

Serpent Newsletter

P.O. Box 954 Mundelein, Illinois 60060 USA

Newsletter for Serpent Enthusiasts

April 1, 2009

A Note from the Editor

This is another newsletter that just about wrote itself, with information flooding in. In addition to the regular columns, there are special articles, one dealing with the subject of cases for serpents and ophicleides.

A while back, I received a 'threat' from a company that planned to register two domain names similar to mine, www.serpentwebsite.net and www.serpentwebsite.org, and they wanted to 'warn' me. I never could figure out if this was a scam or something more innocuous. But it got me thinking, and after a quick check to see how inexpensive it would be to register those domain names along with the existing www.serpentwebsite.com, I decided to do so. The next step was to figure out how to set up the web server so that anyone typing the two variants by mistake would be redirected to the correct website. Easy to do by paying for the service, but not quite so easy to do for free. I finally pieced together enough information to set things up correctly, and now all three URL's, when entered into a web browser, will take the reader to the main .COM website. I did this partly to reserve the three main domain names for my use, but also to help visitors who might get the domain name wrong.

Please don't forget that the Serpent Newsletter is now distributed on a subscription basis everywhere, not just in Europe as in the past. If you get your newsletters from Nigel Nathan, you already know the drill. If you live outside of Europe, then you get them directly from me... If you have not contributed to the upkeep of this publication with a donation within the last two years, please send a payment according to the information in the About the Organization section of this newsletter.

By the way, this newsletter sets a new record for size

Paul Schmidt

Workshops

- The 2009 Serpentarium is on track to be another enjoyable and beneficial gathering. After the relocation experiment to Oxford two years ago, the event will once again be held at Nigel Nathan's Boswedden House mansion overlooking the rocky cliffs on the far southwestern coast of Cornwall, England. The workshop starts on Friday May 22nd and concludes in the evening of Monday the 25th. At this time, the Boswedden bed & breakfast is a full house, but nearby bed spaces may still be available. On-site camping is also a viable option - at reduced cost (newly built shower and toilets to serve). All meals, etc; will be at the house regardless of sleeping arrangements. Currently the players and non-combatants include Chris Gutteridge & Jayne Thomas (nc), Lizzie Gutteridge & Erik Martens (nc), Christian & Anna (nc) Körner, Doug Yeo, John Weber, Michèle, Mike (nc) & Adam (nc) Lomas, Paul Schmidt, Phil Humphries & Anita Boorman (nc), Shirley Civil-Hopkins, Stephan Berger, Wik Bohdanowicz & Anya Spackman (nc). The concert is expected to take place on Monday afternoon. The sessions will be lead by Phil Humphries with help from Doug Yeo. Train service into nearby Penzance is easy, and there will be participants with cars available to come and pick up those arriving that way. There is also a regional airport fairly close by if cars and trains are not your bag; make sure to check with Nigel about this first. If you have not yet signed up, or for any additional information, please contact Nigel using the contact information in the About the Organization section of this newsletter.

- The 25th Annual Early Brass Festival, after a very nice away-from-home event last year in New Orleans, will take place this year on July 17 through 19 at the University of Connecticut in New London. There is expected to be plenty to do for players of all early brasses, from the earliest natural instruments through the 19th Century brasses. Serpents and ophicleides are welcome, but should bring their players for best results. See www.historicbrass.org.

New Materials

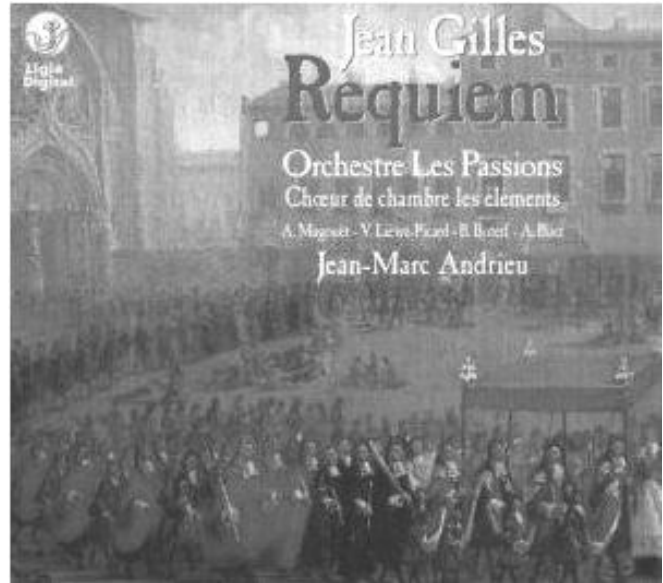
● *The Christmas Album: Festive Music from Europe and America*; EMI Classics / Capitol 0777 7 54529 2 1, *Carol Album 2*; EMI Classics D 104902, *Christmas Carols*; Musical Heritage Society 5489976; The Taverner Consort, Choir & Players, directed by Andrew Parrott, Stephen Saunders, ophicleide. Here are two CD recordings, and their subsequent re-issues, that feature some ophicleide in traditional Christmas songs. *The Christmas Album*, re-issued as disk 1 of the 4-CD set *Christmas Carols*, has Stephen Saunders playing on track 13, *Gloria* by Edmund Pascha. *Carol Album 2*, re-issued as disk 4 in the set, has Stephen playing on track 17, *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*, tune by Mendelssohn. All three are readily available online from places like Amazon and various eBay stores. They are not new releases, but are well worthwhile with many fine performances of carols.



● Berlioz Historical Brass (www.berliozhistoricalbrass.org), an informal collective of musicians, dedicates itself to the exploration and presentation of early 19th century brass instruments. For over 10 years, members and affiliates have written essays for the Historical Instrument Column in the International Tuba and Euphonium Association (ITEA) Journal. These past columns, thanks to the kindness of Jason Smith, editor of the ITEA Journal, now appear on the Berlioz Historical Brass website and can be accessed at www.berliozhistoricalbrass.org/itea.htm. The following titles are just a few of the 31 columns that may be of interest to Serpent Newsletter readers: *Not Quite the Serpent's Swan-Song* by Clifford Bevan [Winter 2001]; *What do you play in A Midsummer Night's Dream Overture?* by Clifford Bevan [Winter 1999]; *Serpent and Contrabassoon Acoustics* by D. M. Campbell [Summer

2002]; *Who Does Our Heritage Belong To?* by Arnold Myers [Spring 2004]; *Serpent of Wood and Metal* by Sabine Klaus [Fall 2005]; *America's First Serpents* by Craig Kridel [Winter 2007]; *Bass Horns and Russian Bassoons* by Craig Kridel [Summer 2003].

submitted by Kraig Kridel



● A new CD of music by Jean Gilles has been released by Orchestre Les Passions and the Chœur de Chambre les Éléments, Jean-Marc Andrieu directing. Gilles' *Requiem* makes up the first half of the recording, while the motet *Cantate Jordanis Incolæ* completes it; Volny Hostiou is the serpentist. Ligia Digital # LIDI 0202196-8, obtained from Amazon France.

