



Serpent Newsletter

P.O. Box 954 Mundelein, Illinois 60060 USA

Newsletter for Serpent Enthusiasts

April 1, 2011

A Note from the Editor

First, I want to thank the readers who submitted lists of music written or calling for serpent. It is a good start to the Serpent Music Anthology Project that I announced in the September 2010 edition of this newsletter. When I get a little bit more material, I will commence work on adding the new page to the Serpent Website. Please continue to send in anything you can think of along these lines. Later on, it will help for people to review the webpage before submitting additions, since they can avoid duplications. But for now, I am more concerned with building a critical mass than I am with possible redundancies.

The serpent world recently lost one of its most enduring and colorful characters. Our friend Wik Bohdanowicz died early this year, leaving a large void in the serpent ether and our memories of a man who is not soon forgotten. This newsletter includes a memorial article about Wik, his life and interests.

Paul Schmidt

usual. Details are available at www.boswedden.org.uk/serpentarium-2011.html. Most participants are already registered, but late comers can still contact Nigel either via the aforementioned website or by the contact information provided in this newsletter's *About the Organization* section.

- The first serpent congress in France will take place at the Paris Invalides Museum on October 6th & 7th, 2011. The congress will include two days of conferences and exhibitions about serpent matters. It is being organized in partnership between IRPMF and the Army Museum and will end with three concerts. The provisional program shows that on Thursday, October 6, the Auditorium Austerlitz will be the venue, and the seminars will include serpent careers, investigation of serpent history in the church as revealed by church directories, plus acoustics, pedagogy, and iconography. On Friday, October 7, the participants will gather in the Grand Salon to discuss organology, the serpent in Europe, and other issues such as the serpent in opera. The symposium is being administered by a committee including Cécile Davy-Rigaux Florence Gétreau (IRPMF), Volny Hostiou (serpent professor at the Conservatory of Rouen), with the collaboration of Bernard Dompnier (University of Clermont-Ferrand) and Jean Duron (CMBV). More details can be found at <http://serpent.instrument.free.fr> and at <http://www.irpmf.cnrs.fr/spip.php?article303>.

Workshops

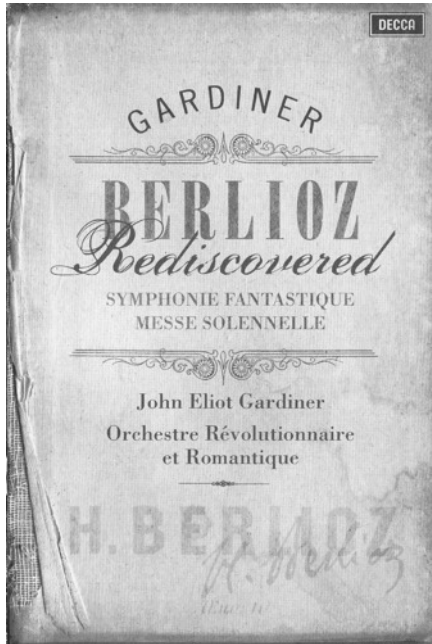
- The Historic Brass Society's Early Brass Festival, originally scheduled for August 5th through 7th in Bloomington, Indiana, has been cancelled due to a combination of logistical issues and low early registrations.
- The 2011 Serpentarium will be over the British Spring Bank Holiday weekend, which is the same as the States' Memorial Day weekend, i.e. Friday May 27 - Monday 30. The location will again be Nigel Nathan's bed & breakfast, the former Cornish mine owners' mansion known as Boswedden House. Phil Humphries will be facilitating, as

New Materials

- *Berlioz Rediscovered*; DVD recording of the *Symphonie Fantastique* and *the Messe Solennelle*; Decca #074 3212. Remastered from earlier video releases. Featuring Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique. John Eliot Gardiner, director, with Stephen Wick, serpent & ophicleide; Stephen Saunders, ophicleide; Marc Giradot, buccin. Obtained from Amazon.

This DVD combines two re-issues of material from older video tapes. The *Symphonie Fantastique* originally appeared on VHS as Philips # 70254, with the soundtrack on CD as

Philips # 434 402-2. This part was recorded in 1991 at the Conservatoire National Supérieur d'Art Dramatique (the old Paris Conservatoire) in Paris as part of a concert performance. The orchestra uses the original forces specified by Berlioz, performing on period instruments. Of interest to serpent aficionados, Stephen Wick plays serpent and ophicleide, and Stephen Saunders plays ophicleide. This is a good transfer, and both the video and audio are clear. The editing shows the serpent and ophicleide clearly and up close during their solos in the closing *Witches' Sabbath* movement. Both instruments can be heard throughout, but they are not afforded the same video attention elsewhere during the piece.

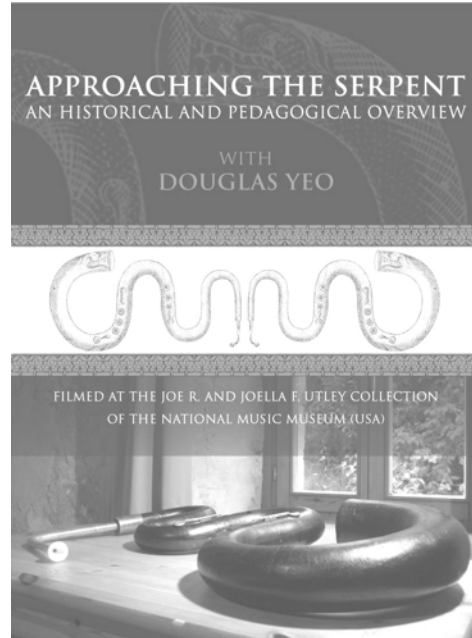


The *Messe Solennelle* was recorded in 1993, two years after the *Symphonie Fantastique*, this time using Westminster Cathedral in London as the venue. The orchestral forces appear to be similar, and both Stephens appear on the same instruments. Also of interest is the appearance of Marc Giradot on buccin, and possibly on ophicleide, although the latter is not clearly shown in the video. Since this is a choral composition, the orchestra is joined by the Monteverdi Choir, with soloists being soprano Donna Brown, tenor Jean-Luc Viala and bass-baritone Gilles Cachemaille.

