

## Serpent Newsletter

P.O. Box 954 Mundelein, Illinois 60060 USA

Newsletter for Serpent Enthusiasts

April 1, 2010

### A Note From the Editor

In this issue of the Serpent Newsletter we have a windfall of serpent recordings. I don't recall a time when so many CDs with significant serpent participation have come to light in such a short length of time.

Also in this issue is mention of a subject that has always been on the fringes of the serpent world; that of the bass cornett. Marin Mersenne wrote, "But the true bass of the cornett is performed with the Serpent, so that one can say that one without the other is a body without a soul." Other writings go beyond this to state, or at least suggest, that the serpent IS the bass of the cornett family, as opposed to being an instrument that complements the cornetts on the bass end. From an organological standpoint, the serpent is not a cornett because the bore expansion is wider and because the playing technique is so different, and because of the lack of a thumb hole to change octaves. Recent lectures and papers have delved into whether there actually was a bass cornett as distinct from the serpent, and this interesting subject, although not strictly serpent related, is touched on twice in this issue.

Several readers of this newsletter and the Serpent Website have sent in some very useful information that made this issue possible. Thanks to all for their continuing efforts.

Paul Schmidt

### Workshops

- Vintage Band Festival & Early Brass Festival

As it was in 2006, the 2010 Historic Brass Society's Early Brass Festival will be held in conjunction with the Vintage Band Festival in Northfield, Minnesota. The VBF will take

place on August 5 - 8, with more than 20 bands performing in over 50 outdoor concerts over the period of 4 days. In addition to those activities, the EBF will present the usual array of lectures, performances, and informal playing sessions for all early brass instruments; natural trumpet, natural horn, cornett, sackbut, serpent, and 19th century brass. A special pre-EBF excursion will be organized to visit the National Music Museum in Vermillion, South Dakota. Many participants will be staying at the Archer House in Northfield ([www.archerhouse.com](http://www.archerhouse.com)), where special festival prices have been arranged. A conference registration form (see [www.historicbrass.org](http://www.historicbrass.org)) has also been posted.

Some of the bands currently scheduled include the Helsinki Youth Band (Finland), Independent Silver Band, The First Brigade Band, Dodworth Saxhorn Band, Kentucky Baroque Trumpets, Passion des Cuivres (Germany), Newberry's Victorian Cornet Band, Federal City Brass Band, Russian Horn Capella (Russia - see the September 2009 newsletter for an article about this group), Chicago Brass Band, Ameriikan Poijat, and many other bands from the Midwest and elsewhere. Details are still being worked out, and the schedule is subject to change, so visit [vintagebandfestival.org](http://vintagebandfestival.org) (without the www prefix) for more information.

- Michaelstein Symposium

*reported by Doug Yeo*

The 30th Symposium on musical instrument making hosted by Stiftung Kloster Michaelstein (Germany) was held from October 23-25, 2009. This year's Symposium was devoted to the cornetto and, by extension, the serpent. Volny Hostiou (France) and I were among those representing the serpent.

The Symposium began with an opening concert by Ronald Wilson, the cornetto maker, who demonstrated a variety of cornetti he had made in a program with a fine male alto,



Volny Hostiou and Doug Yeo at Michaelstein

violin and organ. Playing a bass cornetto in G that he had made - pitched at A = 460, in contrast to the bass cornetto he made for Craig Kridel at A = 440 - he gave a performance of Alessandro Grandi's *O quam pulchra es à 3*. Participants were then shown a special exhibition of cornetts and serpents that had been assembled for the Symposium, including a military serpent (unsigned and undated, but possibly from Saxony, c. 1810) and a Serpent Forveille by Forveille, c. 1839.

Papers were presented through the Symposium, with presenters having a 30 minute presentation slot followed by a question and answer period. I was pleased that the facility - which was in a renovated 12th century monastery - was first rate in every way, with Powerpoint and audio equipment, comfortable seating, and walls that were three feet thick. Thoroughly modernized, it was an excellent mixture of old and new.

The first evening's concert was a program of serpent duets performed by Volny and me. Volny Hostiou's serpent is a church serpent in C, no keys, made by Keith Rogers in 2002; I played my Baudouin (c. 1812, 2 keys). The concert was held in the small Rococco chapel that had been added to the main building of the monastery by a previous owner several centuries ago when the monastery had been converted into a school. Unheated, the 50 degree temperature when the concert started gave all present a feeling of what it was like in medieval times in unheated churches and cathedrals where the serpent was used. But the cold temperature did not diminish the enthusiasm of the audience that responded heartily to our performance. With music spanning four centuries, the duets included works by Orlando de Lasso, Jean-Baptiste Métoyen, Schiltz and others, including improvisations (*chant sur la livre*) and Volny's stunning performance of Michel Godard's *Serpens Secundo*.

The second day started with presentation of three papers on the serpent. Volny spoke on *The Serpent in Choirs of French Churchs in the 17th to 18th Century*. He supported

his paper with images of instruments and the serpent in iconography as well as audio samples from some of his CDs. Christian Ahrens (Germany) presented *Barbarischer Klang oder dynamische Flexibilität? - Einsatz und Berwertung des Serpents bis zum 19. Jahrhundert (Barbarous Sound, or Dynamic Flexibility? - Use and Scoring of the Serpents to 19 Century)*. My paper was *Marches and Divertimenti: Haydn and the Serpent*. My discussion of Haydn's use of the serpent - in three *Divertimenti* attributed to him (including the work that includes the well known *St. Antoni Chorale*) and four marches (one unfinished) for English military bands included projections of all surviving scores of the works, works of art from the British Museum, and audio files including newly recorded performances of the English marches with some of my Boston Symphony colleagues. All three serpent papers were very well received, with lively discussion and an enthusiastic response.

A roundtable discussion about the *Bass Cornetto - Did it Really Exist?* - was moderated by Sabine Klaus; other participants were Volny, Roland Wilson, Wolfgang Köhler and myself. This was a fascinating discussion - heated at times but always friendly - and it led to the breaking of some new ground in our understanding of this real but rarely used instrument.

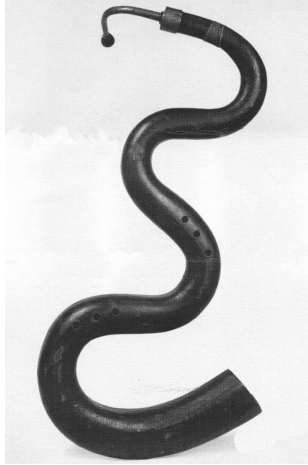


Sabine Klaus, Doug Yeo and Volny Hostiou discuss the bass cornett at Michaelstein

Unfortunately I had to leave immediately after the bass cornetto roundtable - thereby missing the final day's papers and the much - anticipated concert of music for cornetti headlined by Bruce Dickey and William Dongois - since I had to return to Boston for Boston Symphony trumpet auditions. But my short time in Michaelstein was very satisfying on many levels. It was nice to see old friends like Arnold Myers, Murray Campbell, Stew Carter, Howard Weiner and Sabine Klaus, and to meet others for the first time. The serpent certainly took a step forward in the minds of those assembled, who represented many professors and museum curators. For many, it was the first time they had

actually HEARD a serpent, and the experience of playing the duet recital with Volny Hostiou was the beginning of what we hope will be many future collaborations together.

