

# Serpent Newsletter

P.O. Box 954 Mundelein, Illinois 60060 USA

Newsletter for Serpent Enthusiasts

April 1, 2014

## A Note from the Editor

This issue of the Serpent Newsletter has some unusual content, resulting from the more elaborate *New Materials* section. I usually try to keep the newsletter as serpent-centric as seems appropriate to me, but in this instance the new books by Sabine Klaus are worthy enough to review at length even if for the most part they are not directly about serpents.

I would also like to point out that while I do go hunting for material for each newsletter, most of the material comes from readers who send things in. A good example of this is the email I received from Michelle Lomas, pointing out an interesting stained glass window she saw in her travels. One thing led to another, and soon there was enough information to merit several paragraphs in an article. I always rely on such contributions, and I want to solicit more of the same.

And of course, I want to encourage players to send in descriptions of their performances, as well as notices of performances live or recorded (CDs, DVDs, YouTube videos, etc). Even mention of tangential events that you think might be of interest to other readers are welcome. As always, don't worry about your writing style, as everything is edited for clarity, length and style.

Finally, putting the newsletter together is expensive. Your 'subscription donations' are used only for printing and mailing (when applicable to your region) and other incidental expenses common to all newsletter recipients. By and large, money to purchase new materials for review, and funds for office supplies, are donated by me and a few others. This means that the serpent account is kept at a minimum balance and nothing is wasted. In other words, please consider making discretionary donations in addition to your normal subscription.

Paul Schmidt

## New Materials

- *Trumpets and Other High Brass; A History Inspired by the Joe R. and Joella F. Utley Collection, Volume 1: Instruments of the Single Harmonic Series*, by Sabine Katharina Klaus, 2012. Published by the National Music Museum, University of South Dakota, ISBN 978-0-9848269-0-2. Obtained from the National Music Museum, <http://orgs.usd.edu/nmm>.

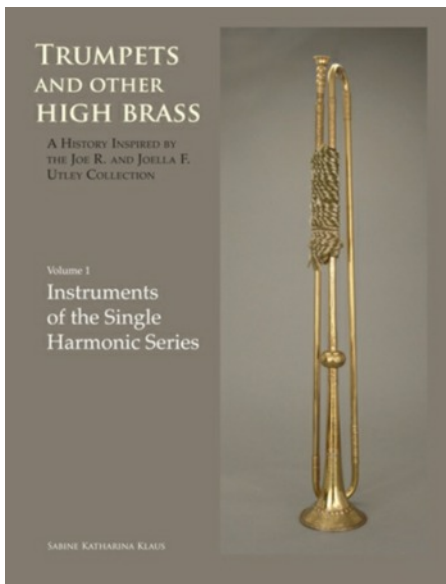
From humble beginnings with his purchase while in high school of a Conn trumpet in 1951, Joe Utley and his wife Joella accumulated brass instruments both common and unique. Paralleling their careers as medical doctors, they shared a passionate love of music in general and collecting interesting music making devices. Moving from Oklahoma to St. Louis, San Francisco, Kentucky, San Diego, and finally cities in North Carolina, Joe and Joella eventually retired to their unique house in the Appalachian foothills that was designed from the start to be not only a home but also a first class museum. Ultimately, they donated the entire collection to the National Music Museum in Vermillion, South Dakota. Musicologist Sabine Klaus, one of the curators of the museum and professor of music at the university, has been closely involved with the Utley collection for many years and has written many papers and given lectures on this collection. It is fitting that she be the one to document the collection through the series of volumes of which the first is the subject of this review.

This newsletter is not normally given to reviews of non-serpent related materials, and indeed this first volume of the series contains no chapters directly related to the serpent family. However, the second volume does feature the serpent and a separate review in this newsletter appropriately goes into some relevant detail. But the decision has been made to cover the series as it becomes available, albeit with less attention given to the non-serpent related volumes.

Volume 1 begins with a history of the Utleys and their collection, followed with a primer on the subject matter. It is worth noting here that while the Utley collection is indeed

focused on higher members of the brass family, it also includes examples of antique brasses in the lower ranges. It appears that Sabine Klaus will not be shy in covering lower instruments in this series that is theoretically exclusive to the smaller horns.

Chapter 1 concerns the truly natural ‘brass’ instruments, i.e. those where the sound originates with the buzzing of the player’s lips into naturally occurring objects such as conch shells, hollowed bones and animal horns. This discussion is not limited to pretty pictures of shells, but rather takes the time to delve into theoretical aspects such as resonances, harmonicity and impedance diagrams, and characteristics of the “mouthpieces” used for such primitive musical devices.



Chapter 2 is concerned with those slightly more developed brasses produced in various metals, such as the trumpets of Tutankhamun dating from 1330 BC, the third century BC Greek *salpinx*, the Roman *cornu* and *tuba*, the northern *lur*, Tibetan *dung-chen* temple horns, and less known examples such as the “plantation” horns of the American old south.

Starting with chapter 3, the instruments become more familiar and are more identified with western music. First, the progenitors of the natural trumpets are described, followed by the better established trumpets of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and leading into the heyday of the natural trumpet in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. With chapters 6 and 7, some newer designs and variations on the natural trumpet are described, and these mostly consist of the unusually folded designs and coiled trumpets.

Chapter 8 explores trumpet making and playing activities in parts of Europe other than the hotbeds of development in Germany and England. A highlight of this chapter is the box trumpets, where a tightly coiled trumpet fit into a metal can, with mouthpiece entering at the top and the bell defining the bottom edge of the can. Chapter 9 is devoted to bugles, hunting horns and post horns, fanfare trumpets and signal trumpets, and the lesser known Russian horns. This chapter

also reveals the rare walking-stick trumpet as well as the common megaphones and ‘speaking trumpets’. Having explored the instruments themselves, chapter 10 covers early trumpet mute designs.

The volume concludes with chapters on the tympani that were so often used with natural trumpets, the revival of the baroque trumpet, reproduction natural trumpets, and the Robert Barclay natural trumpet making classes.

Following the articles in each of the chapters, this volume includes a “checklist of instruments” in the Utley collection, each with a small photo, museum catalog number and basic specifications. There is also a well-done glossary of terms, which includes some nice illustrations, and of course the large bibliography and index.

Throughout this volume, the instruments are pictured in brilliant and well-lighted photography by Mark Olencki, although many instruments described and pictured are not actually in the Utley collection itself, and archive photos are used in these instances.