This DVD is a good place to see old brass and woodwind instruments in use. Besides the aforementioned, there are natural trumpets, corneopans, natural horns, and an assortment of period woodwinds and percussion visible in closeup. The violins and their brethren of course are the same as those used in modern orchestras, and here they appear to be configured with steel strings, which is probably appropriate to the period.

- Drake Mabry wrote regarding his modern serpent publications, such as *Quatra Tanka*. He is now living some of the year in the States and some in France and is not using

a distributor anymore. He also has a new email address. The new contact information is: Drake Mabry, Poitiers, France and Newark, New Jersey, mabry22@gmail.com, Drake Mabry Publishing, San Diego, California, <http://www.drakemabrypublishing.com>, info@drakemabrypublishing.com.



- *Approaching the Serpent: An Historical and Pedagogical Overview*; DVD recording featuring a brief history of the serpent and its variants, demonstrations and lessons. Berlioz Historical Brass #BHB DVD 001. Douglas Yeo, serpent. Obtained from Douglas Yeo, www.yeodoug.com.

Doug Yeo's new DVD is finally available after much anticipation. Most of the information anyone would need about this release has already been covered in previous editions of the newsletter, but for the record and for new readers, an overview is provided here.

The DVD is currently available in two versions, NTSC (USA, Canada, Japan and other countries) and PAL (UK, EU, Australia and other countries). Both versions play in all regions. A Blu-Ray version is promised, but does not yet appear on the Yeo's website order form. This is a standard definition DVD, so it will look best on a standard DVD player and standard definition TV. When available, the Blu-Ray version will satisfy those who have Blu-ray players and can't live without the serpent in crystal clear high def. A preview of two short sections from the DVD can be viewed on Doug's website.

The DVD is an educational video in four parts: *Historical Overview* of the serpent in its various forms, *Serpent Lesson* with Doug Yeo, *Duets*, where the viewer can play along with Doug on either part (PDF files of the sheet music are

also on the DVD), *Overview* of current serpent makers. Overall, the video duration is 1 hour and 53 minutes.

In the *Historical Overview* section, Doug demonstrates five French Church serpents by different makers, including modern, antique and metal models, three similarly varied English Military serpents, soprano (worm) and contrabass (anaconda) serpents, an Early Cimbasso, a Serpent Forveille, a Serpent à Pavillon, an Ophimonocleide, a Bass Horn, and English Bass Horn, and a reproduction experimental Bass Cornetto/Zink.

In the other sections, Doug addresses issues such as different ways to hold the serpent, the addition of keys, posture, playing technique and general approach to playing, and current makers of reproduction serpents. The Rodgers Mouthpiece, intended to give baritones and euphoniums a more serpent-like sound, is also demonstrated. Excerpts from tracks taken from Doug's CD *Le Monde du Serpent* are used as background for the menus and transitions; these include the *Étude 8 Allegretto* by Métoyen and *Duo 2 Largo* by Hardy.

Throughout the video sections, Doug is in various locations in the Joe R. and Joella F. Utley Collection of the National Music Museum. The video is clear and well lighted, and because of the setting it has a warmth that would have been lacking in a more institutional venue. Various instruments in the collection and various wooden furniture and house plants provide the decoration. The sound is taken from Doug's lapel microphone as well as from a more remote microphone during the playing passages. On two occasions, the lapel mic did not work, and Doug's voice is picked up by the remote mic, giving it a more distant sound; this is really the only significant flaw on the entire video.

Doug hopes the disc is helpful in encouraging current serpent players and in identifying a new generation of players to pick up the instrument.



- *The Leaves of Life*; The Serpent Press # SER010. 2010 CD recording featuring The Mellstock Band, Phil Humphries, serpent. Obtained from the group.

Here is another in The Mellstock Band's series of spirited performances of rustic English music. In this instance, the recording includes various music, poetry and stories drawn from rural churches and villages in wintertime England. More specifically, the songs come from the Dorset region as documented in Thomas Hardy's writings, supplemented by material from other regions of the country. The songs are interspersed by spoken word extracts as delivered by members of the band; besides Hardy there are pieces by John Clare and William Barnes.

According to the CD booklet's notes, some of the songs are from an oral tradition while others are from manuscript books as used by church bands when visiting all the inhabitants of the parish on Christmas night, singing outside homes. There are also dance tunes from the collections of the Hardy family and others.



excerpt from page 86 of the 1912 Couesnon catalog

The Mellstock Band is comprised of Dave Tonwsend (concertina), Tim Hill (clarinet), Charles Spicer (oboe) and Phil Humphries (serpent). In addition to playing their instruments, all members sing the songs and spoken parts are delivered by Charles and Phil. On five of the 25 tracks, the band is supplemented by Pete Copper on violin.

Songs include *The Persian Dance*, *The Waterloo Dance*, *Apple Tree Wassail*, *Remember Adam's Fall*, *The Sun From the East*, *Arise and Hail the Sacred Day*, *Arise Arise*, *Down In Yon Forest*, *The Bitter Withies*, *Come Come My Friends*, *The Roast Beef of Old England*, *Two or Three Strings To My Bow*, *Away Dark Thoughts*, *The New May Moon*, *Old Towler*, *On Christmas Day*, *Careless Sally Tarry Wool*, *The Devil's Dream*, *Shepherd's Hey*, *The Sheepshearing*, *The Leaves of Life*, *Sadler's Balloon*, and *Archer's Dance*.