The papers that were presented will be collected and published in a book of conference proceedings in 2010 or 2011.



*Unusually shaped serpent from the late 18th or early 19th Century.*

*This instrument is held by the Civico Museo Degli Strumenti Musicali in Milan, Italy*

*Inventory number 425*

## 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 Nicholas Perry)  
224 North Street  
Luton  
LU2 7QN  
England

Phone: +44 (0)1582 457 992  
<nicholas@perry2185.freemove.co.uk>  
(serpents, early cimbasso, bass horns)

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>

(resin serpents)

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)

Derek Farnell  
82 Crumpsall Lane  
Manchester M8 5SG  
England

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

Wetterberger Serpents  
Stephen Berger  
CH-2336 Les Bois  
Phone: 0041 (0) 3296 11188  
Matthias Wetter  
CH-8475 Ossingen  
Phone: 0041 (0) 5231 73184  
Switzerland

<info@serpentmakers.ch>  
<www.wetterberger.ch>  
<www.serpentmakers.ch>

(alphorns and serpents)

Christopher Monk Instruments  
(c/o Jeremy West)  
+44 (0)1388 526999  
<www.jeremywest.co.uk/cmi/>  
<hmcornett@gmail.com>

(cornetti)

**NEW!**

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

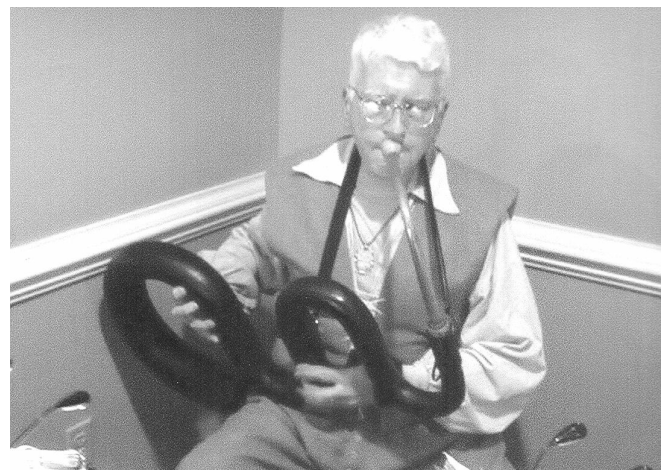
## Where Serpents Gather

- Gabe Stone played serpent with the College of William and Mary Early Music Ensemble on November 7th at the Wren Chapel on campus in Williamsburg, VA. He was joined by student serpentist Evan Calloway who was debuting the college's new Kaiser serpent. The concert featured the music of Purcell and Handel. Interesting to note the the Wren building was built (from) 1659-1699, the same year as Purcell's birth, and during the construction Handel was born!

- Craig Kridel performed with the Lehigh University (Pennsylvania) faculty wind ensemble and students, directed by Professor David Diggs, in February 2010. The concert included late 18th century music by Christopher Eley (1756-1832), originally performed by The Duke of York's Band formed in 1785. The serpent parts would have been played by Rudolphe Christopher Sickell who was a member of the military ensemble until 1810. Music was drawn from three publications of original *Military Pieces* and arrangements by Eley published in 1789 and 1794; instrumentation included oboes, clarinets, flutes, horns, bassoon, and serpent. In addition, the *Grand Military Piece* (1799) for 4 clarinets, 2 horns, 2 bassoons, and serpent by John Lewis Hoberecht (who moved to London from the Southern Netherlands in 1785) was performed.

Thanks to the kindness of the Helen B. Arkell family, Kridel played on the Latham orchestral serpent, c. 1830, formerly owned by Morton Latham of Frensham, England (composer, musicologist, and secretary of the London Bach Choir) and restored by Christopher Monk in 1989.

Harmoniemusik offers wonderful opportunities for the serpentist and, most fortunately, these editions are now available for purchase from DBD Music Publishing



*Robert Wagenknecht plays serpent with his band  
A Company of Waites  
(photo courtesy of B&S Excursions)*



*Lehigh University faculty wind ensemble and students gathered for their performance of music from the Duke of York's band  
Craig Kridel is shown in the back row with his serpent, third from the right, with director David Diggs to his right*

Company. To access extensive program notes, go to [http://www.lehigh.edu/~inwind/duke\\_of\\_york\\_program\\_notes.pdf](http://www.lehigh.edu/~inwind/duke_of_york_program_notes.pdf). To obtain information about the editions, contact DBD Music Publishing at [dbd2@Lehigh.EDU](mailto:dbd2@Lehigh.EDU). (Also see the review of a new CD of Eley's music in this newsletter.)

*submitted by Craig Kridel*

- On November 27, 2009 Erhard Schwartz played his ophicleide in a live broadcast of Mendelssohn's *Elijah* with the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra and its associated Choir, under the direction of Thomas Hengelbrock. As of this writing, a video of the rehearsal is still available for viewing online at [www.br-online.de/br-klassik/br-klassik-elias-thomas-hengelbrock-ID1259251987622.xml](http://www.br-online.de/br-klassik/br-klassik-elias-thomas-hengelbrock-ID1259251987622.xml), and Erhard's ophicleide is highlighted starting at about the 44 second mark.
- Doug Yeo will be playing serpent on Mendelssohn's *Calm Seas and Prosperous Voyage Overture* with the Boston Symphony at Tanglewood this summer. The concert is on Friday, August 6, 8:30 PM, and the program also includes Tchaikovsky's *Symphony 6*. Christoph von Dohnanyi is the conductor.

Doug also wrote, "I have just confirmed that I will give another talk/demonstration on the serpent at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts on Monday, August 2, 2010, from 11 AM until noon. I will talk about serpents in the MFA collection (including serpents and bass horns that were formerly owned by Canon Francis Galpin, for whom the Galpin Society is named in his memory), and will play several of my serpents. The event is free once you are in the museum that day. More details about MFA events can be found at the Museum's website, <http://www.mfa.org>. To

read about my previous talk on serpents at the MFA, on April 30, 1998, see [http://www.yeodoug.com/articles/serpent\\_night/serpentnight.html](http://www.yeodoug.com/articles/serpent_night/serpentnight.html)

- Tra Wagenknecht wrote, "*A Company of Waites*, Renaissance wind band, has been busy showing off "old" instruments, including the serpent. We have been providing background music and programs in Richmond, Virginia, and surrounding areas for about fifteen years. Members of the Waites are serpent enthusiasts: Iris Schwartz, soprano renaissance recorder; Richard Schwartz, alto shawm and percussion; Therese Wagenknecht, tenor kortholt and tenor crumhorn; and Robert Wagenknecht, bass sackbut and serpent. Though all the instruments elicit "what is that?" responses from our audiences, the serpent gets most of the attention."