The *Requiem* by Jean Gilles (pronounced like the second syllable of 'congeal', with the 'g' leaning more towards a soft 'j') is one of the great pieces of funeral music written in the Baroque era. Gilles (1668 - 1705) was head of music at Saint-Étienne in Toulouse, the successor of André Campra. He composed the *Requiem* on commission for the joint funeral of two Toulouse city leaders who had died within days of each other, but even though the music was well received during rehearsal, the men's sons backed out of the commission, refusing to pay. In response, Gilles withdrew the piece unperformed, and it remained among his personal papers until his own death at age 37; at his funeral it was given its first public performance. It was posthumously successful, being often performed throughout the 18th Century for the funerals of the great and famous, including composer Jean-Philippe Rameau, the king of Poland, and King Louis XV to name but three.

The composer's manuscript disappeared during the French Revolution, with two arrangements existing in libraries being the only published record of its structure at that time. The 1764 version by Michel Corrette written for Rameau's funeral increased the size of the orchestra and also added timpani and carillon to simulate the peal of church bells.

The later 1805 edition by Joseph Supries went further, adding horns, clarinets and bassoons. The best known version today is by Abbé Jean Prim, who in 1956 reworked Corrette's 1764 version, further bloating what should have been an intimate piece by adding more woodwinds plus horns and trumpets. For this recording, editors have compared three different unpublished manuscript versions from the period which are not so heavily edited as the aforementioned published versions, along with considerable research into the church orchestras in Toulouse during Gilles' time, and they have succeeded in reconstituting a new version as close to the original as possible.

The circumstances of the origin of the motet *Cantate Jordanis Incolæ* are unknown, other than the likelihood that it was composed for some important event. In its seven movements it tells the biblical Old Testament story of Zachariah, who upon being told by an angel that his sterile wife Elizabeth would bear him a son, refused to believe and was struck mute. Nine months later he recovered his speech when asked to name the boy, who grew to become John the Baptist. As with the *Requiem*, the text is sung in Latin. This piece was frequently performed between 1728 and 1771 in the programs of the series known as Concert Spirituel. On this CD, the light nature of the motet contrasts nicely with the more somber requiem.



The performances on this CD use period instruments exclusively, consisting of nine bowed strings, theorbo, two flutes, two oboes, bassoon, serpent and organ. The sixteen member chorus includes four female sopranos, three countertenors, three tenors, three baritones, and three basses, schooled here to sing as closely as possible to what period French church Latin is believed to have sounded like. The soloists are soprano Anne Magouët, countertenor Vincent Lièvre-Picard, tenor Bruno Boterf, and baritone Alain Buet. The ensemble tuned at A=392, using a temperament by a Gilles contemporary, acoustician Joseph Sauveur.

This recording reveals a flawless performance by proficient and sensitive performers, and the music is delightful to listen to. The soloists are in fine voice, each sounding

totally appropriate to the style of the period. The juxtaposition of the male altos with the female sopranos is seamless. Perhaps most importantly for serpent aficionados, the music gives the instrument both ample and active ensemble opportunities as well as some nice solos, and Volny Hostiou gives a beautiful performance. The technical quality of the recording is also transparent and has a natural presence in an authentic acoustical environment. This is a fine example of the serpent being used in the Baroque music style.

Note that this CD, according to the record label distributor, will not be released outside of Europe. The review copy was easily obtained from Amazon France www.amazon.fr, where it may be found by searching for 'Gilles Requiem'. Since there are other recordings that include different versions of this *Requiem*, you may recognize this particular CD by its cover art featuring a crowd scene and the word *Requiem* in bold red letters. The CD liner and booklet is exclusively in French; working in collaboration with personnel of the orchestra, Paul Schmidt has prepared an English translation and has placed a PDF file of its CD booklet format on the Discography page of the Serpent Website, which readers may download and print.

- Another quick viewer spotted a serpent in a recent movie. *Bedtime Stories* is an Adam Sandler vehicle, directed by Adam Shankman, that appeared in December of 2008. The Adam Sandler character tells bedtime stories to two kids, and elements of the stories have a way of coming true in his personal life the next day. The serpent appears briefly a couple of times during the first bedtime story fantasy scene in a castle, as part of a small band that also includes a crumhorn, recorder, lute, etc. The sound of the serpent is not present. Doug Yeo met the person who acted as the player during his trip to San Francisco, mentioned in the Where Serpents Gather section of this newsletter. Doug



Keith Ryder with his new Kaiser serpent



writes, "The serpent player is Doug Thorley, a Bay area trombone and sackbut player. He said he was contracted as an extra in the movie to play in a Renaissance band in one scene. He's seen holding a serpent (he said it was some kind of awful plastic thing - he did not know whether it was manufactured or just a prop). Apparently he's seen in a scene just above the king's head. They weren't playing, just holding and looking like they were playing."

- Gordon Bowie's serpent concerto *Old Dances in New Shoes* is available from the composer through his website at <http://www.s-press.com/GWB/gwb.htm>. The piece is available with both string orchestra and piano accompaniments. Range is low C to A-flat above middle C. Fully chromatic and extremely challenging, Doug Yeo recently performed its premiere (see Where Serpents Gather in this newsletter).

- A Christmas ornament in serpent shape from the Christmas Revels (see Where Serpents Gather) is available on their shop website: [http://store.revels.org/.....just put 'serpent'](http://store.revels.org/.....just put 'serpent' into the search field and you'll find it) into the search field and you'll find it.

- In Nick Byrne's CD *Back From Oblivion*, he performed the premiere of the middle movement from Simon Proctor's *Ophicleide Concerto*, at that time a work in progress. Simon called to say that he has completed the work, and a copy is in Nick's hands already. If you wish to obtain a copy of the sheet music, order directly from Simon Proctor, 8 Henbane Close, Grove Green, Maidstone ME14 5UW, England.



Serpent Militaire at the London Royal College of Music wood & leather, unsigned early 19th C, photo by Doug Yeo

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)

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

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

(*fiberglass serpents after Baudouin*)

(*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>

Nicholas Perry
224 North Street
Luton
LU2 7QN
England

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

Derek Farnell
82 Crumpsall Lane
Manchester M8 5SG
England

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

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

Matthias Wetter & Stephen Berger
Wetterberger Serpents
CH-8475 Ossingen
Switzerland

NEW!

Phone: 0041 (0) 5231 73184
<info@serpentmakers.ch>
<www.serpentmakers.ch>

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

(*alphorns and serpents*)

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

Where Serpents Gather

- Douglas Yeo, on sabbatical from his position as bass trombonist of the Boston Symphony for six months (January-June 2009) has been keeping busy with a variety of teaching and performing activities including several serpent-centric events. For a complete description, see www.yeodoug.com/sabbatical.html.

In February, Doug traveled to Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he led the first Highland Hills Festival of Sacred Music. In addition to coaching and conducting brass quintets from Grand Valley State University and Cornerstone University, Doug played serpent with the Festival Choir. He performed two pieces he had previously recorded on his CD, *Le Monde du Serpent*, the *Alleluia* (chant) and Nicholas Roze's *Dominum Salvum*. On the same trip, Doug also played a recital at Northwestern College in St. Paul, Minnesota, where he included Cliff Bevan's solo for serpent and piano *Variations on The Pesky Serpent* on the program.