Spoken selections include excerpts from Hardy's *Under the Greenwood Tree*, "Carols for Fancy Day" and "A Rude Awakening", the Dorset dialect poem *Herrenston* as read by

Phil, a verse from the *Gospel According to St. Luke II* "And there were in the same county shepherds abiding in the field...", *Sheep in Winter* by John Clare, and Hardy's poem *The Oxen*.

As with all Mellstock performances, this one is competently realized with fine instrumentals, and the increased number of vocals by the band are welcome. Both spoken word readers deliver their lines nicely. Since this is a serpent-centric review, special note is due to Phil's exposure on serpent; It is hard to recall another Mellstock recording where he gets to shine on so many solos.

Besides being a nice album to have playing while you nestle by the fire on a cold winter's evening, this is a welcome addition to the serpent discography, presenting as it does so many rustic serpent stylings, contrasting with many of the other recent serpent recordings which are more church (or at least church serpent) oriented. Phil usually plays a military serpent when with Mellstock, so this album also adds to the collection of recordings to feature that variant of the instrument.



- *Music All Powerful: Music to Entertain Queen Victoria*; Australian Eloquence# 4802091. Reissued from the original LP recording on the Argo label, # ZRG 596. CD recording featuring the Purcell Consort of Voices, directed by Grayston Burgess, with Jennifer Partridge on piano, Iona Brown on violin, David King, speaker, and Alan Lumsden on ophicleide. Pre-ordered from Amazon with a release date of mid-April, 2011.

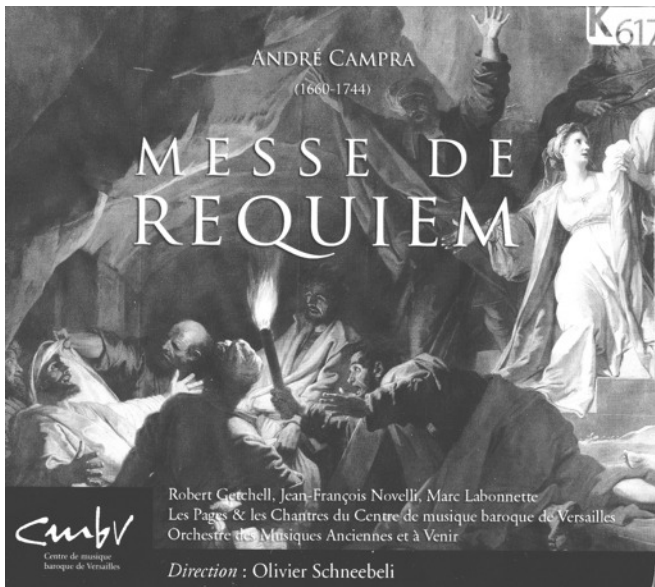
This CD reissue of the classic Purcell Consort recording is a welcome addition to the catalog of reissues on the Australian Eloquence label. The original LP is much sought after, and most listeners must resort to scratchy old disks in libraries. A clean new digital version is an exciting event indeed. Since the new CD was not available in time for a review, this notice must be content with description based on the original album.

The recording is a collection of seventeen chestnuts from the Victorian era, i.e; from the latter half of the 19th Century. They are mostly of a vocal nature, whether actually performed by voices or not. Here are ensemble selections such as *The Stars Beyond the Clouds* by Berthold Tours, Ciro Pinsuti's *Good Night, Beloved*, Barnby's *Sweet and Low*, and *Come Let Us Join the Roundelay* by William Beale. Instrumentals played in a vocal style include Prince Albert's *Melody for the Violin*, Mendelssohn's *Song Without Words, Op. 38 No. 2*, Galkin's *Mazurka* and *Arlequin* by Cecile Chaminade.

Arthur Sullivan's *I Would I Were a King* is a vocal solo, and *A Loyal Ode* is spoken poetry. There is the vocal duet *The Passage Bird's Farewell* by Mendelssohn, and Hyacinth Klosé contributes his *Air Varie for Ophicleide* with piano accompaniment. The album is rounded out with other vocal ensemble selections such as *Autumn Song* by Mendelssohn, the titular *Music, All Powerful* by Walmisley, Alice Smith's *O That We Two Were Maying*, Callcott's *The Lark Now Leaves His Watery Nest*, and the anonymous *The Long Day Closes* wraps up the recording.

All tracks include fine performances, and if one likes Victorian romantic music, this is a great album. All voices are precisely what is required for performances of this kind of music, and the instrumental selections are likewise realized with the proper style. Of particular interest to serpent enthusiasts is, of course, the theme and variations that are Klosé's *Air Varie*, performed here by virtuoso Alan Lumsden, formerly of the London Serpent Trio. The only other commercial recording of this piece is the one by Nick Byrne on his CD *Back From Oblivion*. The recording style differs between them, with Lumsden's version being presented with more 'presence', where the whole 'tone emanating from side holes' thing is apparent, in contrast with the clean recording technique that gives Byrne's version an almost euphonium-like flavor. Both performances are expert, and it is great to have both available.





- *André Campra: Messe de Requiem*; Le Couvent-K617 Records France # K617224. 2010 CD recording featuring Les Pages & les Chantres du Centre de Musique Baroque de Versailles, Orchestre des Musiques Anciennes et à Venir, directed by Olivier Schneebeli, Volny Hostiou, serpent. Obtained from the group.

This new recording includes two selections by 17th Century composer André Campra, the *Messe de Requiem* and his setting of Psalm 125, *In Convertendo*. The *Requiem*, probably the more famous of the two, uses the themes of the traditional *Messe des Morts* plainchant. It opens with the three movements of the *Introit*, the first notes of which are the statement of the *cantus firmus* played by the solo serpent. The serpent is not highlighted elsewhere in this piece, although it is noticeable in the opening of the *Communion's Requiem Aeternam* section. Nonetheless, the experienced listener can spot many places throughout where the serpent sound is discernable.