"On December 5, 2009, the Waites provided an after-dinner program for a bus tour group originating in Portland, Indiana. B&S Excursions brought a group of about 60 for a tour of Richmond and its Christmas decorations - including the Christmas parade, museums, and a local "tacky light tour". Near the end of the trip they had dinner at the Charles City Tavern between Richmond and Williamsburg in Charles City County, Virginia. The Waites were asked to eat with them and then provide a program. What a lively group! We were delighted by our reception. The questions came fast and were thoughtful, often with much joy and mirth. A very happy time was had by all."

- February 26 to March 1, in collaboration with the Basel instrument museum (and the special exhibition *Trichterein*, Michel Godard and Stephan Berger did a serpent presentation in the museum together with Martin Kirbauer, director of the museum. Michel played three concerts with his trio, which also includes Gavino Murgia (voice and



saxophone) and Patrice Héral (drums and electronics), at the Tingely Museum and at the Bird's Eye jazz club. Then, on March 1, Michel conducted a workshop at the famous *Scola Cantorum* with Matthias Wetter and Stephan Berger of WetterBerger Serpents. A dozen serpent players came from Switzerland and Germany. After a serpent solo from Michel to open the day, Matthias and Stephan explained their techniques of making the instrument including a nice video showing the history of the serpent. Then, they went on playing together, with a large part dedicated to how to improve on the serpent, and Michel explaining his own way of approaching a new repertoire. To end the session, they introduced the brand new carbon fiber serpent by WetterBerger, an instrument designed to be light, easy to play, not so expensive, a useful instrument for students or to travel with.



*Illustration of the Coldstream Guards Band with serpent*

## About the Organization

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

(United Kingdom & European continent)

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

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

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

Phone & Fax: +44 (0)1736 788733 phone (no fax): 847-356-7865  
email: <ocleide@earthlink.net>  
<serpents@boswedden.org.uk> webpage: www.serpentwebsite.com

Suggested minimum contribution for non-European subscribers is \$15 for 4 issues (2 years); these subscriptions are required for individuals, and institutions that manage to receive the newsletter without contributions are doing so entirely at the discretion of the regional representative. Rates for the UK are £5 for 2 years, for Europe £6 or 10 Euros; in these cases the handling of subscriptions is more formal.

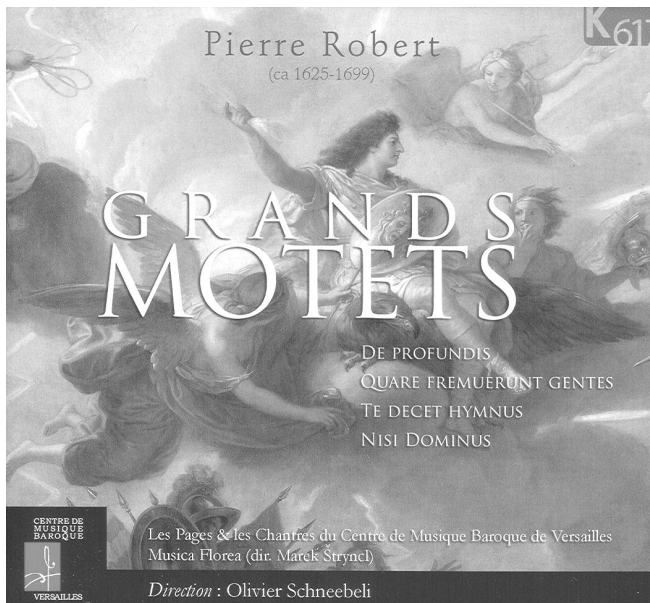
## New Materials

- *Pierre Robert: Grands Motets; Le Couvert # K617215*, CD recording, with a small 'petit' choir comprised of eleven soloists, a large 'grand' choir comprised of 'Les Pages & les Chantres du Centre de Musique Baroque de Versailles', the orchestra 'Musica Florea', and featuring Volny Hostiou on serpent, Olivier Schneebeli directing. Obtained from Amazon France.

This CD is made from a live recording of a public concert that took place in October of 2008 in the Chapelle Royale in Versailles palace, as part of a festival titled *Grands Journées Lully*. The festival's purpose was to explore religious music written for the chapel of Louis XIV, and the concert of four of the masses of Pierre Robert, the subject of this CD, was to bring to the fore this often neglected composer's contributions to the 'French style' that had such an influence on later music in Europe.

Robert was born in 1625 and in his youth studied at the choir school of Notre Dame de Paris, and later at the Collège de Fortet. A contemporary of composers such as Jean-Baptiste Lully and Marc Antoine Charpentier, for a decade he held the position of head of the choir school at Notre Dame, before his fortuitous 'big break' that came in 1663 when the king reorganized the leadership of the Chapelle Royal, naming Robert and three others composers to lead the music programs there. Thomas Gobert, Gabriel Expilly, Henry Du Mont and Pierre Robert shared the

duties on a revolving basis where each man would take on all tasks for three months, before passing the torch to the next man. Robert began at the job in 1663, taking the period starting in April. Five years later, Gobert and Expilly resigned, leaving Robert and Du Mont to share the duties, each man taking a semester. This arrangement continued until the two men resigned in 1682, with Robert continuing to work the April through June quarter the following year. The king rewarded him with a nice monetary gift, as well as a generous pension and an easy job at an abbey to provide him with extra income for as long as he wished to do the work. Robert stayed with the abbey position until his death in 1699.



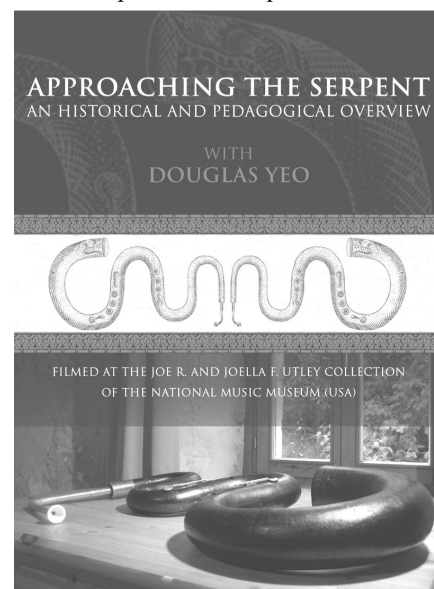
Besides coaching the choirs and leading the music program at the Chapelle during his 20 years there, Robert was expected to write two or three pieces for the masses the king attended. This amounted to shorter pieces plus frequent new ‘grand motets’, which were short mass settings of less than 15 minutes duration. While he is known to have composed at least 50 such pieces, only those 24 appearing in a published collection *Motets et élévations* survive today. This CD includes four motets from the collection, selected to demonstrate compositions spanning his time at the Chapelle. The earliest is *Quare Fremuerunt Gentes* (from Psalm 2), the next is *Nisi Dominus* (Psalm 126), then *Te Decet Hymnus* (Psalm 64), and from the end of his tenure comes *De Profundis* (Psalm 129), all psalm numberings using the Greek system.