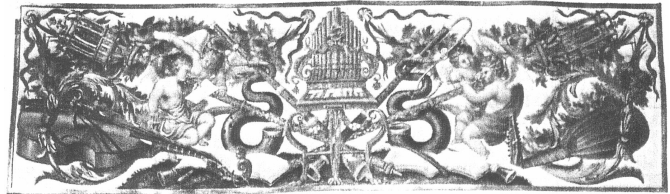
In March, Doug joined with students at New England Conservatory of Music in a performance of Beethoven's *Septet, Op. 20*, as arranged for winds by Henrich Crusell (edited by Mark Rogers). Crusell's 19th century arrangement, which he retitled *Grand Serenade*, is scored for an unusual ensemble of flute, E-flat clarinet, two B-flat clarinets, two bassoons, trumpet, two horns, bass trombone and serpent. William Drury, conductor of the Conservatory's "Jordan Winds" asked Doug to collaborate with the students which introduced them to the unique timbre of the serpent.

Doug has done, and is planning on doing, many other things during his sabbatical, some of which are mentioned elsewhere in this section.



Tony George with the Monstre ophicleide
 Copyright Guardian News & Media Ltd 2008
 photo by Frank Baron and used by permission
 (a better quality photo appeared in the print version
 of this newsletter but could not be used in the online
 version due to copyright issues)

● On the 26th of August in 1846 at the Birmingham Town Hall in Birmingham, England, one of the great oratorios was given its premiere. The unveiling of Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy's new composition *Elijah* (aka *Elias*) was one of the most important moments in Birmingham's history, the concert that established Birmingham on the international cultural map. Commissioned by the Birmingham Triennial Music Festival, *Elijah* was conducted by the composer at the premiere, and was an overwhelming success with eight



encores. Mendelssohn wrote afterwards that, "No concert of mine went so admirably the first time of execution or was received with such enthusiasm by both the musicians and the audience". But Mendelssohn revised the score before the second performance and it is this revised version which is well known today. The 1846 version has not been heard by audiences since the premiere performance.

Approaching the Mendelssohn bicentenary in 2009, the Ex Cathedra choir and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment (OAE) decided to recreate the original version in a new historically informed performance. Ex Cathedra member Derek Acock did extensive research to piece together the original performance, drawing on a variety of sources, most notably the organist's full score that Mendelssohn specially marked up for the premiere. Acock said, "The version performed on 26 August 1846 at Birmingham Town Hall deserved the reception and accolades it received. Some commentators have suggested that the work was initially flawed, but I believe this performance will demonstrate that, on the contrary, some of Mendelssohn's first thoughts were better. The performance of the 1846 version of *Elijah* is not just an interesting historical exercise – it can stand in its own right. But recreating the original score is only part of the story. It has also been fascinating to discover that there were up to 400 performers and that the audience totaled 2,000. Modern health and safety legislation makes it difficult to imagine how they could have all fitted into Town Hall – but the records are clear!"

Cliff Bevan wrote on the subject of using a monstre ophicleide for a recreation of the *Elijah* premier, "My own feelings are that it is very unlikely that it was used in the premiere of Mendelssohn's *Elijah*." However, after the print version of this newsletter issue went to press, he wrote a correction, "I had forgotten about the book written about this event: Audrey Duggan: *A Sense of Occasion: Mendelssohn in Birmingham 1846* (Birmingham, Brewin Books, 1998).

Pages 20-21: 'Mendelssohn particularly specified three ophicleides and these had had placed at the back of the band. One of them, as can be seen from the programme, was a monstre ophicleide . . .'

Page 27. Extract from *The Times*: 'Old familiar faces met the eye . . . Prospero standing beside his monstre ophicleide, that resembled in magnitude a pipe of the great organ'.

Page 74. Here she reprints the programme, which includes: 'OPHICLEIDES./Messrs. Ellison (London)/Thurston (Birmingham)/MONSTRE OPHICLEIDE./ M. Prospero (London).'" So, Ex Cathedra is on target with their



Doug Yeo plays serpent in a rehearsal with the Boston Classical Orchestra for the premiere of Bowie's "Old Dances With New Shoes"

inclusion of the Monstre in their performance. The print version had an insert with this correction.

This performance called for Ex Cathedra to assemble its 40th Anniversary Chorus of over 100 professionally-trained singers, and the OAE's numbers swelled to over 70 period instrument players, including the double woodwind and ophicleides used in 1846. The concert was conducted by Jeffrey Skidmore, Ex Cathedra's Artistic Director. The role of *Elijah* was sung by James Rutherford, and he was joined by Ex Cathedra's own team of highly acclaimed soloists.

The concert took place on the evening of Saturday, October 18, 2008. Christopher Morley of the Birmingham News wrote, "I certainly wasn't alone in sensing the spirit of Mendelssohn hovering around Birmingham Town Hall on Saturday evening..... (Jeffrey) Skidmore must have felt the mantle of the composer more than most, standing where Mendelssohn himself had stood 162 years ago to reveal the glories of this masterpiece to the world..... All the drama, the tension, release and solace of the music, characteristics which heavy Victorianised layers of tradition had suppressed, were here in abundance. Rasping strings, probing brass (including the world's only contrabass ophicleide) and eloquent woodwind underpinned the magnificent projection and diction of the versatile choristers.... Heading an excellent team of solo singers was James Rutherford, for whom the part of the imposing but sorrowing *Elijah* might have been written. He was simply the business."

Before the concert, the organizers decided to try and get a contrabass (or Monstre) ophicleide for the performance. They contracted Anthony (Tony) George of Edinburgh to play the part, and the search began to find a playable instrument. While there are various monstres in museums in Europe, the playable ones can be counted on one finger. Robb Stewart first made one for Phil Palmer, and subsequently made another. The second instrument was

reportedly destroyed in a car crash, leaving the first one as the lone playable example. After Phil Palmer's death, his instrument was sold to retired band director and instrument collector Ron Johnson of Cooperstown, New York. Tony was able, with help from various ophicleide players in the States, to locate Ron and arrangements were made to borrow the instrument. According to an article in the Cooperstown Daily Star edition of October 4, Tony offered to pay shipping expenses as well as give two tickets to the sold-out performance. Johnson accepted and made arrangements to ship the instrument overseas.

Reached by phone afterwards, Ron Johnson had many interesting things to add to the above information. Ron regularly plays ophicleide in his local town band, covering anything from saxophones to tubas parts; he also uses the monstre in this band. When the call came to loan the instrument to the OAE, he happily accepted. He built a crate and inscribed the panels with messages such as, "Musical Instrument - Handle With Care", and also the name "George". Ron had heard that Phil's contrabass serpent (aka Anaconda) had been named George, and decided to dub the monstre with the same moniker. Finally, he added the tantalizing phrase, "Ophicleides Are Not Extinct" to the panels, and sent it on its way via United Parcel Service. Unfortunately, US customs was not amused, apparently thinking that the crate contained some sort of bones or related contraband, and they returned it to sender. This of course endeared Ron to the UPS driver who had to return the crate. Ron asked why US customs could not bother to even Google the word 'ophicleide' to see that this coincided with the cautions about musical instrument!