This is after all a largely vocal composition, and the mostly male soloists get their chance to shine. The principal solo singers are counter-tenor Robert Getchell, tenor Jean-François Novelli, and bass-baritone Marc Labonnette. Also notable are the four soprano voices which portray 'pages'. Two are boys, while the other two are females; at least one sounds suspiciously like an adult (and the liner notes don't do anything to help figure this out), but the liner photo of the group does show three children and one assumes that the fourth is also a youngster. There is a very nice vocal trio in the *Offertory*, and elsewhere the unwaveringly pure child voices are set against the flute in the *Agnes Dei*, before their line segues into the counter-tenor part. Several lullaby-like movements touch the emotions with their sensitivity. Overall, this *Requiem* is not one of unbearable sadness, nor is it full of fire and brimstone. It is surprisingly gentle and even upbeat, ending on a series of triumphant peals that fade into silence that obviously is meant to evoke eternity.

The *In Convertendo* was originally written when Campra was in his early 40's, but it is his revised version of 23 years later that appears on this recording. The vocal resources are the same, albeit using only one boy soprano. The serpent seems to have more to do here than in the *Requiem*, often being heard busily playing in the continuo. This piece is slightly more energetic than the *Requiem*, but otherwise shares much of the same flavor.

The recording is of a live concert held in October of 2010 as part of *Grandes Journées Campra*, as presented by Radio France. The orchestra numbers 13 strings, with oboe, flute, bassoon, serpent, lute, and harpsichord and organ. The combined choirs amount to 30 singers, in addition to the aforementioned soloists and child singers. The vocals are all very well matched and presented, with satisfying balance and tone. Volny Hostiou's serpent playing is uniformly precise and expert in its execution. The orchestra never overwhelms the vocals, and overall the acoustic environment offered by the Chapelle Royale at Versailles Palace is well suited to the music and the recording technique is always clean and unobtrusive.

This recording is another welcome addition to the several French productions of historic music to feature the serpent that have appeared in the last few years. Hopefully there will be many more like it.



About the Organization

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

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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.

Wik Bohdanowicz: In Memoriam

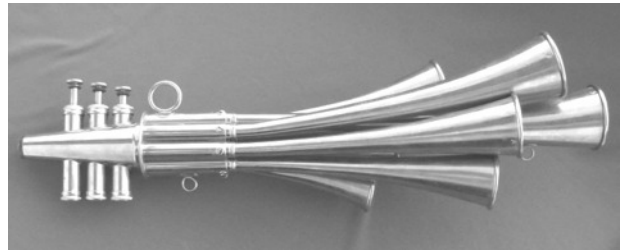
Wiktor Bohdanowicz, long time serpentist and regular at all Serpentariums and festivals in England, died on January 3 of liver related illness. In his career, he taught physics and electronics at Richard Hale School, an all-boys secondary [ages 11-18] establishment that goes back almost 400 years. Regarded by his students as an inspirational teacher, he also served as the school's health and safety representative and the regional teaching union representative.

In a tribute, the school's headteacher Steve Neate said, "Mr. Bohdanowicz, or *Bod* as he was affectionately known by pupils, held forthright views on all subjects and held true to all of these, which made him an exceptional union and school health and safety representative; where no stone remained unturned. He was the voice of opposition when there needed to be redress on issues presented, but always with the view to fairness and clarity. Often maligned by lower school pupils due to his no-nonsense approach to classroom management, his impact on exam classes at GCSE and A-level was profound. His students recall many a funny lesson and 'Bod-isms', as his quotes are now referred to. He was something of a polymath – having knowledge and expertise in guns and ammunition, electronics, cars and music as well as other interests. Above all, he will be remembered as a friendly, approachable, knowledgeable and loyal colleague, an inspirational teacher and what we all appreciate in life – a real character."



Wik Bohdanowicz

Wik's partner, Anya Spackman, wrote to tell more about this very unusual man. "Wik had quite a list of instruments to his name apart from the serpents and ophicleides, namely a double bass which he'd had since his teens, his first instrument and with which he'd earned quite a bit in his youth - he termed himself a properly brought up orchestral player. He had two E-flat basses, one a Profundo, which he was very fond of and it has a lovely tone; a rather pretty euphonium which he said was ex-Salvation Army, a couple of bass trombones, a helicon, and a Martinophone or Schalmey, and a Tibetan monastery trumpet, and that's just the brass section. Add to that a great bass rackett, a crumhorn, a cornetto, two didgeridoos, a couple of recorders, a Count Duckula mouthorgan (which he couldn't play), a walking stick cum triple flute (which he couldn't play), and last but not least, three duduks! His musical tastes included early music, classical music of course, Wagner, Gilbert and Sullivan, brass bands and folk music."



What, you may ask, is a Schalmey, aka Martinophone? Here's a picture of one. It is a reed instrument in the same family as the old squeeze-bulb automobile horns, but with different pitched reed/horn sets blown by one player, using valves to direct the air

Then there are the classic cars. "Neither of us liked modern cars and we had a bit of a fleet of classics, ranging from 1951 to 1980, on which he did all the work to keep them on the road. We both also liked classic motorcycles, and he had several which he planned to get back on the road in his retirement. He was also looking forward to taking up blacksmithing - as he put it, 'he liked hitting things'."

His friends certainly knew about his love of good beer, "And I'm afraid it was his liver that killed him."

Others may not know about his tortoises. "He'd always fancied having a tortoise, but in his youth the family moved home quite frequently so it wouldn't have been practical, and by the time he'd settled they were in the 'you can't get them any more' category. In 1997 I owed him a *huge* favour, so I did some secret research and tracked one down for him, which we collected in spring '98. After a very steep learning curve, including a vet visit that told us there was nothing wrong with the tortoise, only the way we were keeping him, Tortellini was installed in proper outdoor accommodation, but he kept escaping. They said if he had a female companion (or two - a 1:1 mix is not fair on the female as the males are very randy, honestly) he'd stop escaping, so feelers were put out and we got one, then we were lucky enough to rehome one from a bad keeper, and sure enough he stopped escaping. Then Wik adopted a

couple of little illegal imports that were seized at Heathrow Airport, and a couple more rehomed came up, and of course the inevitable happened with having males and females... and so now I have 26 to look after or rehome them, and just to add to the fun there are another 4 eggs in the incubator as well."