This volume comes with a DVD, placed in a plastic sleeve inside the front cover; there is also a CD/DVD sized paper envelope glued inside the back cover, which while empty could also be used to hold the DVD or another disk. In the review copy of the book, the DVD was badly blemished from friction within its sleeve, and indeed it was necessary to have it polished before it would play properly.

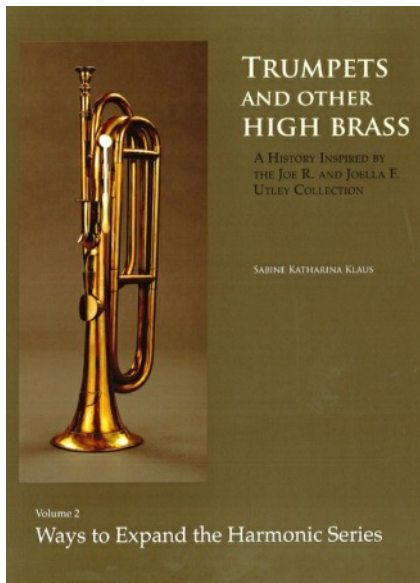
The DVD is a dual-sided disk, formatted per NTSC on one side and per PAL on the other side. The video was recorded in the museum section of the Utley home, and during its running time of just under 11 minutes, it presents a few brief playing examples of select instruments covered in the book. The musicians are Jeff Nussbaum on the shofar, Barry Bauguess and Nathaniel Cox and Crispian Steele-Perkins on the trumpets, and Richard Seraphinoff and Celeste Holler Seraphinoff on horns.



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Klaus has authored a book of high scholarly quality which remains quite accessible and easy to read by the layman. It is generously illustrated and well laid out. The book itself is fairly large at 11.5" x 9", and is reproduced on substantial gloss paper bound in a heavy hardcover. The price is a bit dear at \$120 US (plus shipping costs), which will unfortunately prevent many readers from purchasing it for their personal libraries. A quick check of area library catalogs suggests that this book may not be readily available in local libraries, but hopefully its affordable availability will improve with time.

● *Trumpets and Other High Brass; A History Inspired by the Joe R. and Joella F. Utley Collection, Volume 2: Ways To Expand the Harmonic Series*, by Sabine Katharina Klaus, 2013. Published by the National Music Museum, University of South Dakota, ISBN 978-0-9848269-2-6. Submitted by the National Music Museum for purposes of review, <http://orgs.usd.edu/nmm>.



Following the first volume in the series, *Instruments of the Single Harmonic Series*, Sabine Klaus has planned a series including *Volume 2: Ways to Expand the Harmonic Series*, *Volume 3: Valves Evolve*, *Volume 4: Heyday of the Cornet*, and *Volume 5: The Modern Trumpet*. As of 2013, only the second volume has arrived, and it is the subject of this review.

Volume 2 begins by demonstrating that the series is intended to be read as a whole, and as such each volume will not repeat information from the previous volume. An example of this is the absence of the history of the Joe and Joella Utley and how they came to accumulate their collection that serves as the inspiration for the books. Another is that, for the most part, the limitations of earlier high brass instruments and characteristics are presumed to be already understood, allowing the first chapter to start right off with an opening sentence of, "One of the ways to overcome the natural trumpet's limitation to one harmonic series is to add a telescoping slide." And so Chapter 1 takes us directly into

the subject of the slide trumpet, describing the Renaissance slide trumpet, the German baroque slide trumpet, the English flat trumpet (so named because one could lower, or *flatten*, the harmonic series by extension of a slide), and the English mechanical slide trumpet. The chapter concludes with a series of sections on various mechanisms for controlling the slides, and later developments of the slide trumpet. This is a large chapter that contains copious illustrations and photos.

Chapter 2 enters the world of the cornetto, or zink (zinck), and its relatives. Here are the fingerhole horns of Scandinavia, discussion of the cornetto in iconography, and descriptions of the cornetto in German, French and English treatises. This chapter introduces much of the raw information that has been the root of considerable controversy and confusion over the years, namely the definition of a bass cornett, whether it really existed, what it really was, and how it might be related to the serpent. One aspect of this confusion stems from the descriptions and measurements given in various treatises; Praetorius in his *De organographia* (1619) describes a *Groß Tenor-Cornet* as having a bore length 3-1/2 Brunswick feet, which is interpreted to be just under 33" (998.8mm), while Marin Mersenne mentioned the *basse des cornets* as having a bore of 4 Paris pieds (with the *pied du Roi* of that time equating to 326.596mm, so Mersenne's instrument would be about 43" (1306mm) long, a significant discrepancy in what is otherwise thought to be essentially the same kind of instrument. But then it is revealed that other, more standardized cornetts measured by both scholars exposed discrepancies in the actual units of measurement, so much of this must be taken with several large grains of salt. Just for purposes of comparison, a modern Monk tenor cornett measures about 35" (889mm), so even though historically a seemingly straight forward term like *basse* can be taken at face value, in another place or era it might be the same as *tenor*, or the units of comparison might be misunderstood. Even if for no other reason, this chapter is worthwhile for its discussion of this issue.

Later in this serpent-related chapter, James Talbot's view that the various terms *Cornon*, *Corno torto* and *Groß Zinck*, i.e. the *bass cornett*, are distinct from the instrument referred to as the *Groß Tenor Cornet*, and in fact the former is pitched an octave lower than the latter, making the bass cornett a new instrument unknown to Praetorius and not described in *De organographia*. Klaus elaborates by stating that Talbot certainly never saw an actual *bass cornett* and was basing his description on a misunderstanding of what Praetorius was trying to describe. Talbot then confuses everyone even more by later saying that the instrument is 4 or 5 feet long and not an 8 foot instrument in C, which it would have to be if it was an octave below the tenor. Klaus sums this section up when she writes, "he (Talbot) sowed the seeds for the confusion that lingers on in English cornetto terminology to the present day."

This fascinating chapter concludes with sections on cornetto designs, regional characteristics, and manufacturing

techniques, as well as some observations on the cornett's functions and uses. But the meat of this volume, at least from perspective of this newsletter, is the next chapter.