Doug Yeo plays ophicleide in a rehearsal with the Boston Classical Orchestra for a performance of Handel's "O Ruddier Than The Cherry"

After clearing things up with customs and advising the concert organizers of the delay, Ron sent it out a second time, and it made it over to England without further complications. He said that Tony made some alterations, primarily in the area of adding rubber bands and such to improve the seal of the pads covering the tone holes, and that subsequently the instrument has had a custom made set of new pads fitted, and now it plays better than ever.

London's The Guardian news website ran a brief podcast interview with Tony in the process of learning to play the monstre. Tony commented, with self deprecating humor, that with its unique characteristics made playing it like, "Patting your head whilst rubbing your stomach whilst riding a unicycle through a mud bath".

Peter Trethewey of Ex Cathedra wrote to this newsletter that the performance went well, and that it was recorded for later broadcast. BBC Radio 3 wrote to say that any ophicleide enthusiasts will want to tune in to the broadcast of the concert recording, currently scheduled to appear on the 'Performance on 3' show on Friday, May 8 at 7 PM. The performance won't be available for actual download, but people will be able to listen to the performance for up to 7 days after the broadcast via the BBC iPlayer.

Great efforts were made to reach Tony in hopes of recording his comments on the experience of learning this monstre and the actual performance. Many serpentists and notable music figures in the UK were involved, but unfortunately all attempts to reach Tony were fruitless.

Hopefully, we will all be able to listen to this historic performance with our own ears, either live on the radio or via the BBC website.

- On Sunday, November 23, 2008, Doug Yeo performed with the Boston Classical orchestra under the baton of director Steven Lipsitt in Boston's Faneuil Hall. Doug played serpent for the premiere Gordon Bowie's *Old Dances in New Shoes*. The piece is an homage to traditional Baroque-style dances, but with an up-to-date jazzy feel. As an encore, Doug played ophicleide in the aria *O Ruddier Than the Cherry* from Handel's *Acis and Galatea*. Besides the two early brass selections, the orchestra also played two early symphonies, Haydn's *No. 10* and Mozart's *No. 29*.

On the Friday preceding the concert, November 21, Doug appeared on Boston's National Public Radio station WBUR's show 'Here & Now' with Robin Young. Doug and Robin discussed the serpent and ophicleide, with Doug playing examples on serpent. At the time of this writing, the program may still be heard on the station's website at http://www.here-now.org/shows/2008/11/20081121_5.asp under the Reviving Old Instruments link.

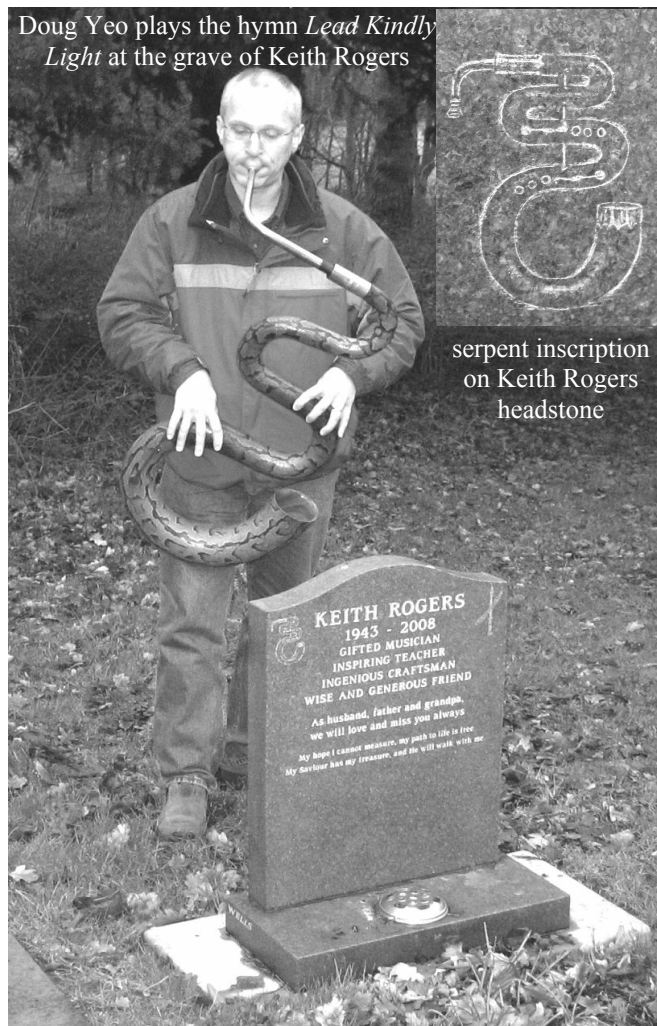
- Craig Kridel participated in the 8th Annual Moravian Music Conference, held in October 2008, at Moravian College in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Craig presented *The Serpent and the Bass Horn in the Early 19th Century Northern Moravian Province*, representing three years of



Trombonist Bruce Randall (center) joins the Mellstock Band for a tune in The Christmas Revels at Harvard University's Sanders Theatre in Cambridge. L-R: David Townsend (concertina), Charles Spicer (oboe), Bruce Randall, Phil Humpries, (serpent), Tim Hill (clarinet). Photo by Roger Ide, courtesy The Revels, used by permission

research on the use of these instruments in America. He then performed in the famed Central Moravian Church for the Conference's final concert, playing the Latham serpent (an 1830s orchestral instrument similar to what is on display in the Moravian Museum) on Douglas Yeo's arrangement of the Haydn *Divertimento* and performing German bass horn for the re-premiere of two early 19th century Moravian works from Bethlehem: *Kommt, ach kommt ihr Gnadenkinder* by Johann Christian Bechler, with text by Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf, and *Heiger Schauer deiner Nahe* by Andreas Jakob Romberg, with text by Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller. Modern editions of both anthems have been prepared Nessa Glenn of Sarastro Music [let@sarastro.co.uk]. Craig continues to research the Moravian serpent and will be adapting a Christopher Monk instrument (owned by Dick Fuller) to replicate the serpent from the Moravian community of Lititz, Pennsylvania. A full account of this project will appear in a forthcoming Historical Instrument Column in the International Tuba and Euphonium (ITEA) Journal.

- Bodie Pfof in California will be performing the *Paulus Overture* with the Tulare Symphony in Visalia, CA on April 25 at 7:30 PM, see <http://tcsymphony.org/> for details.