A characteristic of all four motets is their use of two choirs, one small or *petite* and one large or *grand*, plus an orchestra that was considered to be fairly large for the venue. On this CD, the two choirs are comprised of members of the childrens’ group *Les Pages du Centre de Musique Baroque de Versailles* and the adult group *Les Pages du Centre de Musique Baroque de Versailles*. The

small choir uses an adult soprano and one boy soprano, two counter-tenors, one high and one low voiced tenor, a baritone and a bass. The large choir consists of four female sopranos, five counter-tenors, five tenors, and five bass-baritones. The baroque orchestra is *Musica Florea*, consisting here of four violins, three violas, plus cello, viola da gamba, string bass, two recorders, bassoon, theorbo, harpsichord, organ and Volny Hostiou on serpent. The use of these forces follows the traditions of the style, with most of the singing being done by the small choir and its soloists and most of the playing being done by the organ and continuo instruments, with the other forces breaking loose for the dramatic choruses.

The music itself ranges from quietly moving to powerfully tumultuous. The vocal forces are fairly light and the text comes through clearly. The soloists have a nice presence, and the modulation between small and large choirs is precise. The orchestra is understated except when it needs to be large, at which point the extra instruments join the continuo and provide a surprising amount of power. This is not a recording one would go to in order to hear a serpent, as it is used in a doubling capacity for the large choir and does not draw attention to itself; Volny Hostiou’s playing here is what the music requires. The acoustics of the Chapelle Royal is very nice for the style of music, although it should be noted that today’s Chapelle is a larger venue that only was coming into use during the end of the reign of Louis XIV, and Robert would have been composing for a smaller space of the same name that was in use during his career there. Although this is a live performance, there is no evidence of the audience in the recorded sound until the applause at the end of the last mass. The extensive CD booklet notes are in French and English.

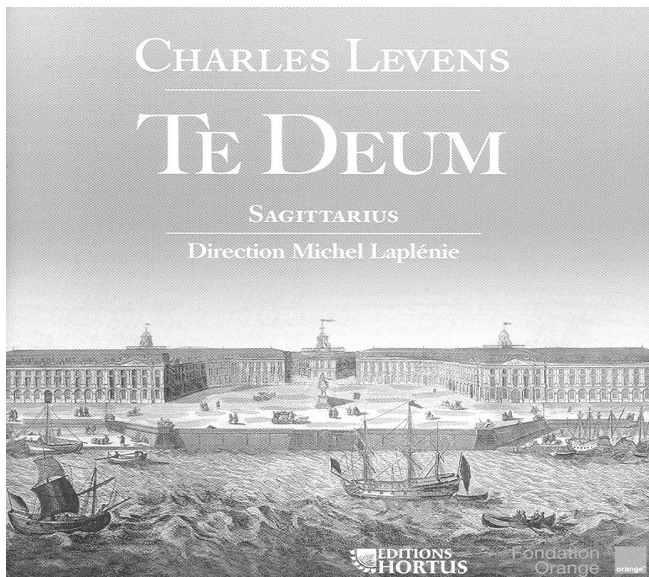
This is a fine recording of music that is hard to hear anymore. It is less important as a ‘serpent recording’ only because of the less prominent serpent sound in the mix.



- Doug Yeo is putting the finishing touches on his new DVD, titled *Approaching the Serpent: An Historical and Pedagogical Overview*. Filmed at the Joe R. and Joella F. Utley Collection of the National Music Museum in the USA, it is the first video of its kind, giving viewers a comprehensive look at the serpent. Doug demonstrates a variety of types, shapes and sizes of serpent, gives a serpent lesson, invites viewers to play duets with him and answers questions about the serpent. The DVD also includes PDF files of all musical examples, exercises and duets. The running time is just under two hours, and the DVD will be available in PAL and NTSC format versions. Doug writes that the planned release date is May 15. In the meantime, you can take a look at his website page devoted to the DVD, [www.yeodoug.com/publications/approaching\\_the\\_serpent/approaching\\_the\\_serpent.html](http://www.yeodoug.com/publications/approaching_the_serpent/approaching_the_serpent.html).

Doug writes, “The important thing for people to know is that it will be available in both NTSC (Region 1 - USA) and PAL (Region 2 - UK, EU, Japan) versions. People will have to specify which format they want. I'll obviously have an idea from their address, but if someone wants to send a gift to someone, it will need to be in the right format.

I will have a new order form on my website once I have discs in hand. I'll have Warwick Music in England who will sell the PAL version, and Hickeys Music in the USA who will sell the NTSC version - both of those places take credit cards (I don't). So there will be flexibility for people who want it.”



- *Charles Levens: Te Deum*; Hortus Editions # Hortus 060, CD recording, with vocal soloists of Ensemble Sagittarius, the combined choirs Ensemble Baroque Orfeo and Groupe Vocal Arpège, Orchestre Baroque Les Passions, and featuring Volny Hostiou on serpent, Michel Laplénie directing. Obtained from Amazon France.

Recorded in November of 2007 at the Chapelle de la Miséricorde, Regional Directorate of Cultural Affairs of Aquitaine in Bordeaux, this CD presents two grand motets by French composer Charles Levens, a contemporary of J.S. Bach. Born in 1689, Levens initially worked in various musical and leadership capacities in rural churches before being appointed head of the Saint André Cathedral choir school in Bordeaux, where he remained for the rest of his career. Besides running the music school and supervising the students, he was responsible for composing liturgical music for special occasions, and renewing the mass and motet repertoire in particular.

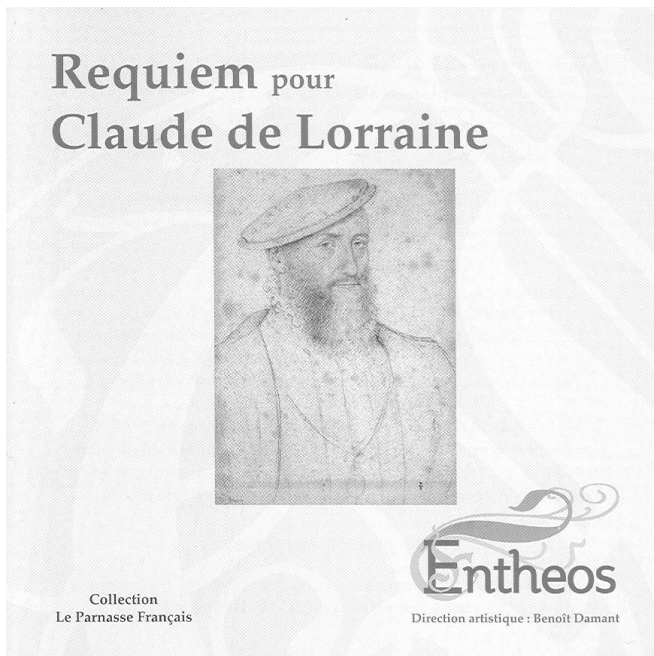
Levens' sacred compositions were well regarded during his life and could be heard at the Chapelle Royal a generation after Pierre Robert served there. The two motets selected for this recording are *Te Deum* and *Deus Noster Refugium*. The former was composed around 1722 while Levens was still at one of his previous postings, and was notably performed in 1758 to honor the governor in Bordeaux and again in 1789 to celebrate the change in the political tide at the start of the French Revolution. Its twelve sequences are in a prayerful, hopeful vein, full of exaltation and adoration, and are delivered as a series of vocal solos, duets, trios and five voice settings. The *Deus* piece was one of the composer's most famous works during his lifetime, with the mood of the music closely following the text's statements of trust in God for protection from all trials.