Chapter 3 is titled, *The Serpent – A Member of the Cornetto Family?* While the cornett originated as an evolution of the fingerhole horn, the serpent is usually thought to have spontaneously appeared at a specific time and place, and with a specific inventor. Klaus quotes the memoirs of Abbé Jean Lebeuf, “A Canon named Edmé Guillaume discovered the secret of turning a cornetto into the form of a serpent around 1590. It was used in the concerts given at his house, and having been perfected, this instrument has become common in the large churches.” Klaus then observes that Lebeuf did not cite a source for his information, and there are no other records that directly support his assertions. By the 20<sup>th</sup> century, an author wrote, “[The serpent's] invention is attributed, with true antiquarian generosity, to a French ecclesiastic of the Middle Ages, one Canon Edmé Guillaume, of Auxerre, about 1590; and the fact that the instrument was frequently used in continental churches seems to support this generally received tradition.” The perceived unreliability of the recorded origins of the serpent begs questions such as ‘Did it spring into existence when Edmé Guillaume *invented* it, or was it really just a step in a series of evolutionary steps from the cornetto?’, and ‘Did it possibly originate in Italy instead of France?’, and ‘Is it a member of the cornetto family, or a distinct and isolated member of the brass family?’.



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Klaus discusses the many instances where the unreliability of iconography has led people to false conclusions regarding possible predecessors of the serpent, and she makes distinctions between actual serpents and other serpentine horns. She mentions cornetts that had a more serpentine

shape than usual, and indeed having been referred to by the name *serpentin*, meaning in its derivation a ‘cornett in the form of a serpent’. Another cited source is a German mention of *schlangen cornet*, or ‘serpentine cornet’.

There follows a discussion of the distinctions, or lack thereof, between snake-shaped cornetts and what could be called “early serpents”. Klaus illustrates this point with several examples of cornetti made in the fanciful shapes of snakes, often with carved heads that have no acoustical function. All such examples feature the cornett's thumbhole, an important characteristic. She also makes another warning about reading too much into illustrations of apparently long-bored early serpents, specifically that many have their acoustical bell openings located far short of where the instrument appears to end, due to extraneous serpentine carvings and cosmetic extensions. One example, possibly Italian, which has been copied more than once by makers of reproduction instruments and based on illustrations rather than extant examples, actually ends acoustically at a pair of side holes located far short of the bell flare, and its air column is only slightly conical up to this point.

Klaus cites several examples of Italian instruments that approach a serpent's size and conicity, yet seem to be without all qualifying characteristics of what we know as serpents today. She also observes that many of the zoomorphic examples of proto-serpents were intended as props for underworld scenes in theatrical events. These support scholar Herbert Heyde's assertion that the serpent's evolutionary beginnings were in Italy instead of France. Klaus suggests that Edmé Guillaume's real contribution was in transforming a fanciful zoomorphic musical sculpture made for special events into the functional and useful instrument that was already well established by the year 1600. Indeed, her opinion hews close to previous statements by other early brass scholars regarding the serpent's origin and the Guillaume story.

Klaus then goes on to make comparisons between the cornetto and the serpent, mentioning features such as the thumbhole, or lack thereof, that are often cited as reasons why the serpent is not a kind of cornett, as well as wall thickness and conicity of the bore. By this point it is clear that she accepts the serpent as an evolutionary development of earlier zoomorphic oddities as undeniable fact. The often mentioned thumbhole issue is dismissed as she observes, “it should come as no surprise that the new instrument [the serpent] did not have a thumbhole, since the French cornetto did not have one either”, referring to a description of same in Chapter 2; the information about the French instrument is not well known. Additional transitional instruments from Italy are also discussed in this regard. She ends this section with, “On the basis of these arguments, it appears likely that the serpent was developed from Italian snake-shaped cornetti and transformed into a standardized instrument of the bass register at some point in the late sixteenth century, possibly in France. It subsequently led a somewhat independent existence from the cornetto family as a whole.”

Next in this same chapter is a lengthy coverage of different serpent designs and their regional distribution. The text then switches to the migration of the serpent to England and its uses there. Klaus mentions the infamous case of Handel including a serpent part in his *Music for the Royal Fireworks*, only to soon delete it. An interesting observation in this section is that the popular painting by Johan Zoffany, of the Sharp family preparing to play a concert on the Thames, shows the French style serpent in such detail that the bocal thumb screw characteristic of some Baudouin instruments. The English military serpent is also discussed, and several notable makers are given ample attention.

This chapter concludes with five pages describing the acoustics of the serpent from the player's perspective, much of the text here being quoted from an interview with Doug Yeo, plus a page covering the serpent's decline in the orchestral world of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Chapter 4 covers that little-known variant of the natural trumpet, the so-called "Invention trumpet". The name was based more on the Latin compound *in + ventus*, meaning that something is inserted into the windway, than on it being a new invention. This instrument was produced with multiple crooks that could be inserted in the middle of the tubing to put the instrument in different keys. Like the simpler stopped trumpet that did not have the multiplicity of crooks, both instruments were played using the hand in the bell to adjust pitch, much like the natural horn.

Chapter 5 explores the keyed trumpet, beginning with the transposing one-hole system and moving through the instrument's development up to the instrument known to Haydn and Hummel. Chapter 6 similarly covers the keyed bugle, with the invention of its more comprehensive keying system. This is the longest chapter in the book, and while it is not about the ophicleide, two pages at the end are provided for a brief mention.

Like Volume 1, the book concludes with a checklist of related instruments in the Utley collection. One bonus is found in Appendix III, which contains the text of the *Bill of Complaint by George Collins and Answer of the Defendant John Green Regarding the Patent Rights for the Keyed Bugle by Joseph Halliday*. Another bonus is Appendix IV, which is an excerpt from a letter by Henry Distin to Enderby Jackson, regarding the introduction of the keyed bugle in France and Russia. Of course there is also a sizable illustrated glossary, the bibliography, and the index.

As with the DVD in the first volume, this is a dual NTSC/PAL disk and it was recorded in the Utley home. Its musical selections are somewhat longer in duration, resulting in a running time of just over 17 minutes. Instruments from the book are demonstrated, including the slide trumpet, cornetto, metal serpent, Invention and stopped trumpets, keyed trumpet, and keyed bugle. The musicians are Barry Bauguess and Crispian Steele-Perkins on the trumpets, and Kiri Tollaksen on cornetts, Douglas Yeo on

serpents, and Ralph Dudgeon and Jeff Stockham on keyed bugles. Regrettably, this DVD suffers frequently from focus issues; sometimes the focus is just soft, and at other times the video camera's hunting for focus is readily apparent.