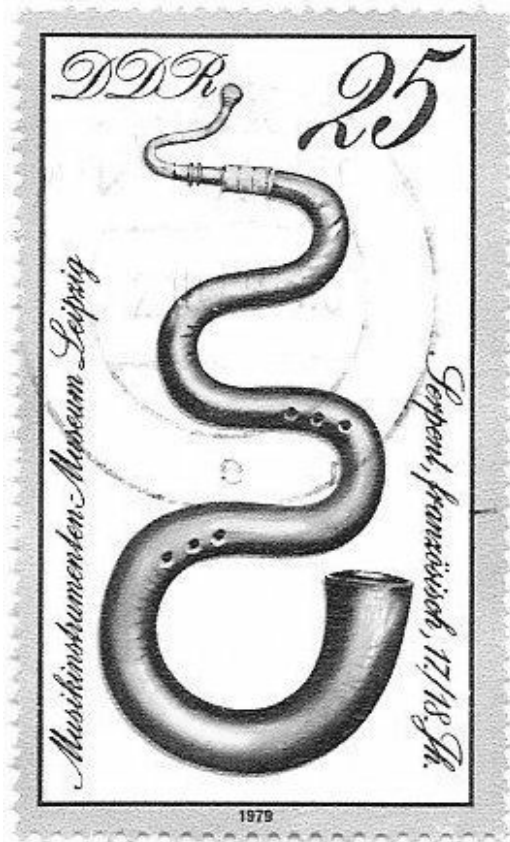


Doug Yeo and Phil Humpries with their English military serpents backstage during *The Revels*

- On a recent trip to England, Doug Yeo made a stop at the cemetery at St. Peter's Church in Yaxham, where his friend, serpent maker Keith Rogers is buried. Doug had not been able to attend Keith's funeral, but had desired to play Keith's favorite hymn, *Lead Kindly Light* there. Now, standing by the serpent inscribed headstone, Doug was able to join his wife Pat and Keith's wife Kathryn for an impromptu gift of music, using that same Victorian hymn and playing on Keith's own plumwood serpent with python skin. Pat took some photos, two of which are printed in this newsletter.
- Sue Bradley in Australia writes, "Last October I played *Midsummer Night's Dream Overture*, with the Victorian Youth Symphony Orchestra. I am a bit long in the tooth for the orchestra, but they needed an ophicleide! And it was the first orchestra I ever played with, when I was 16. Then, on February 28 (2009) in an outdoors concert of lighter music, I played the ballet music for Gounod's *Faust*, with Stonnington Symphony. Very simple music, but pleasant.
- During the week of February 1, 2009, Doug Yeo resided in the San Francisco area, rehearsing and playing with one of America's leading baroque ensembles, Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, in their four performances of Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, as directed by Nicholas McGegan. Doug writes, "In such a group, made up of 19th century wind instruments and a relatively small string section by modern orchestra standards, the ophicleide brings a strong bass to the table. And it is not every concert that finds PBO venturing so late into the 19th century in terms of repertoire. Mendelssohn's scoring is ingenious, and to play this piece again ... (in the week)... of what would have been Mendelssohn's 200th birthday was a rare and rewarding experience. For the concerts in Berkeley, I was asked to join John Prescott, PBO's pre-concert program annotator, in a discussion about the Mendelssohn's use of the ophicleide with appreciative audiences." The performances were Thursday the 5th at Herbst Theatre in

San Francisco, Friday the 6th at the First United Methodist Church in Palo Alto, and two performances at Berkeley's First Congregational Church on Saturday the 7th and Sunday the 8th.

- Thomas Hardy's beloved Wessex was a place in the mind to celebrate the winter solstice in the 38th annual production of *The Christmas Revels*. Consisting of 18 performances from December 12th through the 30th, the event took place at Harvard University's Sanders Theater in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The English novelist's vigorous country musicians had little respect for the boundaries between tavern and church so long as they made a joyful noise. With help from The Mellstock Band, the organizers of The Revels recreated a village "quire" (singers accompanied by string and wind instruments including the



Old East German postage stamp with serpent image commemorating the Musikinstrumenten Museum in Leipzig

serpent) and evoked the joys of the season in carols, anthems, rounds, and old favorites in novel settings. In addition to The Mellstock Band, featured performers in this joyous musical and theatrical celebration included musician David Coffin, soloist Mary Casey, The Pinewoods Morris Men, Cambridge Symphonic Brass Ensemble, actors Richard Snee and Tim Sawyer, the Casterbridge Children, a lusty Village Quire, and the attending public. Serpentist Phil Humphries of The Mellstock Band also delighted the audiences with a recitation of Thomas Hardy's *The Choirmaster's Burial*. Phil was joined by Doug Yeo to give

a pre-concert "Inside Revels" talk on December 19-20, having conversation and playing some duets on their English military serpents. Their time together allowed Doug and Phil to compare their English Military serpents; Phil's being an original by Francis Pretty and Doug's being Keith Rogers' last instrument based on Andrew van der Beek's Pretty serpent. After those shows, they retired to the nearby John Harvard Tavern and enjoyed some pints.

- In the coming months, Doug Yeo is planning to attend the biennial Serpentarium in England, do serpent-related research at several museums and collections in England, and produce a DVD on how to approach the serpent that will be filmed at the Utley Collection in South Carolina in June. In July, he will play ophicleide and join with Craig Kridel (bass horn), Lowell Greer (natural horn) and David Loucky (trombone) at the Early Brass Festival in Connecticut in the premiere performance of Cliff Bevan's work for brass quartet and choir, *The Seasons*, in tribute to Felix Mendelssohn.

About the Organization

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Well Done, Cliff Bevan

Clifford Bevan has been announced as the recipient of the 2008 Historic Brass Society Christopher Monk Award for his important work as a scholar, performer, publisher and teacher. Bevan's dedication to the history and performance of the tuba, serpent, ophicleide, and cimballo in particular, has brought about a greater understanding of the world of

low brass instruments, and has put their development into a clearer perspective. Bevan's book *The Tuba Family* has been cited as the definitive work on the subject. A presentation of the Award is planned to be held at the upcoming joint meeting of the Galpin Society and the Historic Brass Society in London (July 7-11, 2009).



Cliff Bevan at the piano in a 1960s music video with the Temperance Seven playing "Everybody Loves My Baby"



The Historic Brass Society established the Christopher Monk Award in 1995 to honor performers, scholars, teachers, makers, and others who have made significant and life-long contributions to the brass field. The late Christopher Monk, himself a performer, brass instrument maker, scholar, and teacher was perhaps the most important promoter of the early brass field of music. Past recipients of the HBS Christopher Monk Award have been: Edward Tarr, Herbert Heyde, Keith Polk, Mary Rasmussen, Hermann Baumann, Bruce Dickey, Stewart Carter, Trevor Herbert, Renato Meucci, Crispian Steele-Perkins, Gunther Schuller, Robert Barclay, Robert King (awarded posthumously), and Clifford Bevan.

Excerpted from the award's nomination process, as reprinted in the ITEA Journal, Volume 36, Number 2, Winter 2009, "With the appearance of *The Tuba Family* in 1978, published by...Faber & Faber Limited and later reprinted by Piccolo Press in an expanded second edition, Dr. Bevan merged a brass player's interests and intuitive knowledge with a musicologist's precision and substantial

historical information. Christopher Monk attributed the book as the most important guide to his understanding of the serpent, and Bevan, by accepting the challenge of placing the tuba within the context of historical low brass, assisted a generation of brass players and researchers in understanding the evolution and musical role of the tuba."

"Bevan's contributions to the early brass field, however, are not represented solely by the publication of *The Tuba Family*. He...prepared a groundbreaking treatment of the cimballo that has been widely received in the tuba world. He has served as an officer of the Galpin Society and contributor to that organization's journal and, since 1993, he has maintained a column in the International Tuba and Euphonium Association (ITEA) Journal, preparing widely acclaimed educational essays about historical brass topics."