"He also liked shooting, particularly muzzle-loaders, and was beginning to regress to flintlocks. He'd been a battle re-enactor with the Sealed Knot society in his younger years, and made all his own armour as well as his musket. He'd sold all his guns when he first moved to London because of the hassle of keeping them, but went back to it after he moved in with me."

Then there was his collection of "loud waistcoats, of course - I'm wondering what best to do with them now."

Finally, all who knew Wik as a raconteur will remember his ability to recite many a joke, bawdy limerick, or spontaneously sing any and every Monty Python or Tom Lehrer song. *And they will remember his pith helmets.*

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.freeserve.co.uk>
(serpents, early cimballo, 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 Boudouin)

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>

NEW!

(alphorns and serpents, both wood and carbon fiber)

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

(cornetti)

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

Where Serpents Gather

- The last week of December 2010 saw the 40th anniversary of the *Christmas Revels* at Sanders Theater, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts. The Mellstock Band, with Phil Humphries on serpent, performed with the brass ensemble used in the show. That ensemble was called Puddletown Brass in the show and two of their players were founding members of The Annapolis Brass Quintet.



the Mellstock Band and Puddletown Brass at the Revels

- Jon Hall of Portland, Maine, wrote about his serpent related activities. "My services as ophicleidist date to a few years ago. The Yankee Brass Band has now been going for 25 years, and I've been part of it since the start. We gather from around the country and do a week-long tour on the last week of July. The tours are always in New England. This coming summer we are in Maine. Paul Maybery has been the leader, arranger, editor, etc; from the start. My normal instrument is trombone, though more recently euphonium and tuba as well. In *Yankee* I play a tenor saxhorn, but several times in past tours Bob Eliason and I have done solo duets for two 'cleides and brass band, usually taken from operatic band arrangements (usually intended for baritone and tenor). See www.yankeebrassband.org for recent events, also see www.centennialbrassband.com for my own local group."

"The only time I ever did a 'cleide solo in public otherwise was at Strawberry Banke Museum in Portsmouth, NH. It had gone well in rehearsal (I played the Kuffner *Polonaise for Keyed Bugle* with a saxhorn sextet), but when the performance started, I discovered to my chagrin that since it was cold (in the 50s) and my repairman had generously sprayed the pads (and instrument) with silicone, it was almost impossible to hold onto with cold hands. Such are the perils of outdoor gigs in the fall!"

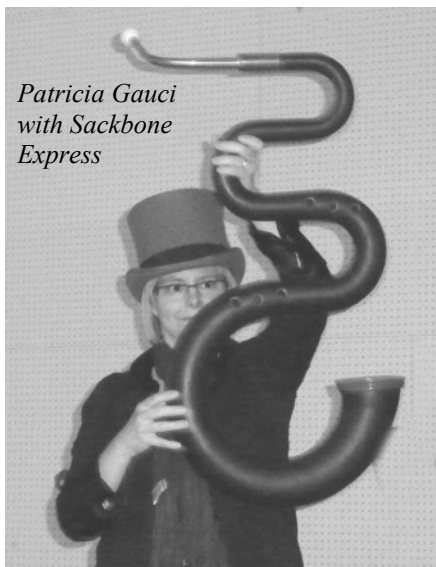
"I noted with interest on the website for the 2010 Vintage Band Festival the presence of the *Roving Ophicleides*. I

remember meeting Leonard Byrne at an HBS meeting a few years back. Bob Eliason was there also (I was there to sit in with the Federal City Band) and we took part with our 'cleides in a spontaneous session with a group of serpentists which included Leonard."

Editor's note: Jon Hall is also known to me from our mutual membership in the antique bicycle organization The Wheelmen, www.thewheelmen.org.

- Patricia Gauci of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada wrote about her serpent debuts in December, 2010.

"Sackbone Express, a sackbut ensemble in Edmonton, performed a half-hour recital of Renaissance music in the lobby of Edmonton's Winspear Centre for the Arts on November 24, 2010, in advance of the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra's main-stage evening performance. The nine-sackbut ensemble included, for the first time, a 'snake in the brass': Patricia Gauci, making her debut public serpent performance on Sol, a keyless church serpent built by Russ Kaiser in 2009. Sol provided support to the bass sackbut voicing. Patricia, Sol and Sackbone Express appeared together once again on December 6 at Dickinsfield Junior High School in Edmonton as guests of the school band

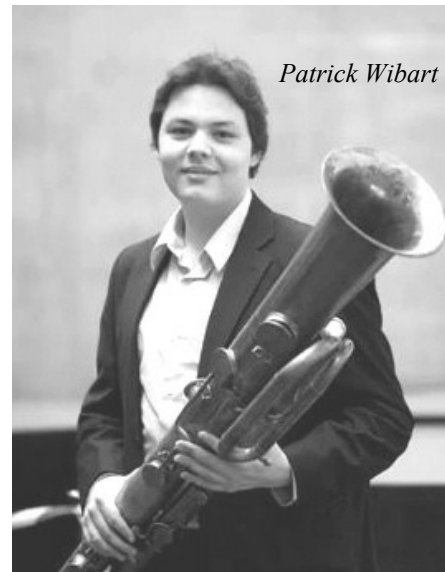


programme's seasonal concert performance. This time their fifteen-minute playlist of early music included *Lo How A Rose Ere Blooming* and *Coventry Carol* to help set a festive mood." Patricia is a relative newcomer to the serpent, and is expecting to participate in the 2011 Serpentarium in May.