This is an excellent volume, and the significant chapter on serpent presents some information not found in most other references. As with the first volume of the series, it carries a hefty price tag.

There is some additional related information on these books in the *More Exciting News* section of this newsletter.

Please consider contacting your local library's research librarian to encourage that they acquire these books.

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## 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>  
(see Christopher Monk Instruments  
website URL at lower right)  
(*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*)

Serpents Ribo  
(c/o Pierre Ribo)  
Rue Van Oost, 40  
1030 Bruxelles  
Belgium  
Phone: 0032 497 574 496  
England

<pierre.ribo@souslesplatanes.be>

(*serpents*)

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

(*fiberglass serpents after Baudouin*)

Serpentones Lopez  
Juan Lopez Romera, maker  
<http://serpenton.com/>  
(*wooden serpents & cornetti*)

Derek Farnell  
82 Crumpsall Lane  
Manchester M8 5SG  
England

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

Wetter/Berger 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, both wood  
and carbon fiber*)

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

(*cornetti*)

Sam Goble Historical Mouthpieces  
phone: +44 (0) 77 8056 4370  
<www.samgoble.com>  
<info@samgoble.com>  
(*cornett and serpent mouthpieces*)

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



## Workshops

- Nigel Nathan wrote that he and Murray Campbell have agreed that the 2015 Serpentarium will return to Cornwall, being hosted by Nigel at Boswedden House, with the next Serpentarium in 2017 back at Carlops, near Edinburgh in Scotland. For the 2015 event, the late May bank Holiday in England and Memorial Day in the USA are on May 25, so that would be the Serpentarium weekend as usual. No further information is available at this time, but the next issue of this newsletter is expected to have more details.
- On March 29, the West Suburban Early Music Society, a diverse early music band in the Chicago area, held its annual all-day music festival, this time in the town of Naperville. Normally directed by Laura Kuhlman, who is also the president of the American Recorder Society, this workshop was led by Vicki Boeckman of Seattle, Washington. Vicki is a well-known performer, clinician and teacher of early and modern woodwinds, and taught at the Royal Danish Academy of Music in Copenhagen and the Ishøj Municipal School of Music for 23 years before settling in the Pacific northwest nine years ago. Her theme for the workshop was *Around the World in One Afternoon*, a bit of a misnomer since half of the morning was also involved.

The workshop's band was comprised of about 30 musicians, coming from Illinois, Wisconsin and Indiana. Instruments included all sizes and kinds of recorders, shawms, dulcians, crumhorns, other similar instruments, plus one contrabass racket and Paul Schmidt on serpent. The method of the workshop was for Vicki to distribute a new selection, discuss its context and composer, and then rehearse it fairly thoroughly before moving on to the next selection. The pieces played in the world tour were [from America] *To a Wild Rose* by Edward MacDowell, arranged by John Phelps, [Africa] *Naka ee tona (The Great River)* by Sören Sieg, three pieces from Wales arranged by Alyson Lewin, *Tros y Gareg (Over the Stone)*, *Bugeilio'r Gwenith Gwyn (Watching the Wheat)* and *Hela'r Ysgyfarnog (Hunting the Hare)*, [Norway] *Elegiac Melody No. 1 – Våren (Last Spring)* by Edvard Grieg, arranged by Norman Luff, [Italy] *Sonata a 5 for 2 Trumpets, 2 Violins and Bassoon* by Vincenzo Albrici, arranged by Philip Neuman, and finally [Germany] *Passacaglia* by Johann Christoph Pez.

The ensemble included a mixture of relative beginners as well as accomplished multi-instrumentalists. Much of the music was fairly challenging and the group enjoyed working it up under Vicki's baton. The concluding *Passacaglia* was a highlight due to extended technical passages in the large multi-part bass section, which included a large assortment of great bass recorders, double reeds, the racket and the serpent. This was the first time that some in the ensemble had seen or heard a serpent, and there were many favorable comments from the group, as well as from the director. After the workshop, many participants repaired to a local drinking establishment for beer and shop talk.

- This is a reminder that there is still an upcoming serpent festival this year, from May 1 through the 4, in Cerneux Gopdat, Switzerland. The details were in the September 2013 edition of this newsletter, which can be viewed at the Serpent Website if you don't still have your old copy.

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## 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. As of April 2012, all newsletters distributed in the European region will be electronic, not printed; newsletters distributed elsewhere remain in printed form.



## In Memoriam: Stephen Willis

Stephen Murrell Willis was born in Suffolk, England in 1929 and grew up in Dorchester. At the age of 8 he was accepted as a choir boy in Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, and it was there that he developed his love of singing and Renaissance music. After his National Service when he served in Germany as a cipher operative during the Berlin

airlift, he studied to become a lawyer. He practised law in Suffolk for several years during which time his three daughters and son were born. He sang in the Aldeburgh Festival Choir as a countertenor, later forming a choir from its members, The Suffolk Singers. In 1960 he moved to Sussex as a partner in a successful law firm. There he founded The Prodigal Singers, a highly polished small chamber group which gave concerts in local churches, and for many years performed music for Holy Week at Worth Abbey, Sussex. He enjoyed sailing, and with his second wife, Doris, sailed each summer in the Mediterranean. In 1975 he was appointed one of the first Solicitor Judges, a Recorder which was a part time post, while continuing his practice. In 1985 he was made a full time Circuit Judge based in Croydon, and he also appointed Magistrates. He had taken up the serpent, and attended the 1990 Serpent Celebration as a member of the huge serpent band that played at St. John's Smith Square in London.

On his retirement in 1995 Stephen and Doris moved to Paphos, Cyprus, where they built a beautiful villa. He continued his musical activities, organizing concerts in Paphos for the Italian Ambassador, as well as singing in the local choirs. He organized the Paphos Music Forum, a network to inform the public of musical events, and he and Doris organized Renaissance singing courses. His greatest achievement was to open The Friends' Hospice, the first in Paphos and the second in Cyprus. He loved life, his family and his cellar. He died peacefully on September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2013 after a short illness at the age of 84, at home with his family present. His funeral was held at Ayia Kyriaki Chapel (St. Paul's Pillar), one of the most ancient churches in Cyprus. Over 165 people attended the service in which music by Palestrina, Byrd & Tallis was played, and €2,700 was raised for the Hospice. He is buried in Cyprus.