"As a player he was (a) member of the London Serpent Trio during the time of Christopher Monk and has assumed the role of that ensemble's spokesperson. A former orchestral tubist and London West End session player, he is still engaged by the Horniman Museum, the University of Edinburgh Collection of Historical Musical Instruments, and others for radio and television demonstrations. Also, in a not commonly acknowledged aspect of Bevan's performing career, he was the arranger, trombonist, and pianist in The Temperance Seven, a popular music group with a 1961 British #1 top of the charts recording. Managed by 'the fifth Beatle', Sir George Martin, the Beatles appeared as a warm-up group for the Temperance Seven, leading to Bevan's friendship with George Harrison. Lennon-McCartney's *Honey Pie* was in fact homage to the group..."

If you would like to see Cliff Bevan at the piano with the Temperance Seven during their heyday, performing *Everybody Loves My Baby*, go to the YouTube link <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zcelC9xF19A>, and observe how musicians with pointy beards never seem to age.... Also Amazon lists several CDs by the group.

Making a Good Case for the Serpent

by Paul Schmidt

Attending the Historic Brass Society's Early Brass Festival in New Orleans last Summer, I once again lamented having to schlep a large, wheeled ophicleide case around, with a heavy serpent hard shell case hanging on my shoulder by a strap and a backpack on both shoulders as well. Even when I don't take the ophicleide, the serpent case alone tends to slowly pull my shoulder down as the muscles tire, and eventually my back feels like it needs a good twist by a giant to snap it back into alignment. I carry the backpack for things useful at the festival, such as note pad, music, pen, camera, pocket digital audio recorder, etc; I do this because I can have it with me in the frequent lectures, whilst leaving the cumbersome serpent case over by the



Philharmonia Baroque low brass players, L-R: Douglas Yeo (ophicleide), Douglas Thorley (bass trombone), Richard Cheetham (alto trombone), McDowell Kenley (second 'bone)

door, and hence gain ready access to the smaller items without needing to open and close the large case all the time.

There in the sweltering July atmosphere, I started to think about combining the backpack and the serpent case. Why not have a lightweight back-packable serpent gig bag that could also hold the sundries? This would be easy to carry, and the ophicleide, when I have it along, would be easier to manage without the larger serpent case hanging from its shoulder strap. Of course, the hard case would still be needed for transportation to and from the event, but once there the gig bag could take over the serpent carrying function.



Michel Godard models his new serpent gig bag made by Stephen Berger of the Wetterberger shop

About that time, I was sent a photo of a serpent gig bag made by the Wetterberger shop for their serpents, as modeled by Michel Godard. Michel wrote, ““While working on the new serpent with Stephan Berger (of Wetterberger) in his "atelier de cuir" in Switzerland, I was looking at his beautiful handmade bags hanging on the walls, dreaming of something similar for the instrument. My old serpent gig bag looks just big enough to have problems taking it with me on the plane. Then, one day, Stephan came up with his new beautiful serpent gig bag, a piece of art, great design, amazing handcraft, and very cozy for the instrument.... And on top of it the serpent looks much smaller! No more trouble at the airport, dreams come true. Contact Stephan Berger at atelierdecuir@bluewin.ch or www.serpentsmakers.ch, phone +41329611188.”

The Wetter/Berger gig bag, while very nice, is expensive at about \$800, and lacked one feature I desired, namely the lack of bulk and flexibility to allow it to be rolled up into a small bundle and stowed inside the hard shell case during those to-and-from trips. I drew up various plans for the ideal serpent gig bag, and eventually settled on a design. Then, in collaboration with the Guru of Gig Bags, Donna Altieri, a prototype bag was manufactured.



the new Altieri serpent gig bag designed by Paul Schmidt showing nested bocal stowage, shoulder strap & side handle

The case is without padding for several reasons. First, padding is not very useful against blows strong enough to damage the serpent, and its utility is mostly in the area of protecting against abrasions and small knocks. A simple cloth sheath will protect as well as padding against abrasions, and (unlike instruments of brass) small knocks are tolerated by serpents with ease. Second, padding would make the case too bulky to roll up small enough to fit inside the hard shell case. Third, padding makes the case more expensive and complicated to design. Finally, the primary mode of carrying the gig bag is as a back pack, and



Paul Schmidt models his new serpent gig bag made by Donna Altieri in its backpack mode

here the instrument is shielded by the body when walking, and should not suffer impacts with doorways and other objects.

The bag is designed to hold the brass bocal inside, nestled within the bends of the instrument on the sides, protected on the front by the player's body, and by the thickness of the instrument towards the back. It is held in place by a combination of pouches at either end plus a large Velcro flap in the middle. It is easy to secure and remove, but will not come loose on its own. The outside of the bag has a large zippered pouch, sized to hold even the largest music folder, plus items such as writing pads. Also inside the pouch is a courier bag style insert, which has several mesh pouches on a thin yet stiff panel, using Velcro for pouch closures. These pouches hold mouthpieces, camera, audio recorder, electronic tuner or pitch pipe, and other sundries. This insert can be removed by simply slipping it out of the large bag pouch, and this makes it easy to get at the items stowed in the small pouches. The insert also has cloth loops, as in attaché cases, for carrying pens and pencils.

The gig bag opens along three sides with two zippers that pull towards the center, much like the method used on soft sided luggage. It has two adjustable shoulder straps, unpadded because the bag with instrument and sundries is light weight and also because the bag will not usually be used for long treks (and padded straps add to the bulk), plus a detachable shoulder strap and cloth strap handles at the side and top. The entire case is made from rip-stop nylon and narrow nylon mesh straps (as on seat belts). It is sized to fit most church serpents, but anyone wishing to order one for themselves would be well advised to send a tracing of the instrument outline on a large piece of paper along with the order. The bag by itself rolls up small enough to fit between any of the bends of the serpent while

stowed inside a hard shell case, and the courier bag insert, unburdened of its contents, easily slips into the hard case on top of the serpent.

After seeing my gig bag, Doug Yeo ordered a similar one, plus a similar one with padding designed by Altieri, plus padded handles & backpack straps that hide away. It has the same tight fitting inner dimensions as the unpadded version, but with a quilted lining and closed cell foam on the large front and back panels. It is a cross between the all-nylon design and something a little more substantial. Doug wrote, "The Altieri bags arrived (and) I could not be more pleased. You know about the basic bag since you have the first one. I asked her to make mine the same as yours. I am very pleased. It does everything I hoped it would - basic protection, very well made. Both my CMI and Baudouin serpents fit in both bags- my bocals also fit in both bags. My padded Altieri serpent bag worked beautifully on my flights from Boston to Grand Rapids to Minneapolis to Boston. Safe and sound; I just had to be sure some Bozo didn't try to put a huge carry on bag on top of it. Donna did a great job and it was your design that made it happen. Thank you."



Doug Yeo's padded serpent gig bag made by Donna Altieri

Donna Altieri makes these for a fair price; \$150 for the unpadded version and \$240 for the padded version. She can be reached at www.altieribags.com, via mail at Altieri Instrument Bags, 1 Galapago Street, Denver CO 80223 USA, by phone at 303-291-0658, or by email at info@altieribags.com.