The forces delivering this performance are seven vocal soloists from Sagittarius, including two female sopranos, counter-tenor, tenor, and three baritones, plus the 28 singers of the combined choirs Orfeo and Arpège, accompanied by the 18 instrumentalists of Les Passions. The orchestration consists of violins, violas, cellos, one bass, two oboes, a bassoon, a theorbo, organ and Volny Hostiou's serpent. Like the Robert recording reviewed above, the vocals and instrumentals are well balanced and very clear in presentation. Unlike the Robert, the music is generally more powerful throughout, with more choral as opposed to solo, and more of the band playing more often. The serpent is much more prominent in the mix than in the Robert, and this CD serves as a good example of serpent as used in Baroque orchestra. The serpent playing is accurate and musical, handling the fairly fluid lines with aplomb. The CD booklet notes, which are in French and English, take care to quote a document listing the musicians who were hired for a performance of this work, with the serpent being duly noted.

- *Requiem pour Claude de Lorraine*; Entheos # CD005, CD recording, with Ensemble Entheos, featuring Volny Hostiou on bass cornett, Benoît Damant directing. Obtained by email request made to Entheos, [myspace.com/ensembleentheos](mailto:myspace.com/ensembleentheos), [contact@ensembleentheos.com](mailto:contact@ensembleentheos.com).

Claude of Lorraine was the first duke of Guise and prince of Lorraine, living from 1496 to 1550. Claude and his brother Anthony were raised during the reign of Louis XII. Upon his death, a grand funeral was produced and the music written for it is the subject of this CD.

It may be worth taking note of the funeral itself, since its organizer Edmond Boullay wrote such a specific diary of the plans and proceedings. While Claude died in April, the funeral could not take place until his sons arrived and this did not happen until the end of June. In the interim, Claude was given a funeral commensurate with his status as a foreign prince, which indeed he was given the politics at that time. For eight days his body was laid in state for public viewing, after which his body was embalmed, laid in a lead coffin, and carried to a chapel of the Church of Saint Lawrence. At about that time his brother John also died and the two bodies were laid together in a larger room. His body was then taken to the local nunnery where an effigy has prepared with a wax head copied from his face, and this was available for more viewing for another eight days. Finally the body was moved in a large procession to the church for the funeral. On July 1, three masses were given in his honor, lasting seven hours. Due to this length, most of the nobility only attended the last one, the funeral mass itself.



During his life, Claude loved music and always provided for high quality musicians during his reign. Indeed, in 1525, he ceded some of his musicians to Pope Clement VIII, which could only have happened if his artists were of the highest quality. Because of his large and qualified staff of musicians, and because of the support he had given musicians during his life, the funeral mass was given a large and well prepared performance. The mass used was the *Missa pro Mortuis* of Pierre Cléreau (aka Clereaux),



*Ensemble Entheos  
with Volny Hostiou  
playing serpent*

one of six masses the composer wrote. Although there is some reason to suspect that the composer might have been on hand to direct the performance, there is no specific record of him doing so. This mass is arguably his best composition, and is written as a paraphrase of Gregorian melodies, coupled with Italian influences due to the many years he lived in that country previously.

Multiple versions of this mass exist, and for the performance on this CD, a book residing in a collection in Munich was used. This version calls for 'all the stops' to be pulled, so the instrumentation calls for extra instruments such as cornetts (including the rarely heard tenor and bass), in addition to the more typical viol, bassoon and organ. For this recording, the cornetts include both regular and mute soprano cornetts, a tenor cornett, and a bass cornett as played by Volny Hostiou. While the bass cornett is organologically considered to be in a parallel line of the brass family to that of the serpent, one so rarely hears a well played example that this newsletter can bend a bit and pretend that it belongs here! The bass cornett used in this case is made by Serge Delmas after an instrument in the Musical Instrument Museum (M.I.M.) in Brussels. The singers include a male soprano, counter-tenor, tenor and bass. On the *Libera me* track, a guest singer is added, a young girl soprano.

Even given the smaller forces used for this recording, the sound is surprisingly large. Benoît Damant has assembled a fine group and the performance is very accomplished. The quality of the work itself is also considerable, and this is an important recording, even beyond its significance to the early brass world due to the presence of the rare cornetts.

In addition to the Cléreau mass, the CD also features three organ selections of the type that might have been used in the funeral service, especially given Cléreau's Italian influences. These are *Canzon Francese deata Frais et Gaillard*, *Canzon Francese deata Martin Menoit*, and *Ricercar sopra Martin Menoit*, all by Andrea Gabrieli and performed here by Michaël Parisot on an historical instrument.

This recording is not well distributed, and readers are unlikely to find it in stores or online. After reading about it on Volny Hostiou's website [serpent.instrument.free.fr](http://serpent.instrument.free.fr), this



reviewer contacted Benoît Damant who furnished a copy via the Entheos website; he has indicated that readers may contact him through the group website as listed above to investigate obtaining additional copies. The CD booklet is in French only, so as a service to English speaking readers, Paul Schmidt with help from Daniel Heiman has prepared an English translation. As a result, the PDF file of a separate booklet in English has been placed on the Serpent Website discography page, which may be downloaded and printed. See [www.serpentwebsite.com](http://www.serpentwebsite.com)



*Illustration from a May 30, 1906 issue of the weekly illustrated British humour magazine "Punch."*

- *En ces jours-là, je répandrai mon Esprit*; Gimini Music # GM 1016, CD recording, featuring Mario Hacquard, baritone vocalist and Volny Hostiou on serpent. Obtained from the publisher at [www.gimini-music.com/cdsearch/mario2](http://www.gimini-music.com/cdsearch/mario2), or email [cd@gimini-music.com](mailto:cd@gimini-music.com).

This recording is exclusively of Gregorian chant, as realized by a single baritone vocalist with serpent accompaniment as well as a few select instances of a clapper, a drum and tambourine played by two percussionists. The title of the CD is taken from the Old Testament book of Joel, chapter 2 verse 28, "And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out my spirit..." The text of the 22 tracks is meant to represent several days of services during Pentecost, and they are divided by the days and types of service, Vespers, Matins, Laudes, etc. Many of the chant melodies are familiar due to their use in modern Catholic and Protestant liturgical settings; all text is in Latin.