- Doug Yeo wrote to mention that serpent and ophicleide wunderkind Patrick Wibart appears on two YouTube videos. As Doug said, "These links are ridiculously wonderful". Johan Hummel's *Fantaisie pour alto et orchestra* is at www.youtube.com/watch?v=hGBmqthNjOs&NR=1, performed on the ophicleide. Dario Castello's *Sonata prima per soprano solo* is at www.youtube.com/watch?v=0eafB4QqziA&feature=relat, performed on serpent. It is clear from these recordings (the YouTube items are sound only with a montage of related still images) that Wibart is already a major talent with an incredible degree of accomplishment on these difficult

instruments. Hopefully he will be able to get recording arrangements in the near future...it would be great to have some CDs of these performances.

- A brief note arrived from Steve Palmer of Lansing, Michigan, who is a clarinet player who has been using his Harding serpent for four years in a community band, playing with the bassoons. We have heard of other serpentists doing this, so perhaps it would be a workable way for others to get more 'lip time' and experience when there are no early music opportunities nearby.



- Gabe Stone in Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia, has been hard at work with his serpent, and a nice video of this can be seen on YouTube at www.youtube.com/watch?v=eMwTv4hfQv8, or by searching for Williamsburg Serpent. The tune is the *York Fusiliers*.

The Case of the Waterloo Serpent Part Deux

In the September issue of this newsletter, we ran an article by the Bate Museum's curator Andy Lamb, *The Case of the Waterloo Serpent*. Andy described a serpent in the collection that had some intriguing maker's markings, and which brought up some questions about who the original player(s) was or were. Dr. Mike Lomas, husband of Michelle Lomas who is a Serpentarium regular, replied to Andy with some of his own insight into the matter. His letter follows.

"I was interested by your article in the recent serpent newsletter on the Waterloo serpent; my doctoral thesis, with Trevor Herbert, was on bands in Britain in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and much of this (and one or two published articles) featured military matters."

"Although my knowledge of the extremely intricate world of late 18th/early 19th century military band finance is slightly

rusty and largely concerns the bands of the auxiliaries - volunteers, yeomanry and militia - I think that your doubts about the inscription on the serpent may be unfounded."

"Richard Bentinck could certainly have been a drummer *and* a serpent player. To understand the background to this, one needs a little detail. Before 1803, only the Royal Artillery, the Foot Guards, the Horse Grenadier Guards and (up to 1766) the Dragoons received official state support for military bands. The official line was that given by Thomas Simes in his *The Military Medley* of 1768. The *Military Dictionary* which forms part of this work includes the following entry: 'Band of Musick, which a corps keep up at their own expence [sic]'."



The Mellstock Quire in a scene from the 1920s film version of Hardy's "Under the Greenwood Tree"

"However, things were not as they seemed. In the militia, two drummers per company were on the regimental strength and received pay and equipment allowances. (This was reduced to one drummer for each company by the 1786 Militia Act - although grenadier and light companies retained two.) These 'drummers' were sometimes actually bandsmen - a devious (and very 18th century) method of misappropriating government funding for band purposes. A 1796 list of the drummers of the Cambridgeshire Militia shows that the regimental band consisted of 7 'Drummers' and 3 'Additional Drummers' - the latter allegedly paid by the officers. (Wiltshire Militia bandsmen were also carried on the strength as sergeants - a 1770 letter refers to 'the Sergeants who act in capacity of musicians'.) Almost certainly similar things happened in the regular army."

"In August 1803, the situation was regularised, perhaps to contain abuses. A circular from the War Office (covering regulars and auxiliaries) stated that: 'In regiments that have bands of music, one private soldier of each troop or company is permitted to act as a musician, and a sergeant is allowed allowed [sic] to act as master of the band; but all these men are to be effective to the service as soldiers, are to be perfectly drilled, and liable to serve in the ranks on any emergency'. There is plenty of evidence that this fairly

meagre level of government support was supplemented by various dodges for the rest of the wars against France, including the use of men paid as 'drummers' in the regimental bands. For instance, an inspection report of 1812 for the Wiltshire Militia commented that the bandsmen 'in order to prevent their claiming their discharge upon a peace are enlisted and kept on the strength of the Regt as Drummers'. A list dated 2 November 1803 shows that three of the drummers and fifers of the Staffordshire Militia played 'occasionally' in the regimental band."

"Therefore, it is quite likely (and a more satisfactory explanation) that Bentinck was both enlisted as a drummer and was also a serpent player who used the Waterloo serpent - in other words, the inscription should be taken at face value. His attachment to the Grenadier Company of the 23rd does not preclude this. No doubt his regiment possessed a corps of drummers, but this would have existed in addition to the band. Although some civilian professional musicians were present in military music, it was actually in their unit's interest to have them at least nominally on company pay lists. There was also increasing pressure for misappropriation of state funding for bands - my own research has shown that bands were getting bigger and more imposing in the Napoleonic wars - much larger than the dozen or so members allowed by the War Office. It is also perfectly possible that Bentinck had his serpent with him at Waterloo. There are various references to bandsmen (and their instruments) present on campaign in the Napoleonic Wars. Some more research in the regimental archives may confirm the above, although given the questionable legality of the funding arrangements for bandsmen, the details may not always appear in the records. I hope that this is of some interest."