My gig bag design is not the only one along these lines. Guy Smith wrote, "I saw on the serpent forum that you were asking for examples of gig bags. I've attached a photo of the one I put together for my Monk. It's just a simple zippered cordura shell lined with Polartec. The pocket holds the bocal and mouthpiece. I carry my music, stand, and other impedimenta separately. The Polartec provides pretty minimal padding, but it's OK for light duty with a bit of care and its compact when it's folded up. If I were carrying it around a lot, I'd probably add at least 1/2" of high density foam padding. If I ever take it on an airline, I'll make a hard case and take this one along to carry it around when I get there." (See Forum <http://serpentforum.informe.com/>)

Doug Yeo has more to report, "A couple of bits on serpent cases. When I visited Keith Rogers in September 2009, he told me that Bass Bags, the maker of the serpent case that he was able to supply for a number of years, had gone quiet and had not responded to his repeated emails and phone calls. He assumed they were no longer in business. Nick Perry needed cases for the new serpents he's made so another contact attempt was made - and they are still in business. People might want to know this; they can order serpent cases directly from Bass Bags. Kathryn Rogers paid £107.16 for a case (not including VAT and shipping)." Contact Bass Bags, Chevin House, 33 Avenue Road, Duffield, Derbyshire, DE56 4DW, England, phone+ 44 (0) 1332 840391, email sales@bassbags.co.uk



Guy Smith's home-made serpent gig bag

Since serpent players need good hard shell cases as well as gig bags, I did some investigating. At one time, the Monk workshop supplied a hard case as an option, but then later on replaced the hard case with a soft shell case. It was thought by many that those excellent hard shell cases were no longer available. It turns out that they were made by Kingham in England. Bob Kingham wrote, "We are certainly making serpent cases. The case photos on our website were designs that our customers wanted, without extra room inside, and we can of course make the case just like yours. (Actually these were cases for Doug Yeo's English military serpent by Keith Rogers and Robert Wagenknecht's church serpent. And, Doug told me that the case for "George" the contrabass serpent was made by Kingham, the largest case they've ever made.) We do not have the original patterns so we will need new ones. The cost is around £280.00 and delivery time is 6 weeks from date of order. Please let me know if you would like any further details." Contact Bob at Kingham MTM Cases Ltd., phone +44 (0) 1245 494740, email rk@kingham.co.uk, website www.KinghamMTM.com.

Serpent cases are well covered, but what about ophicleides? I have two well established designs described on the Serpent Website, but you have to make these yourself.



*Typical serpent hard shell case made by Bob Kingham
NOTE: The Altieri unpadded serpent gig bag is shown rolled up and stowed within the large bow of the serpent AND the Kingham case is inside an Altieri serpent case sheath, which gives it a shoulder strap, abrasion resistance, and an outer zipped pouch for holding a music stand, etc.*

While many players have followed these designs, it would be nice to be able to buy a good gig bag ready to go. Doug Yeo took up the torch on this, and working with Donna Altieri, developed a new design. Doug submitted the following:

Ophicleide Gig Bag by Altieri

review by Douglas Yeo

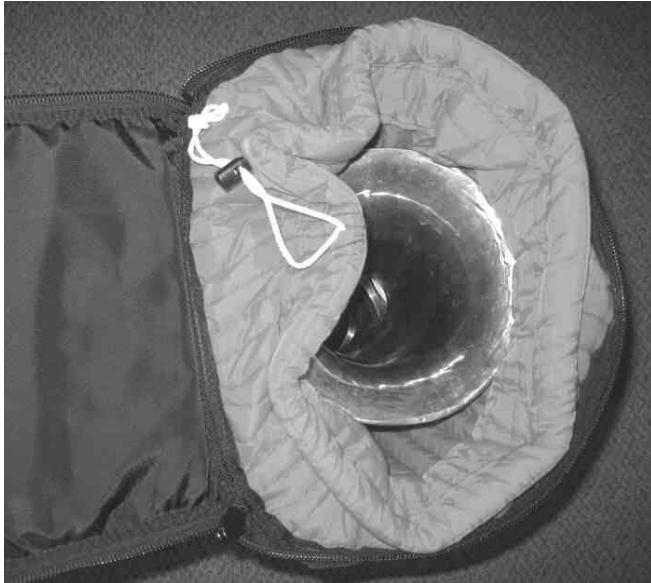
In 2006, I had a heavy duty, high impact case constructed for my ophicleide (Roehn, Paris, c. 1855, in C, 9 keys) by Caravan Protective Cases (Elyria, Ohio), provider of cases for the Boston Symphony Orchestra, so I could transport my ophicleide on the 2007 Boston Symphony tour of Europe on which I was playing ophicleide on Berlioz's *Damnation of Faust*. The case protects extraordinarily well, but at 50 pounds (loaded), it is not practical for local use where my ophicleide has to be transported by car, public transit and foot.

In late 2008, I asked David Zimet of Hickey's Music Center if he could recommend a company that might be able to make an ophicleide gig bag for me. After some research, he informed me that Donna Altieri, of Altieri Bags, would



Doug Yeo's prototype ophicleide gig bag by Donna Altieri

be willing to make one to my specifications. The resulting bag was delivered to me in November 2008 and I used it successfully in conjunction with my performances of Gordon Bowie's serpent concerto *Old Dances in New Shoes* and, on ophicleide, Handel's recitative and aria *O Rudder Than the Cherry*. I'm happy to report that the gig bag provided excellent protection.



On the Altieri ophicleide gig bag, a thickly padded section closes by draw string over the bell, and the bocal can fit between this and the zippered cover, or it may go elsewhere



A double layer of closed cell foam provides protection for the keys, which are further cushioned by the soft, quilted interior lining. The back of the bag is supported with a stiff panel that goes against your back when using the shoulder straps. A large external pocket is handy for music and other accessories and a small pocket inside the large pocket keeps the mouthpiece secure. The bocal can be placed on top of the bell once the drawstring is pulled closed and the unique "circle in the square" zipper top keeps the bag with its protective shape intact (I also purchased an Altieri oboe case cover for use when I want to carry two bocals). The

bottom of the bag is heavily padded to protect the butt end of the instrument. A handle for hand carrying, padded shoulder straps and a single shoulder strap provide a variety of carrying options. Designed for an ophicleide which is 41" long with an 8 1/2" bell, the case as designed will also fit instruments up to 43" long and 9" bell.

I'm pretty pleased with my ophicleide gig bag. It's not meant for long haul use and lots of traffic, but for getting around town, in a car, walking, etc, it does exactly what I want. The bag is available through Hickey's Music Center for \$399. Contact Altieri directly or order via Hickey's Music Center at www.hickeys.com.

