). Mentioned on the website was the band's instrumentation, including the "serpentine" played by Henry Bradley, an important town father. The prospect of uncovering/discovering a serpent player in midwestern America in the mid-19th century prompted me to make an appointment with Doris Reinke, Elkhorn's village historian and namesake of the Walworth County Historical Society's Doris Reinke Research Center. Spending an afternoon with Doris, we pored over the yellowed pages of *The Independent*, the county's only newspaper in the 1800s as well as now. Fascinating as this was, after perusing all issues in the time span of interest and finding nothing useful about the band, we shifted to other material on file. We finally hit on two publications, *History of Walworth County, Wisconsin, Volume 1* by Albert C. Beckwith, and *The Concert Bands of Elkhorn: 1840s - 1982* by Elliott Kehl. From these we learned that Henry Bradley was a player in the Elkhorn band in the 1840's, but he played an ophicleide that he referred to as a "serpentine". His parents were co-founders of Elkhorn, and as a young man he went to California during the gold rush, only to return empty handed, becoming post master until 1893. He was then a village officer, member of the school board, etc; finally passing on in 1909. Of his adventure in the far west, he claimed that the only gold he ever saw there was money he got from selling the eggs of a chicken he found. - editor

● Keith also uncovered information about the "Seward Band" in Bloomington, Indiana starting in the year 1838. This was probably the first band to be organized in the town and was given its name because four members and the director were all from the Seward family. During the presidential campaign of William Harrison in 1840 (he won but died 31 days into his term in 1841) the band was given the chance to perform during his stop and took advantage of the opportunity to improve their performance quality. However, in place of a cornet they had only a bugle, and playing the alto and tenor parts were an "Ophe Cleide Horn" and "a twisted concern called a serpent."

● To wrap up this threesome of contributions to this newsletter, Keith referenced the book *Music in the Western World: A History in Documents* by Richard Taruskin and Piero Weis, 1984. This includes a chapter titled *A Musical Episode From the French Revolution*, which tells the story of the *Festival of the Supreme Being* in 1794. The effects of the French Revolution included the nationalization of formerly royal institutions, with the Royal School of Singing and Declamation becoming the National Institute of Music, better known as the *Conservatoire*. Teachers such as Gossec, LeSeut, Méhul were strong advocates of

the new national order. During the period of violent purging of the vestiges of the 'old way', often referred to as the Reign of Terror, Maximilien Robespierre established by decree the cult of the Supreme Being and appointed June 8, 1794 as the day on which the first *Festival of the Supreme Being* would be celebrated. It was decided that 2400 people, representing the various sections of Paris, should sing atop an artificial mountain and that all other people should follow their lead. For this, there was to be a new hymn as well as the *Marseillaise* with new and revised words. On June 7, from 7 PM until well after 10, many of France's most distinguished composers and music teachers were seen in every section of the city, violin or flute in hand, teaching the people of Paris to sing the new songs in tune. The *Festival of the Supreme Being* proved to be the most impressive of the French Revolution's many public ceremonies. One of the musicians participating was Jean Mathieu, the Conservatoire's first serpent teacher. One can only pause to reflect on that wayward section of Paris that saw a serpentist wander in after dinner saying, "OK everyone, gather around me so I can teach you the new songs for tomorrow night's festival. Just let my put the bocal in my serpent, here...." (Thanks also to Cliff Bevan's book *The Tuba Family* for some of this information).



● Andrew Lamb of the Bate Collection submitted the following, which he had received from Jo Fearnley, a member of Friends of the Bate. Andy writes, "Eric is a pseudonym to protect the innocent; real name: Patrick. I have no idea who he is."

Dear Eric,

I've had a chance to see the late R. Morley Pegge's ophimonocleide, so here's how to spot one. Its roughly half brass and half wood, wood below the waterline, brass above (bell and crook). The wooden bit is a "u" tube, looks nearly parallel from the outside, but the bore is actually gently conical. The two sides of the "u" are joined by the bend at the bottom. (There are) two "webs" each with three finger holes in - and they should have inserts to make a sharp edge for the fingers to seal against. From the mouthpiece the brass crook is much the same as that of an ophicleide or Serpent Forveille, and it leads into a brass "down - round-the-bend - up - round-the-bend - down into the wooden bit. The joint between crook and the brass bit provides a tuning slide like the ophicleide. The bottom loop of the brass bit may also pull out like an ophicleide to provide a second tuning slide. There are no finger holes in that brass bit (they are all six in the wooden bit), and there



an ophimonocleide

are no keys on that brass bit either - so quite different to the Serpent Forveille. From the wooden bit up to the bell mouth it's one single brass section; the one key is on this section. It stands normally open, just like the key nearest the bell of an ophicleide, and thus different to the bottom key of a Serpent Forveille, which as we know from the one you saw, stands closed. The ophimonocleide is thus much more an ophicleide than it is a Serpent Forveille. Which is what its name might suggest.

Editor's note: Cliff Bevan's book *The Tuba Family* (2nd Ed) has this to say about the ophimonocleide. "Five years later (i.e. after the appearance of the Serpent Forveille in 1823) the ophimonocleide appeared, invented by Jean-Baptiste Coëffet of Cahumont-en-Vexin. This upright serpent had a metal bell below which an open-standing key (as on an ophicleide) was provided with the intention of facilitating the playing of sharps and flats. It was to be closed only for all Cs and C#s, the E-flat and F of the fourth octave, and the B and F of the third octave. The instrument was built at *diapason de l'opéra*, but if the entire lower part of the butt was pulled out about two inches, it dropped to *diapason de la cathédrale*, the pitch of *serpents ordinaires*. At its lowest point, the crook had a reservoir where any water collected. It was, in fact, a wooden ophicleide. The crook contains a considerable proportion of straight tubing, although it travels through three curves before reaching the wooden portion, emerging into a soaring vertical bell section. The overall impression is that of an instrument combining elements of English bass horn, serpent, and tugboat." Of course, the ophimonocleide's fingering system still relies on two groups of three closely spaced finger holes like a serpent, which is quite different from the ophicleide system. But add the aforementioned mono-key complication, and you have an instrument that is very hard to define!

A Serpent Collection

By Bruno Kampmann

I own a wind instrument collection, and among those, 15 instruments of the serpent family. Most of them are in good playable condition, with mouthpieces, and if you wish you are invited to try them if you go to Paris.

Contact : Bruno Kampmann – 136 Boulevard Magenta (door code 43B97) F75010 Paris France. Tel : +33 621778774 +33 148787009 bkampmann@free.fr

A detailed description (in French) was published in my collection catalogues (LARIGOT special issues I, I bis, IX, XVI and XVII, edited by ACIMV).

A few of these serpents are pictured in this newsletter.

R40 - serpent Forveille in C, wood covered with black

Serpent Newsletter

leather, the S part is in wood and not in brass as usually built, 2 brass keys. Poor condition.

photo below

R358 - English serpent in C, wood covered with black fabric, no finger holes, 10 big brass keys, 2 brass stays, very unusual wood bell at the end. Good condition. Due to the big holes, the sound is more like an ophicleide than a serpent.

photo at right

R42 - upright serpent in C, copper covered with leather, 3 brass keys replacing the 3 left hand holes, crook not original, painted bell. Average condition.

photo at lower right