It is hard to say too much about such an open faced production as this. Mario Hacquard has a fine baritone voice and a delivery that seems totally in place given the material. The brief CD booklet notes say that he was a pupil of Pierre de Saint-Jorre in the study of plainsong at the École César-Franck (César-Frank School) in Paris, which was active from 1935 through 1985. The vocal lines are often fairly complex, and he manages them with a clean sense of line and excellent agility.

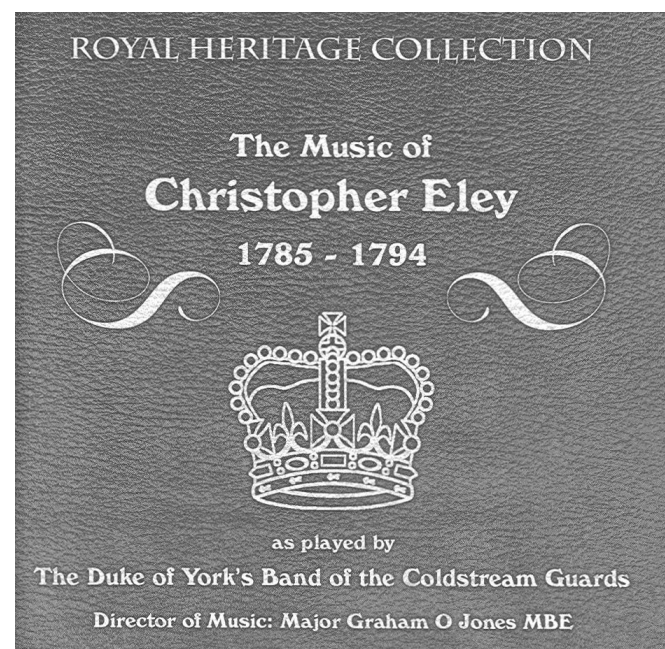
Volny Hostiou's serpent shines throughout, as he often introduces the melody, accompanies the singer, or adds little flourishes at the ends. He is not playing on every selection, but there is still plenty serpent sound in evidence. In some instances his playing is punctuated with the dull thump of a loosely roped drum or the jingle of a tambourine, and on two selections a clapper resounds to invite the faithful to kneel and then stand up again.

Overall the music is soulful, peaceful, resonant and so generally agreeable without being intrusive that this reviewer has taken to playing it while working. It is a good example of chant and of the serpent in this venue.

Although there is little in the brief CD booklet of interest, the most interesting parts have been translated from French to English, and a PDF of the booklet insert is available on the Serpent Website discography page for download.

- *The Music of Christopher Eley*; Bandleader Recordings/Modern Publicity - Royal Heritage Collection # BNA 5196, CD recording, with The Duke of York's Band of the Coldstream Guard, Major Graham O. Jones directing, and featuring Stephen Wick on serpent. Obtained from CD-Zone UK from an order placed via Amazon.

Remembered today largely on account of his popular and oft-performed *The Duke of York's March*, Christopher Eley was a German-born contemporary of Franz Joseph Haydn. At the age of about 29 he emigrated to England to assume the position of director of the Coldstream Guards Regimental Band, a post he held for eight years. During this time and that concurrent with his subsequent post as leader of the Royal East India Volunteers Band, he was arguably one of the most influential people in the elevation



of the English military band from provider of mere marching music to quality ensemble capable of much wider range.

In addition to his qualifications as music leader, he was a supremely skilled performer on clarinet and cello, and indeed he was one of the musicians who regularly played in the concerts given of Haydn's music during that composer's time in England. Add to that his accomplishments as composer, and it is clear that Eley was a superior all-around musician. This CD is a compendium of pieces either written by Eley or arranged by him for military band. The further arrangement efforts required to make the music ready for the recording were undertaken by David Diggs, director of winds at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and expert on English military music of the period as well as on music of the American Civil War.

In 1785, Frederick, Duke of York, formed a band to provide functional music for the Coldstream Regiment of Guards, and retained Eley for the purpose of leading it. Frederick was German and at this time the regiment was based in Germany and comprised of soldiers local to the country, so even though this music is considered to be English, it had a heavy German influence. The band was drawn from the regiment and from civilians, and numbered eleven players plus the director. The band soon became well known for their high quality that set a standard for others to match. The instrumentation included two each of oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns, a complement that was typical for the *harmoniemusik* style in which they were engaged. Later the band was expanded to include trumpet and serpent. Within a decade this became the prototypical configuration for military bands in England.

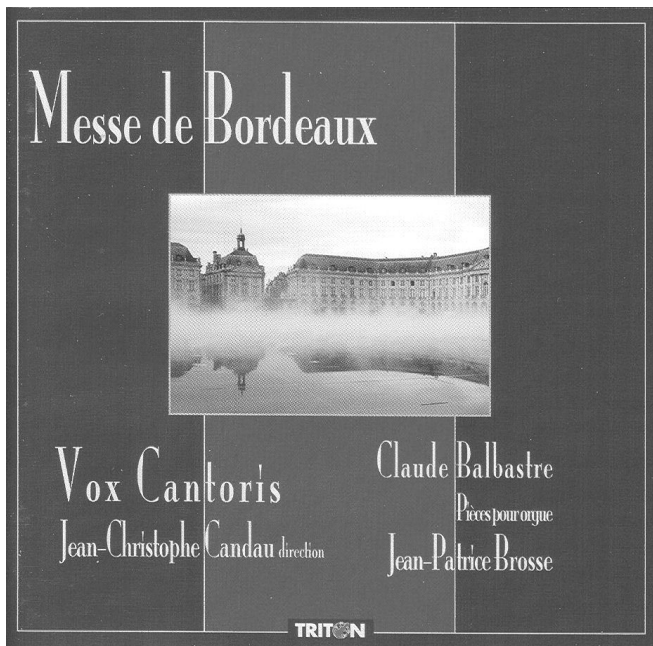
According to the notes in the CD booklet, most of Eley's band music was only recently discovered. The collection includes music both fast and slow, "for all occasions" and often based on popular tunes of the day. About half of the selections on this CD are by Eley, with the remainder being his arrangements. Some composers whose music is quoted in Eley's arrangements include Mozart, Pleyel, and Paisiello. The 33 pieces are drawn from three collections, *Twelve Select Military Pieces (1789)*, *A Set of Military Pieces (1794)*, and another set of the same name and publication date.

This is an enjoyable and often rousing collection, played with panache by a group of players obviously competent with their period instruments. Unfortunately, the CD booklet offers no information about the modern ensemble that shares a name with Eley's original band. The band's website states that it is the official band for the Regiment of the Coldstream Guards, the oldest regiment in continuous existence in England. Both the regiment and its band are considered elite postings. Major Graham O. Jones became bandmaster in 2001 after holding several successful postings with other regimental bands.