More Exciting News

- The Christopher Monk Instruments website www.jeremywest.co.uk/cmi/serpents.html has been updated for 2009, and encouragingly lists serpents for sale. This goes along with reports that Nick Perry has produced some serpents for Monk. Hopefully, there will be more concrete news on this in the future.
- Andy Lamb, curator at the Bate Collection in Oxford, wrote to advise of the museum's new website, which you can peruse at www.bate.ox.ac.uk.
- Sue Bradley wrote, "I want to find some sort of stand/support for the ophicleide for gigs like this where I have to put the ophicleide down, and change straight away to tuba. Often space is tight, and I can't always lie it down safely. I have stands for the tubas and cimbasso (very necessary!), and use a bass guitar stand for the serpent. Any suggestions from you or the members of United Serpents for something that can be adapted to an ophicleide stand?" If you have any ideas to share, contact Sue at suetuba@mira.net



*Dizzy Gillespie playing the serpent
If you know where this images comes from, let us know!*

• Early in November (2008), Doug Yeo walked into his local Trader Joe's grocery store in Burlington, Massachusetts to pick up a few things and was confronted with blackboard & chalk sign as he entered. After doing a double take, he had the presence of mind to take a photo on his iPhone. He sent the photo to Paul Schmidt, who promptly called the store, asked for the manager, who upon hearing about Doug's photo, divulged that the artwork was by a young woman named Jackie Gaff who works at the store. She stated that she created it simply from 'out of her mind'. She seemed delighted that it turned out to resemble an actual instrument! Jackie and her manager agreed to allow publication of the picture in this newsletter and the Serpent Website.



Jackie Gaff's ophicleide rendering on Trader Joe's display

In January, Doug and his wife were back at Trader Joe's and saw that the great ophicleide artwork had been moved to another location. He met the artist and they had a nice conversation. Doug writes, "We talked about how she came up with the ophi image. Turns out she has a book of Victorian and early American engravings, Currier and Ives type things. She sometimes uses the book to give her an idea that she then will stylize into something for a sign. She said each store has their own artist who creates the signs, murals and other artwork for the store. Jackie also said she did contract work so I may have her make a few things for me."



"Berthaphone" engraving, probable source used by Jackie

• Keith Ryder wrote about an internet scan or transcription of pages 240-252 of *Home History; Recollections of Buffalo During the Decade from 1830 to 1840, or Fifty Years Since*, by Samuel M. Welch (published 1891 at Buffalo, NY). The Pearl Street Presbyterian Church (known as "Dr. Lord's church" for its famous pro-slavery clergyman) was erected at the corner of Genesee St. and Pearl St. in Buffalo, NY in 1837; it was an oval-shaped church ("the goose-egg church"), and was demolished due to structural problems in 1849. The Rev. Dr. John Chase Lord (1805-1877) was a conservative; his church had no organ, but its choir featured a small band. A late-1830s bill or proposal for the band's instruments listed the following (with prices):

double-bass or violone	\$25
clarinet	\$20
bassoon	\$20
keyed bugle	\$20
trombone	\$15
two 6-keyed flutes	\$20 each
oboe	\$15
serpent	\$20
Chinese bells	\$40
cymbals	\$30
TOTAL	\$245

So here was a serpent in a "west-gallery" role in a Presbyterian church at Buffalo, NY in the late 1830s. Around the same time, according to the New Grove Dictionary, Congregational churches in the U.S. were replacing their little bands with organs; perhaps the Presbyterians were in the same musical boat.

• Paul Schmidt has been busy with home cooking again, and the results are now included in the Serpent Website's 'Recipes' link. The first one is for the southern German dish Maultaschen, and the second is for a fabulous dessert comprised of a chocolate fudge cheesecake filling over an Oreo cookie crumb crust. The latter has already been a big hit at two Chicago early music group rehearsals. See www.serpentwebsite.com/cheese.htm

• French serpentist supreme Michel Godard has a new website, www.michel-godard.fr/ with his biography, list of tour dates, recording projects, discography, specific instruments he plays, downloads of photos, songs and videos, links and contact information.

• Robb Stewart has decided to cease production of larger brass replicas, including metal serpents and ophicleides. For information on smaller instruments, contact Robb at 626-447-1904 or by email at oldbrass@altrionet.com.

● Andy Lamb of the Bate Collection at Oxford wrote, “I am meeting with a young music student from the Birmingham Conservatoire.....She is keen on learning the serpent. I will reel her in.” Then later that day, “Georgia Towery is here in the Bate playing some of our instruments. She has also brought her own serpent which is one her father made based on measurements from your designs (i.e. the Squarpent). I attach some photos. I have had a go on it and it's great! It sounds really good. He has bound it in linen strips and painted it black.”



Georgia Towery playing serpent made by her father based on plans for the Squarpent, and then given a more serpentine shape and paddles made from coins to cover the holes. Photo by Andy Lamb

● Stephan Berger from Wetterberger Serpents wrote about the name change (from just Matthias Wetter instruments), and to advise that he and Matthias now have a new website and email address, www.serpentmakers.ch and info@serpentmakers.ch.

● There is a magazine, probably from the 1950s, that features an article titled *Dizzy Digs Daffy Horns*, which depicts the great jazz trumpeter holding, and presumably playing or trying to play various instruments. The largest photo shows Dizzy holding a church serpent, fingers in the right places, and appearing to blow into it. Only a small, low resolution, photo of this page has been found on the

Internet so far. If any readers have this magazine, or know something about it, please contact the editor (see the About the Organization section of this newsletter).

● Nick Byrne’s website, www.ophicleide.com, mentions that a sequel to his outstanding *Back From Oblivion* CD is in the works. This newsletter will keep you posted on developments, and you may also visit Nick’s website for updates.

A Serpent Collection

by Bruno Kampmann

(continued from this newsletter’s April 2008 edition)

I own a wind instrument collection, and among those, 15 instruments are 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. Phone +33 621778774 or +33 148787009, email bkampmann@free.fr.

Two more serpents are pictured in this newsletter.

R41- upright serpent in C, in the shape of a baritone saxophone, wood covered with leather, 3 iron keys, very unusual. Poor condition.

R47- TABART model – Russian Bassoon in C, wood covered with decorated brown leather, S brass crook, dragon head shaped painted bell, 3 brass keys. Average condition.



Getting Serpents (Last Minute Update)

It is nearly two years since Keith Rogers became ill, and it has taken a very long time to begin to reconstruct his work after his death in January last year. Since January, I have been working in collaboration with Michael Sanders, an industrial three dimensional design consultant, model maker, and flute player, to transfer the measurements of the Christopher Monk Instruments (CMI) church serpent onto computer so that they can be cut by CNC (computerized) machine. This is a development that I hope Christopher, with his passion for finding innovative modern solutions to making old instruments, would approve. Today I cut the finger holes and played the first notes on the first new instrument and I am very pleased indeed with the results. The computer program has meant that we have been able to rationalize the cross sections and wall thickness of the instrument and use a much finer and more accurate cut to carve the wood and give a good finish. As a result the instrument resonates extremely well, and feels very good under the hands, now that the cross section comes out beautifully round. The dimensions have crossed over well to the new system so the intonation is very similar to Keith's instruments. Unfortunately, due to rising costs in general and because the carving is a much slower process in order to give the improved accuracy and finish, the price will be rising to £2450.00, but I hope that the results of this new process will justify the extra cost. Any enquiries about serpents and repairs should be sent directly to me at nicholas@perry2185.freeserve.co.uk, and Jeremy West of CMI will continue to deal with cornetti (we have also been making some very good new cornetts by this method). Nicholas Perry, 224 North St. Luton LU2 7QN. UK phone 01582457992. See also <http://www.jeremywest.co.uk/cmi/serpents.html>

submitted by Nicholas Perry

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