Stephen's daughter, Jill Davies, who is a music agent handling mostly performers in the Early Music field, is organizing a concert to celebrate his musical life. It will be held on Sunday, April 27<sup>th</sup> at 3 pm in St. James's Church, Hampton Hill, followed by a tea party. Stephen's widow Doris has asked that the celebration be attended by serpent friends who are able to make it. Doris hopes that Daniel Serafin, a young player who bought Stephen's serpent, will be able to make an appearance.

## Where Serpents Gather

- Leonard Byrne of Spokane, Washington, wrote about his experiences being the *Serpent at the Symphony*:

On October 26 and 27, 2013 I had the opportunity to perform on serpent with the Spokane Symphony, playing Mendelssohn's *Reformation Symphony*. This was both very exciting and quite unexpected. There are very few symphonic works with serpent parts, and we play those works rarely. I've been the tubist with Spokane since 1975 and I only remember the *Reformation* appearing once, in

2007, and didn't expect to see it again in my tenure. In addition, in 2007, our then new Music Director, Eckart Preu, was clearly not interested in "experiments" and had vetoed the unwanted serpent at the first rehearsal. I was excited when I saw the *Reformation* on the schedule for 2013/2014 but had decided to not pursue including the serpent, especially since we had an ugly strike last year, and as a member of the orchestra committee I was prominent in those proceedings. Imagine my surprise in late August, when I received an email from Eckart asking whether ophicleide would be the correct instrument to use on the *Reformation*. I raced to respond that although I would be more than happy to play the part on ophicleide, I thought we should use serpent. Eckart agreed, and we were on.



*Luke Bakken, contrabassoon & Leonard Byrne, serpent*

Of course it is one thing to get the gig and quite another to actually pull it off. I had no interest in having the serpent be eliminated after the first rehearsal like in 2007. The part doubles the contrabassoon on the octave, and both the contra and the serpent only play in the last movement. The part is not trivial, but is not as technically challenging as, say, *Symphonie Fantastique*. I worked much harder preparing for this concert than I typically do on tuba. My efforts included not only working up the fast parts but extensive efforts playing along with recordings, recording myself, playing duets with my wife on cello, singing the part, and living with a tuner. My wife pointed out to me that the "hard" part was not going to be the technically challenging fast section, which takes place in the middle of a loud orchestral tutti, but the soft woodwind chorales - the sections I dubbed the "emperor has no clothes" sections. All the fast passagework in the world wouldn't matter if I didn't sound good on the chorales. Intonation was the real challenge and I was planning on leaning on the contra to keep me centered.



Our rehearsal schedule is four nights in a row (Tuesday - Friday), a dress rehearsal on Saturday morning, then concerts Saturday night and Sunday afternoon. The Mendelssohn was being used as the concert opener. The orchestra is currently using a setup with the basses behind the first violins on stage right, the cellos beside the firsts, and the brass in one long row with the bass trombone at far stage left. I was sitting beside the contra bassoon in the center of the stage, right in front of the trumpets and principal horn. I now know why our woodwind players wear earplugs. At the first rehearsal, my stress level went through the roof when I realized that our principal bassoon was sick, and Luke Bakken, our contra player, was playing principal. NO CONTRA. Yikes! When we got to the fourth movement I was glad I had worked so hard on intonation. The part is much harder to play with all the other bass or contrabass instruments sitting at least 30 feet away, the trumpets blaring in my ears, and the realization that the second bassoon part is not at all like the contra part. But it was ok. I had held my own, sounded fine, and actually contributed by being the only one on the part. It's nice when practice pays off.

At the concerts, Luke was back on contra and everything went fine. I felt much more secure with that contra right in my ear. From the recordings I would say the serpent was a small positive contribution, audible but just barely. I should say something about Luke's contra. He plays a Wolf Contraforte. It is by far the most robust, round, and full contra I have ever heard. In fact, it almost does not even sound like a contrabassoon. If Mendelssohn had had a contra like that, he probably would not have used a serpent double. On the loud *tutti's* I was giving it all I could through my Monk serpent with a Wick heavy wall Ultra Baritone mouthpiece, barely audible on the recording. The bonus for the concert was that I was brought out stage front to play *Happy Birthday* unaccompanied for the concert sponsor, a 90-year-old widow. She was delighted, and it might have been the only time most of the audience could actually hear me.



*Clark Wolf tries out Paul Schmidt's Kaiser serpent*

● On December 14, 2013, Paul Schmidt and Clark Wolf met in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, to play ophicleides as part of the larger TubaChristmas event taking place there that day. Paul and Clark first met at the Vintage Band Festival in Northfield, Minnesota, in July of 2006. Paul was playing a concert with the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade Band and Clark had come up from Iowa to hear the concerts. At that time, Clark was not yet an ophicleide player, but the fires were already burning. Because the two ophicleidists had not met since that time, and Cedar Rapids was more or less equidistant between their homes, it was decided to use the TubaChristmas event as an excuse to get together, talk shop and do some playing.

Clark was the first to arrive, and was already well established in the ensemble during rehearsal when Paul showed up somewhat late, having driven through a snow storm coming down from central Wisconsin that morning (another TubaChristmas in Stevens Point, Wisconsin, the previous night being the reason for that angle of approach). Clark was playing both double-belled euphonium and ophicleide, and Paul brought his ophicleide and a Kaiser church serpent. The organizer was very enthusiastic to have such instruments in the ensemble (although in truth he had been asked for his permission by email prior to the event), although initially it was hard to read the attitude of the director. During the break before the performance, Clark was able to try out the Kaiser serpent, probably his first serpent experience. The two also played some ophicleide duets for fun and to demonstrate for the other interested tuba players in the ensemble.



*Clark Wolf and Paul Schmidt play ophicleide duets prior to the Cedar Rapids, Iowa, TubaChristmas*

The concert went well, and the audience seemed enthusiastic in their reception of the concert in general and their interest in the ophicleides. Clark and Paul remained after the last tuba selection to play some duets for the audience, selecting from music from the same book as the Roving Ophicleides use at the Northfield events. The director made a point of telling the two how beautiful their duets sounded, which cleared up any reservations regarding how he felt about having the two horns in his band. Paul met Clark in the parking lot afterwards to check out Clark's other ophicleide that he had in his car, but the bitterly cold wind soon put an end to the meeting, and both had several hours of driving to get home again.