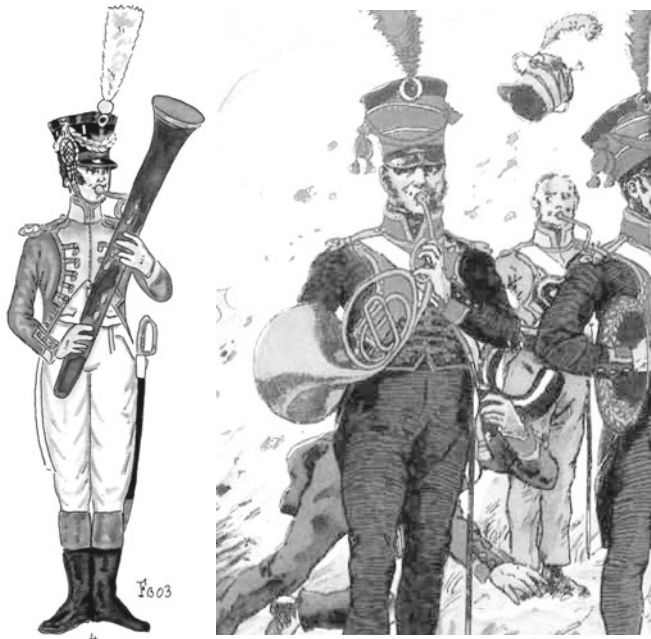


*Serpent player excerpt from "The Sharp Family" oil painting ca. 1779-1781 by Johann Joseph Zoffany
.....ahem.....*

"I can tell undoubted Raphaels from Gerard Dows and Zoffanies, I know the croaking chorus from the Frogs of Aristophanes!".....sorry

More Exciting News

- Gabe Stone wrote to mention some interesting illustrations found on a French website about the infantry regiments of the Napoleonic Wars, *Soldats de la Grande Armée*, the French emperor's army used for the invasion of Russia. The URL of the website is <http://frederic.berjaud.free.fr>. Colorful and well-illustrated drawings of musicians are found on the pages for *Le 4e Régiment d'Infanterie de ligne, 1796-1815*, and, and *Le 42e Régiment d'Infanterie de ligne*, and *Le 63e Régiment d'Infanterie de Ligne*. There are several serpent related instruments shown on these voluminous pages, and the non-musically related drawings depict a wide variety of military uniforms, actions and situations from that conflict.



(Left) Musician from the Fichier Wurtz; cartoon in *Napoleonic Soldier # 01*. (Right) Musicians in 1811 (source: Bucquoy, according to documents 'Espagnols/Fort') used by permission of Frederic Berjaud, from his website

- Anya Spackman, the late Wik Bohdanowicz's partner, would like to find new homes for Wik's Monk church serpent, his antique military serpent, and his two ophicleides. Contact anya@ejog-enterprises.co.uk.

- Paul Horner wrote to tell about his latest acquisition, a Russian Bassoon, or *basson russe*. "After looking at the very small makers mark, I believe I have identified it as "Jeantet". I perused my copy of the New Langwill index, for makers in LYON, France (as also marked). This name fits; page 194 lists his mark as JEANTET / A LYON, 1823-1827. Langwill lists (him as a maker of) *basson russe* and serpent bassoon."

- Michel Godard wrote, "I'm glad to be the one to announce to you that the new carbon fiber serpent from

Paul Horner with his Russian Bassoon



WetterBerger is now ready. Based on a French 18th century anonymous church serpent, the instrument is in one piece of carbon fiber, except for the leadpipe and mouthpiece of course. It is very easy to play, and the sound is amazingly close to the original wooden one. I personally travel a lot with it by now. Not fragile at all, very light at 1.2 kilograms (2.6 pounds), it can be a perfect instrument for students, but also for professional musicians having to deal with planes, snow, diving, wild animals.....WetterBerger also developed a new series of mouthpieces for both regular and carbon serpents. You'll find all information on WetterBerger's website, www.serpentmakers.ch."



WetterBerger has submitted their price list for the carbon fiber serpent, with the price being guaranteed until the end of June, 2011. The serpent with your choice of bocal, synthetic mouthpiece and cloth case is 2,480 Swiss Francs, which currently comes to \$2,705 US or 1921 Euros.

- Here's the story of a man named Hyacinthe-Marie Cormier. He was born Louis Stanislas Henri Cormier in 1832 and died in 1916), and was a French Roman Catholic priest and active musician, singing proficiently, playing the flageolet, the organ, and of greatest interest to us, the ophicleide. Later, taking the name Hyacinthe-Marie, he excelled in his studies but suffered from chronic hemorrhage. His health problems prevented him from making his profession with the Dominicans, but the Master General of the Order was willing to ask Rome for a special dispensation for him. Cormier traveled to Rome, where Pope Pius IX agreed to let him keep his church profession with the condition that he remain healthy for a month, noting, "Since it is not for him to live under the religious habit, it will be at least for him to die under it." When he had met the Pope's conditions of health, he commenced his church life 1859 at the church of Santa Sabina in Rome.

He took various posts such a master of novices and as a superior at a convent, then as Provincial of Toulouse, a post to which he served until 1874. He was then elected prior of the Convent of Marseilles in 1874, where he completed construction of a church and convent. He left this position when he was re-elected Provincial of Toulouse in 1878, an office he held until 1888. He was subsequently elected definitor for the General Chapter of Lyons in 1891, then later was called to Rome as associate to the newly elected Master General of the Order, the man who later became Cardinal Frühwirth. He eventually became Procurator of the Order and was elected Master General of the Order, a post which he would hold until 1916. After the end of his term, Cormier retired to San Clemente in Rome and died soon afterwards.



He is remembered for his saintly qualities, as a powerful preacher, an influential church officer, as a co-founder of the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas (the Angelicum) as it exists today, the Dominican university of Rome and one of the major pontifical universities. He also maintained his enthusiasm for music, especially sacred music. Franz Liszt heard him play the organ on one occasion and declared him to be a "master of the art". Cormier's cause for sainthood was recognized by the Holy See, and he was beatified by Pope John Paul II in 1994. The feast of Blessed Hyacinthe-Marie Cormier is celebrated with an optional memorial on May 21. Not bad for an ophiclidian; serpentists now have a Saint Ophi.