As a serpent recording, this is one to treasure for its clear portrayal of the instrument in its role in *harmoniemusik*. Stephen Wick, also of the London Serpent Trio and professor of Serpent and Ophicleide at the Royal Academy of Music, does a fine job and his playing is always true in presence, stylistic interpretation and intonation. (Note that Craig Kridel has recent experience playing this sort of music; see his comments in the Where Serpents Gather section of this newsletter).



Students at the Scola Cantorum serpent workshop, presented by Michael Godard and Stephen Berger



- *Messe de Bordeaux*; Triton # BNA 5196, CD recording, with Vox Cantoris and organist Jean-Patrice Brosse, Jean-Christophe Candau directing, and featuring Michael Nègre on serpent. Obtained from the publisher's website [www.disques-triton.com](http://www.disques-triton.com).

This CD is of a performance of an anonymous French mass written in the mid-18th Century, which over the years has gone by the names *Messe de Bordeaux*, *Bordeloise mass*, *Trumpet mass*, *Chartres mass*, as well as by others. In spite of, or perhaps because of its unknown composer, it was quite popular over a wide region for a long period of time. During this extended period, it was given different settings ranging from simple plainsong to harmonized versions in two, three, or more parts, up to settings in full polyphony. These were widely published, and it was not uncommon to use parts of different settings together, such was their familiarity. The ensemble Vox Cantoris specializes in rescuing neglected manuscripts through their performances, and on this CD they have elected to present a version that delights in the contrast between the differing styles as the mass moves through its stations.

This mass is part of a long series that stylistically owe much to earlier mass settings from the latter half of the 17th Century, significantly including those written by Henry Du Mont for the Chapelle Royal (see the review of the Pierre Robert: *Grands Motets* above). Such works have a structural simplicity that allows them to be used in monasteries with limited forces or expanded when resources are better. Some of the features found in this mass that set it apart from plainsong are the wider use of varying note lengths, extended embellishment, etc.

The four male singers here are augmented by serpentist Michael Nègre. The recording was made in the eminently

suitable acoustic environment of the former cathedral in the rural medieval village of Saint-Bertrand de Comminges in southwestern France. The singers are used soloistically or in unison with serpent introduction or accompaniment, as well as in ensemble in the more complex musical sections. Interspersed between the stations of the mass are the movements of four organ pieces by Claude Balbastre, his *Concerto en ré majeur*, the *Trio en la majeur*, the *Récit*, and the *Trio de flute et de Voix humanine*, as performed by Jean-Patrice Brosse. The constantly changing stylistic landscape keeps the listener interested, whereas the same melodic material done only in plainchant would be fairly likely to put one's chin against the chest.

The vocalists have voices suitable for plainsong, and it is easy to slip into the notion that it is a group of four stalwart monks doing all the work. Michael Nègre seems to be a relative newcomer to the world of recorded serpentists. Inquiries to Michel Godard and Volny Hostiou reveal that he is not a professional player, and is reportedly an engineer of some sort. Nevertheless, he has contributed a competent bit of playing here and this makes the CD a valuable one for showing the serpent in its role of accompanying plainsong. The CD booklet notes are fairly extensive and are presented in both French and English, with a brief article on the serpent and its liturgical uses by its player. Thanks to John Wall of [www.NewOlde.com](http://www.NewOlde.com) for discovering this gem and alerting this newsletter.



### Un Serpent de Paroisse.

*Un Serpent de Paroisse. (A Parish Serpent) A ruddy-faced parish priest (with a fantastic expression!) blows into a snake-like horn. Drawn as a satirical print for a Paris periodical such as 'La Caricature' or 'Le Charivari'*

- *De Bronze et de Lumière*; composition for serpent and piano by Thérèse Brenet, published by Musik Fabrick in 2009, piano score plus solo part, obtained from the publisher at [www.classicalmusicnow.com](http://www.classicalmusicnow.com), but available in the US from Sheetmusicplus, Southern Ohio Music and others, and in Europe from D-Arezzo, Otto Harrasowitz, etc.

Composer Thérèse Brenet wrote this piece for Michel Godard, but it went unperformed until Doug Yeo and pianist John Anthony gave the world premiere at the Historic Brass Society's 2009 Early Brass Festival in July. This contemporary and challenging piece was inspired by the flexibility of dynamics and pitch that the serpent can offer, and highlights the expressiveness the instrument is capable of in the right hands. The title translates as *Bronze and Light*, referring to the composer's impressions upon first hearing Michel Godard demonstrate the instrument's capacity to astonish. It uses widely spaced levels of both pitch and loudness, two extensive trills, and then towards the end its softness of timbre and lightness of touch seem



*Stephan Berger and Michel Godard in the Basel Musical Instrument Museum*

to reflect the color of brass in warm lighting, according to the composer's introduction.

This work would make a suitable recital piece to work up for any serpentists interested in expanding their horizons.

- Orchestre Les Passions and Choeur de chambre les éléments, under the direction of Jean-Marc Andrieu, recently gave us the excellent recording of Jean Gilles' *Requiem*, on which Volny Hostiou played serpent. The same forces, including Volny's serpent, have produced another Gilles recording, this time of the *Lamentations*. The record label is again Ligia Digital, with the formal release date being the end of March, and a copy has been ordered from Amazon France so that a review can appear in the next edition of this newsletter. Volny has written to say that his participation on the new recording is similar to that of the *Pierre Robert: Grands Motets* as reviewed above, specifically less soloistic and more part of the mix in backing up the large choir.

- *Instruments of the Middle Ages and Renaissance*; CD recording, with The Early Music Consort of London, directed by David Munrow, Alan Lumsden on serpent, sackbut and other instruments. Virgin Veritas 0946 (3 85811 2) 3, obtained from Amazon.

This CD is a reissue of an older LP record published as EMI/Angel SLS 988 and also as SAN 391-392 (2 LPs). This historically significant anthology was a valuable effort to demonstrate many of the instruments that your mother never told you about, and most of the performances are quite good and hold up very well compared to more modern recordings. In some cases, one would be hard pressed to find other recordings with some of these included instruments, and this may be why Virgin Veritas bothered with the re-release. The serpent itself is used on the track *Canzona Quarta for 'basso solo'* by Girolamo Frescobaldi, which is track 5 on side B of record 2, aka Side 4 (LP version) or track 20 of CD2 (CD version).



*Early 17th C. illustration 'Garde Impériale: Musicien des Grenadiers a pied' from Aaron Martinet's Troupes Françaises*

## More Exciting News

- In the September 2009 issue of this newsletter, the childrens' book *One Ted Falls Out of Bed*, by Julia Donaldson and Anna Currey (Macmillan ISBN 0-333-94782-7), featured a whimsical illustration of a frog playing a serpent. In response, Andrew van der Beek wrote, "Ok, I'll come clean. Anna Currey is a near-neighbour of ours and Deborah's best mate - also, of course, a wonderful book-illustrator. I can't remember if I told her that reaching all the holes was one of the problems or if she worked it out herself..... I think you can say that Anna knew about the serpent through me. I think she may have come and sketched the Pretty (Andrew's military serpent) at Lacock." In the back of our minds we all probably knew there had to be that Lacock connection!