● Gary Nagels wrote, “I've been playing in a *Choro* band (Brazilian popular music from the early-mid 20th century), a group we formed last spring, and for the past couple of months we've been playing every Wednesday night at a bar/restaurant in Quebec city. It's a popular spot in town, there is always something going there and now we seem to be gathering a real following as lots of the same people show up every week. We hold what is referred to as a "roda", which is a sort of open rehearsal, and musicians often show up and sit in. Recently some Brazilian musicians have come in from out of town and have sat in.....it's great of fun. There seems to be a small Brazilian community in Quebec city and lots of them play an instrument. If not, they all recognize the tunes and know the words to the songs. They can't believe there is an ophicleide player in Quebec city playing *Choro* music. They have all seen pictures of the ophicleide in the ensembles of that time, but none of the Brazilian musicians have ever heard or seen one live. I wonder if anyone in Brazil still plays the instrument? Interesting times, all in all, a sort of ophicleide revival in some popular music styles. I wonder where else it was used besides Cuban dance bands and Brazilian *Choro*. I'm making a demo of the group in the coming weeks and I'll send a copy to the newsletter. The group consists of piano, clarinet, accordion, a singer, pandéro/percussion, guitar and my ophicleide; I play a few tunes on the trombone as well.

Another interesting project I'm involved in is a production of Molière's (pen name of Jean-Baptiste Poquelin) *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. We are presently in rehearsal and there will be about 30 shows at a theatre here in Quebec city (a big production). We are in costume on stage. The music is by Jean-Baptiste Lully and has been rearranged to sound very contemporary. The group consists of electric organ, clarinet, violin, singer, percussion, and I double on trombone, ophicleide and serpent..... all very strange but seems to work well. Lully and country & western! The costumes are over the top as well, so we'll see how it goes.

● On Friday, December 6<sup>th</sup> (and again on Sunday the 8<sup>th</sup>), the Chicago Symphony Orchestra performed the Berlioz *Symphonie Fantastique* as part of their *Beyond the Score*



Gene Pokorny and Matt Gaunt onstage at the CSO

events. Conceived by creative director Gerard McBurney, the first half of the program was a dramatized recreation of what was going on with Berlioz when he was inspired to compose the piece. The composer was portrayed by actor Matthew Krause, accompanied by actress Lindsey Marks as his great love and inspiration, and tenor John Irvin. As Krause's Berlioz wandered the small raised stage set up behind the orchestra, and Marks and Irvin performed from the choir gallery above that, director Stéphane Denève led the orchestra through brief musical segments to introduce the themes.

The highlight of this pre-concert dramatization was when CSO tubist Gene Pokorny on serpent joined with associate CSO tubist Matt Gaunt on ophicleide to play the *Dies Irae* from the *Witches' Sabbath* section of the symphony. Both players had needed to learn the instruments especially for this performance. Paul Schmidt and John Weber were contacted about obtaining instruments. Gene was able to borrow a Monk military serpent from Mickey Moore, and Matt borrowed John's ophicleide. John wrote about this, “Gene Pokorny asked if I had an ophicleide. I believe Josh, my tenant, told him that I had one. So I'm renting my ophicleide to the CSO for the concerts. I realized that the ‘A’ key's post on the horn was loose and almost coming off. Dana Hofer did the repair work. My rental fee for the ophicleide was two tickets to the Friday concert for me and my friend Sara, plus the \$50 Dana charged me.”

Many local tubists attended the two concerts. Paul Schmidt joined John Weber and Sara for the Friday performance, and met with Gene and Matt onstage to discuss their preparations and views on the performance and to take photos. When the show started, the dramatization portion was very effectively done, with nicely choreographed projections above the stage, as well as some well-chosen stage props (including an old barrel stove that ‘Berlioz’ used to incinerate discarded drafts of his musical ideas) enhanced the entertainment value of the show. Gene and Matt did a nice job of playing their unfamiliar instruments, and the audience was appreciative. Indeed, audience comments overheard by Paul during the intermission were mostly about the two antique instruments and the good impression they had made. After intermission, the actual performance of the symphony took place, although Gene and Matt reverted to modern tubas for this. A post-concert reception took place, although John and Sara were unable to stay for it, Paul was able to stick around and met Gene and another local tubist, Lauren Knust, for further discussion and shop talk.

Gene sent out an email afterwards, “I think I can speak for Matt and myself. We both had a great time learning these instruments and, for me, it was great to get closer into the genesis and thought process of Berlioz's mind that led him to use these instruments for the *Dies Irae* in his symphony. I will remember this experience profoundly. John, thanks so much for providing the ophicleide and, indeed, your willingness to provide a serpent as well. Your participation and enthusiasm led to yet another premiere milestone in the

CSO's *Beyond the Score* projects. Thanks for being a part of the team."

Creative director Gerard McBurney emailed, "Dear John, Matt, Paul, Gene and Beth. These last few days have been a dream and I am deeply indebted to all of you for your amazing contributions. Truly, *Beyond the Score* is a collective effort, a village in itself. Without so many adventurous people it would not be the half of what it is. And we have had such glorious feedback from members of the public, often talking about the impression made on them by the Serp and the Clyde."

The show was well received by the local media. Chicago Tribune critic John von Rhein wrote, "The players all joined in gamely, none more so than CSO tuba virtuoso Gene Pokorny and Matt Gaunt, who delivered the medieval chant *Dies irae* (which Berlioz incorporated into the *Witches' Sabbath* finale of the symphony) on the sour-sounding serpent and wheezy ophicleide, respectively. Berlioz included these now-obsolete instruments in his original scoring but later dropped them because he felt their timbres did not blend with the rest of the orchestra."

It is very rare, almost unheard of, in the Chicago area to have such a prominent display and exposure for the serpent and its brethren. Kudos to Gene and Matt and the CSO directors for having the courage and enthusiasm to go out on a limb and make it happen.



*Christmas Brass at the Hennage Auditorium  
L-R Gabe Stone, Steve Ruckle, Stephen Christoff*

*Christmas Brass* was the title of a program at Hennage Auditorium in Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia, on December 7, 2013, given by Gabe Stone, Stephen Christoff and Steve Ruckle. The group started off with two serpent trios (using bass serpents in C and D and tenor serpent), *Here We Come a Wassailing* and Isaac Watts' carol *Cradle Song*. Gabe used serpent in several other numbers on the program including *Greensleeves*, *Nonsuch*, and *Ding Dong Merrily on High*. There was singing along with instrumentals using, in addition to serpent, trumpet, trombone, tuba, sackbut, guitar, flugelhorn, and post horn. Many varieties of Christmas music were presented, from well-known carols to *Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer* and a multiphonic *Silent Night* tuba solo/duet by Gabe. My husband Robert and I had moved at a very leisurely pace to the hall only to overhear someone say it was sold out, so we hurried in to get our favorite (unreserved) seats. Yes, it was

sold out. The crowd loved it. The evening before the concert we had enjoyed dinner at Christiana Campbell's Tavern (part of Colonial Williamsburg) and were delighted to discover that Gabe Stone was providing the entertainment. Williamsburg musicians move from room to room serenading the diners. Gabe presented an excellent program of music and information on the serpent, closing the evening with what has become his signature serpent work at Williamsburg, a virtuosic performance of *Rakes of Mallow*.