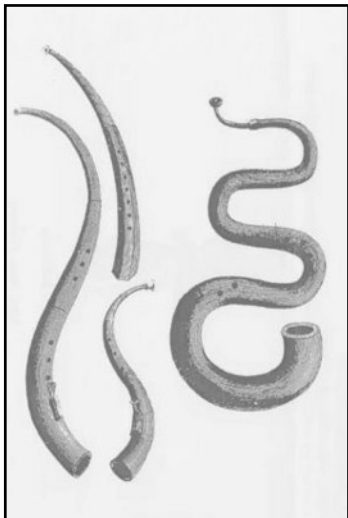
- American serpent maker Russ Kaiser, of Kaiser Serpents, has shared his developments with the newsletter, and what follows is a condensed version with some paraphrasing by your editor. "I am laying up fiberglass serpent number 35 right now. I have really wanted to work on a new mold set based on Doug Yeo's Baudouin serpent, but I haven't really had time. Unlike my earlier serpents, I no longer offer the finger rings; I have become convinced that the instrument plays a little better without them and is actually a little easier to hold as well. I also relocated the holes based on additional research. I think the biggest move might have been 3/4 of an inch but it seems to make the instrument a little easier to play. All the instruments are wrapped now, having been that way since number 13 or 14, so they take quite a bit more effort to build and finish. I have become pretty good at making mouthpieces out of Delrin, and I like the fact that they are so slick, almost like a gold-plated mouthpiece. I seem to stay 3 to 5 months behind in production but I am probably working at a ten instrument a year pace now."

"Now for the new serpent saga: I stalled on creating new fiberglass Baudouin-based instrument through the majority of 2010. Hand laying the fiberglass in the manner that I do requires a lot of sanding by both hand and machine to arrive at a finished product. This is work that has to be done wearing safety glasses, respirator, and ear protection. In short, it becomes a drag very quickly. For the last year I doodled with the measurements that I got from Doug's instrument and I kept coming back to the fact that making a new set of molds would just keep me doing things exactly the same. New molds would yield a new better playing



instrument, but each copy would still require hours of drudgery to get it out the door. Also, should it be necessary, making changes would involve major work since making the molds themselves is a huge investment in time. However, I have created the computer files for cutting the steel centerline silhouettes for the new molds.”

“I ultimately decided to revisit my first approach at serpent making, using CNC (computerized numerical control) milling machine. When starting my serpent making venture, I tried a handmade CNC machine, and while that was a great learning experience, it didn’t create anything usable. Well, I ordered a real CNC mill which was delivered just before Christmas last year. It is capable of making the serpent in pieces following the method Paul Horner used to build his instrument. I call it the Horner method, though I know some historical instruments were made this way. This is a professional, turn-key milling machine, with the capability of milling hard metals with an accuracy of a thousandth of an inch while running continuously. Not only will it be able to carve the serpent pieces, it will be able to make key saddles, draw rings, and other useful items as well.”



“I plan for my next serpent offering to be made from 16 pieces of hard wood, 8 pieces to a side, and assembled like two adjacent courses of brick. Each piece has a three inch centerline overlap with the piece on the opposite side of the center line. With modern adhesives it should be stronger than two piece construction because the long grain of the wood will stay oriented as much as possible with the centerline of the instrument. On monolithic block construction, the long grain normally runs from the top of the serpent to the bottom and this makes the horizontal runs very weak because of the cross-grain. I have started working on the files for this venture and I should be ready to start making instruments fairly quickly after learning how to use the machine. While it’s carving, I can be assembling pieces that are already done, making bocals and mouthpieces and other items. The first wooden serpent will be one based on my measurements of Doug’s instrument. The nice thing about this is if I miss the mark, I will re-draw it and try again.”

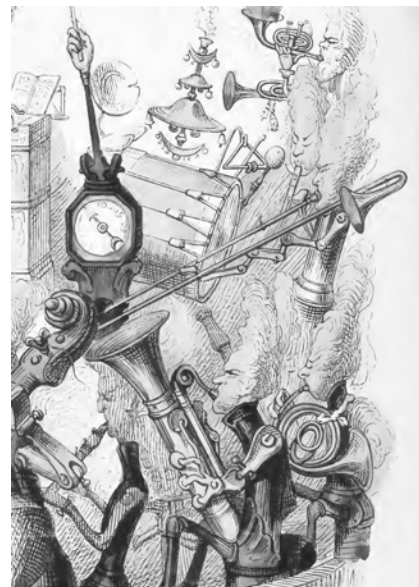
“I don’t plan to abandon fiberglass instruments, but I want to use the ability of making serpents in this fashion to refine and nail down the design of next instrument I make in fiberglass. It will be possible to use the mill to make the next set of plug molds for that instrument, which will also be a plus. Time of course will tell, but at least I will be working primarily with wood instead of glass. It is also possible that I will be able to use three dimensional molding, like Harding, to make a mostly resin model and not have much sanding at all. Again, time will tell. I have plans to make some small items, to iron out feed rates, cutter styles and the like. The first item from my mill is a straight ‘worm’ (soprano serpent) that I am making now in late March, 2011.”

Russ advised that at this time he is continuing to take orders for his fiberglass serpents, and is not yet accepting orders for the wooden serpents. Keep in touch with his progress on his website, www.kaiserserpents.com.

- Doug Yeo wrote about the book *Public and Private Life of Animals*, adapted by J. Thomson from the French book *Scènes de la vie privée et publique des animaux*, by P.J. Hetzel. The main attraction is the illustrations by J.I.I. Gérard, generally known as J.J. Grandville. On page 207, as part of the story *The Funeral Oration of a Silkworm*,



there is a wonderful engraving Grandville of a funeral procession comprised of anthropomorphic insects, with the leader carrying a serpent. Doug writes, “I continue to be fascinated by the drawings of



Grandville. I have found another of book of his with several ophicleide images, really wonderful stuff. The book is, *Le Autre Monde*.” You can see it (and download the very well scanned PDF file) at <http://www.archive.org/details/unautremondetran00gran>. Doug downloaded and extracted two images which appear in this newsletter.