- Keith Ryder wrote, "I've just bought a Plano Bow-Max XT single bow case (model # 1143) for \$55; with very little work it will hold my Kaiser serpent. It requires gluing foam in place, but needs only minimal cutting of the case itself. The case's internal braces and pillars make it fairly rigid, but interfere with the serpent very little. The case is meant to hold a compound bow, quiver and arrows; interior dimensions are 43" x 23" x 9"; it's hard black plastic, tough and light. I think Bass Pro Shops or Cabela's or Gander Mountain has them as well, and they show up (new) on eBay, too. I suspect the Plano Bow-Max XT case will accept most "church" serpents, whether wood or fiberglass, new or old. I made a paper tracing of my serpent, and tried it out in the case to make sure it would work."



- During Christmas of 2009, Australian serpentist and ophicliidian Sue Bradley encountered breathing problems, and a scan discovered a lung tumor; even more shocking since she has never smoked. Early in 2010 it became necessary to remove one lung, bad enough for anyone and worse for a professional player of tuba & other low brasses. Happily Sue is on the mend, and just before this newsletter went to press she wrote, "I've made the decision in the last few days that I am no longer a sick person. I've had three months of being ill, and now I am so over it! So I am refusing to be treated by my well-meaning friends as a sick person. No excuses, I just have to get on with things. The stuff from the operation to actually remove the lung is pretty much all fixed; there's been a noticeable improvement in my breathing in the last two weeks, with increased rib cage flexibility and better diaphragm control. I can play the F tuba pretty well, and the C tuba is improving."

"I do get 'out of puff' climbing more than a couple of flights of stairs, but I shall persevere."

"I am well over half way through chemotherapy, with no hair loss so far, thank heavens. It isn't particularly pleasant, and fatigue is a problem; I could sleep for Australia at the moment! But only three more sessions of the chemical cocktail to go, over the next five weeks. I haven't played my serpent or my ophicleide yet, still getting back into the swing of regular practice. I have had lots of lovely supportive emails from the serpent community."

- Jeremy West of Christopher Monk Instruments wrote to say that his long standing email address has changed. Please refer to the Getting Serpents section of this newsletter for details.

- At the Paris Conservatory, Michel Godard has been coaching a promising young player, Patrick Wibart, who has been playing serpent for a year and a half. He is playing a Wetterberger serpent, and though young shows great talent on the instrument. To see a video of Patrick playing in a student recital, go to this specific YouTube link, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=CKedL1mt0nc&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CKedL1mt0nc&feature=related), or from any other YouTube page search for *le jeu du serpent Patrick Wibart*. Patrick also recorded a special demonstration audio track for the WetterBerger (SerpentMakers) website, made at the Paris conservatory and accompanied by Bruno Teixeira-Martins on organ. From [www.serpentmakers.ch](http://www.serpentmakers.ch), select your language and then select Instrument, then select sounds/klangmuster/extraits sonores, and locate the *Tota pulchra es amica mea* selection.

- Wetterberger serpents recently added a new fiber carbon serpent to their lineup. Michel Godard wrote that he is very pleased with the sound, and thinks it is a fantastic

instrument for students, or if you have to travel in difficult conditions! It is also much less expensive than the wooden ones made by Wetterberger. See [www.serpentmakers.ch](http://www.serpentmakers.ch) for more information.

- Andy Lamb at the Bate Collection in Oxford wrote, "I have just had a research enquiry from a chap who is studying the Hibernicon. We have the bass one here in the Bate Collection but, apparently, there is a tenor one lurking about somewhere. So, we are appealing to readers of the newsletter to let us know if they are aware of the location of the tenor hibernicon. The bass version was created by Thomas Key of London in 1823. It is made of brass and has four long joints (steadily expanding to a bell flare). Three of the joints are connected by squared-off boot sections and the fourth has a wide, curved section. The whole thing has an uncomfortable, spindly appearance and is generally inelegant. I would guess the tenor probably has a similar construction style."



*Doug Yeo playing the bass Hibernicon at the Bate*

For the curious reader, Bate's catalog entry on the bass is as follows: "ROYAL PATENT BASSO HIBERNICON, Thomas Key, London, c.1825. Invented by Rev. Joseph Cotter of Cork in 1823, not as a contrabass bass horn but so that it could be played on higher harmonics of a longer tube and thus use fewer keys. The 8 keys provided give a full chromatic compass in the normal register." Andy also

wrote, "I think the name Hibernicon is an oblique reference to Ireland as the instrument was also known as the Hibernian Horn, Hibernia being a romantic/archaic term for Ireland." In reply to a query about the details of the box joints where the straight tubes sections change direction, he wrote, "As for the box joints, we haven't had a close enough look to see what is actually going on in there. When Doug Yeo came and played the thing he found the mouthpiece was the biggest obstacle to superior tonal quality."

"If you have come across anything like this in shops, museums, galleries or private collections around the world we would like to hear from you." Please reply to [andrew.lamb@music.ox.ac.uk](mailto:andrew.lamb@music.ox.ac.uk).

- Jay Krush wrote to let us know that the Chestnut Brass Company has a newly designed website up now. It is a fine looking site and is worth a look, even if you have been to their site in the past. <http://www.chestnutbrass.com/>

- Michael Protzen, a serpentist in Germany (who only recently became known to us) wrote, "Serpent playing seems indeed not to be very common in Germany, I do not know any other serpent players around but me. I just heard of a guy making a serpent himself, but he died before it was ready. I made my serpent myself too, but I'm still alive. Making it did not need so much time, because I did not make it from wood, but of layers of cloth glued one upon the other and afterwards finished. This is, by the way, the same material as the East German *Trabant* cars were made of. It doesn't really work badly, but I fear if I meet another serpentist, he would laugh at it. I have played the serpent for about five years (I've been a trombone player before) and I'm not yet very experienced, just having some little performances in the church (next Sunday I'll play some pieces on Bach's birthday, hoping he'll enjoy it) and on some *avantgarde* improvisation sessions, but I'm still looking for contacts, maybe a renaissance wind ensemble or something like that. (Michael has also built other wind instruments, such as the *pechhorn*, a rustic signaling horn.)

- The International Tuba Euphonium Association will present Clifford Bevan with one of the ITEA Lifetime Achievement Awards at the 2010 International Tuba Euphonium Conference in Tucson, Arizona, in May. ITEA recognizes individuals who have made significant and distinguished contributions to the euphonium and tuba through performance, composition, research, education, and/or the music industry. Among Bevan's many contributions is his book, *The Tuba Family*, considered the definitive history of the tuba and related instruments. In addition, ITEA will present the first Clifford Bevan Award for Excellence in Research.

*submitted by Craig Kridel*