*submitted by Therese Wagenknecht*



*Gabe Stone at Christiana Campbell's Tavern  
in Colonial Williamsburg*

## New Contrabass Serpent

J.C. Sherman, a musician and instrument maker in Bedford, Ohio, has built a new contrabass serpent (CBS). As with other extant CBS instruments, including the original example known as the "Anaconda", the instrument is an octave below the usual bass serpent, and thus has twice the bore length. Besides that original Anaconda which dates from 1840, the other known CBS instruments include the "American Anaconda" made by Steve Silverstein around 1986, "George" which was made by Christopher Monk in 1990, and "George II" which was completed in 1997 by Keith Rogers. The former are all in traditional serpentine form, but two more non-serpentine shaped CBS's were also previously made; "Patrick" made by Paul Schmidt in 2003, and "Sylvester" made by Bill Broom in 2004. Since all of the CBS examples except the American Anaconda still exist, Sherman's new CBS qualifies as the 7th known to have been produced, and the 6th extant CBS. It is the 5th known and 4th extant CBS to have a serpentine shape.

It is a tradition that all CBS's since the Anaconda are named after the saint's feast day that falls closest to when the new instrument is first sounded in its completed form. Since Sherman's new CBS was given its first toot on St. Gabriel's Day, September 29, 2013, the horn was dubbed "Gabriel". It is made completely of metal, so this the only metal CBS. Like the historic serpents, this instrument has only 6 holes,





*Gabriel, the new contrabass serpent, with Monk bass serpent*

and they are covered by copper keys. Gabriel was painted black to match the patina of traditional black-leather serpents. While some parts of the instrument were borrowed from sections of other large brass instruments, several feet of Gabriel are hand-made from sheet metal. The mouthpiece is also hand made. It is in 16' CC, modern pitch.

Sherman wrote to the newsletter to tell Gabriel's story. "This was a three step project spanning seven years, beginning with an "AHA!" moment while looking at the last curve of a disassembled sousaphone, and inspired as well by reading about the other CBS instruments in existence at the time. My approach, initially, was to make it twice the length of a Monk serpent, and to double the area of the cross sections and tone holes. The only exception was the mouthpiece receiver on the end of the bocal, which is a typical tuba-sized opening but not quite equal to double the area.



*J.C. Sherman with his contrabass serpent "Gabriel"*

"After meeting Craig Kridel a year later, I learned I had no business working on this project! Despite being a long-time ophicleidist, I couldn't control a serpent at gun-point! After this meeting, while it ultimately led to the manufacture of my serpent mouthpieces, I tabled the CBS. Fast forward to 2013, and I had several years of successful serpentering under my belt, and had made or rehabilitated several serpent-related instruments, and felt competent to examine the half-finished CBS with a fresh look.

"The bocal was a giant challenge, being more than 42 inches in length, and needing to be hand formed from sheet brass. This was a BIG challenge! After that was made and bent, I installed the keywork and tooted. It was St. Gabriel's Day, September 29, 2013). I wasn't happy with the keywork, so I tabled it again until February 2014. I created new positive-acting keys (they close the holes when the keys are pressed) with hand-formed key cups, and installed them and finished it again. The key hinges and part of the levers were re-purposed from modern rotary valve horns. Besides the key cups, the key supports and connecting rods were also hand made. With the new keywork, it's robust and more comfortable. I made a unique new mouthpiece just for it, turned from Olivewood, based on descriptions of the Wood brothers' original Anaconda mouthpiece, and tempered by my experiences with making the Rogers mouthpieces.

"Those of Gabriel's bows that are finished in black are pre-fabricated, chosen from various tubas to make the taper I wanted. The bell rim was made 7 years ago, hammered over a bell wire and soldered. The bocal, as previously mentioned, is handmade, though since my lathe cannot accommodate making a mandrel 42 inches long, it was hammered over a straight rod, end over end, then hammered with dent balls to round. It was then annealed, filled, then bent to shape, then the hand-made tenon fabricated over a properly sized mandrel. The receiver was a tuba receiver, which coupled gapless with the bocal, could accommodate a wide range of mouthpieces for its ultimate owner.

"This CBS was made to be played vertically, either on a stool or on a tuba stand with the player standing. However, it can be used comfortably at an angle on a standard chair, and can even accommodate an English under-hand grip in this posture. But it is really designed for an over-hand grip.

"Gabriel was a challenge to myself to make another fully capable CBS. Originally meant for me, I'm now a full-time business man as well as a musician and instrument maker, so I don't have the luxury to hang onto this, so it's for sale now for a negotiable \$7,500. But I'm having a ball with it right now!"

Sherman may be contacted by phone 440-317-0214, by email [jc@jcsherman.net](mailto:jc@jcsherman.net), and his website URL is [jcsherman.net](http://jcsherman.net). Gabriel can be heard in two YouTube videos:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=pERBzBBepGc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pERBzBBepGc)  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=a3CGZ1DNep4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a3CGZ1DNep4)

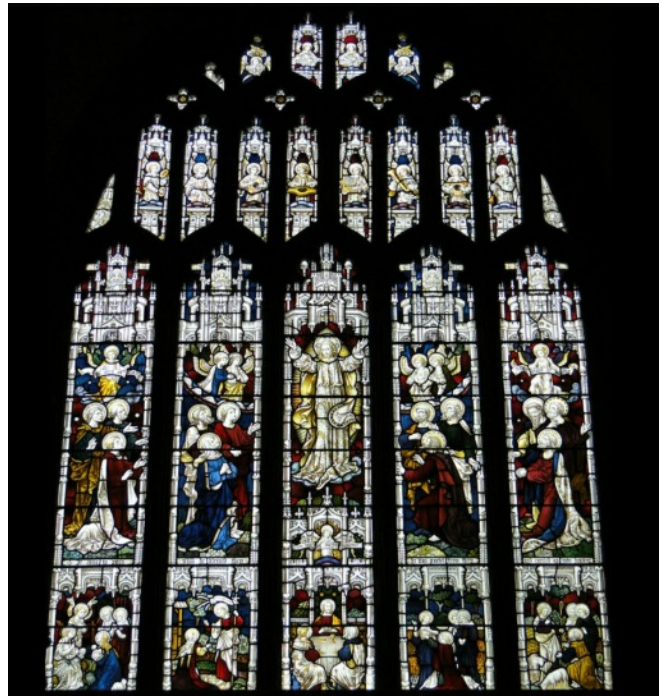
## More Exciting News

● Michele Lomas sent in a couple of photos she took of a stained glass window in Croscombe Church, Somerset, which has purportedly has a picture of an angel playing an ophicleide. Croscombe is a tiny village located on the A371 highway between Wells and Shepton Mallet, about 20 miles south of Bristol. Formally known as the Church of Saint Mary the Virgin, the structure was built in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. Further research, mostly gleaned from the writings of Valerie Stevens, a Croscombe resident who recently passed away, as well as from members of the organization Friends of Saint Marys Croscombe, reveals the following information. The church's original stained glass windows were removed during the reformation, and further damage was done during the puritan era. While other windows in the church were replaced by famous stained glass artist Sir Ninian Comper, the largest window at the chancel, or altar, end of the church was done in 1893 by the prolific and well respected stained glass firm of Clayton & Bell. It was done as a memorial to prominent local Croscombe lawyer John Nalder. Besides the main window, Nalder's family commissioned Clayton & Bell to do two smaller windows to either side of the chancel, depicting his family members, a compromise allowed by church fathers in return for the gift of the large window.

*Church of Saint Mary the Virgin, located in Croscombe, England*



The large main panels of the window depict Jesus ascending, flanked by angels, the Virgin Mary, and the Apostles. A series of smaller vertical panels above the main panels depict the eight members of an angelic orchestra. From left to right, their instruments are cymbals, what looks like a brass dulcian, a harp, a dulcimer, portative-lap organ, bass horn or ophicleide, a zither, and a shawm. The artists were not trying to depict instruments known in biblical times, but rather gave it a more Victorian twist. As the fanciful large brass instrument clearly has finger holes and keywork, but only on



*East window at chancel of Croscombe Church*

the smaller vertical tube section (look at the angel's right hand), it may be inspired more by a keyed bass horn than an ophicleide. But at the same time, the artists would have been more likely to have familiarity with the ophicleide.

*Clayton & Bell's stained glass panel, part of the chancel window of Croscombe Church, depicting an angel playing some sort of bass horn.....*

*.....or.....maybe....*

*was it supposed it be an ophicleide???*



● In the 2013 movie *The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug*, starring Ian McKellen and Martin Freeman, and directed by Peter Jackson, audiences flocked to theaters to see the stupendous and eponymous giant flying serpent. But only the careful watcher will have noticed that another serpent appears briefly, but is not heard, in a musical celebration in Laketown before Bilbo and Thorin's Company proceed to the lonely mountain Eribor. This serpent is brown in color and has a hexagonal cross section,



similar to the modern do-it-yourself patterns produced by Scott Hall.

- Doug Yeo wrote to inform the readership about the Gallica Bibliothèque Numérique website, <http://gallica.bnf.fr>. Although this is French website, there are other languages available via a pull-down menu located at the top of the main screen. This is a great resource for manuscripts, sheet music, periodicals, artwork, etc. For example, after typing “ophicleide” into the search box and clicking the OK button, a large list of matches appears. On the left of the screen are options to narrow the search results by category, or by author, etc. Selecting “image”, up pop a few illustrations of ophicleides. One that appears twice is a placard for a comedy in one act called *L'amour dans un ophiclède*, by librettist Charles Louis Étienne Nutter; the poster illustration was by an artist named Lhéritier who lived for most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This illustration appears in this newsletter. For the serpent and ophicleide players, this resource links to an amazing number of methods and other free downloads. By the way, the script for the above mentioned play can also be downloaded from this same website.



Poster for the play  
“L'amour dans un  
Ophiclède” by  
Charles Nutter

- Robert Wagenknecht wrote about another serpent sighting in film. The 1977 PBS Masterpiece Theatre television series *Poldark* featured serpent in one episode. The show was about the gallant Captain Ross Poldark and his adventures following the American Revolution, based on the novels by Winston Graham. The show is available on DVD from Acorn Media #AMP-8602. In *Poldark - The Complete Collection: Series 2, Episode 6*, the serpent appears starting at 8 minutes and 12 seconds into the episode, as part of an outdoor wedding celebration. The serpent is both seen and heard in three brief scenes.

- Another in the series of serpent and ophicleide performances by French virtuoso Patrick Wibart appears on YouTube at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=n-Sbq-XL\\_VU&sns=em](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n-Sbq-XL_VU&sns=em). The selection is *Tota pulchra es* by Bassano and Palestrina, performed by Ensemble Anamorphoses, which is comprised of Patrick Wibart on serpent, Romain Falik on théorbo, and Justin Glaie on Archlute.

- After being out of touch for several years, composer Simon Proctor has resurfaced with a new stable mailing address, website, email address, home phone and mobile phone: The Dairy House, Kirkdale, Loose, Maidstone ME15 0EA, England. Phone: 07922-111-695 or 01622-743-801,

Email is [simon.proctor.music@gmail.com](mailto:simon.proctor.music@gmail.com), and his new website URL is [simonproctor.info](http://simonproctor.info).

- As mentioned in the September 2013 edition of this newsletter, ophicleide virtuoso Nick Byrne is in the process of recording the *Brass From the Past: Suite for Ophicleide & Orchestra* by William Perry. This composition is also known by its alternate title of *Ophicleide Concerto*. Prior to the formal recording project, he premiered the work in late 2013 with the Brown University Orchestra, Paul Phillips conducting. The entire performance may be seen on YouTube in four segments that correspond to the movements of the suite. *Movement 1, Blue Ophicleide* may be seen at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=kfluK\\_h1lns](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kfluK_h1lns), *Movement 2, Military Ophicleide* is at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=QzOO3nlv7zM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QzOO3nlv7zM), *Movement 3, Pastorale Ophicleide* is at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=D8HPDFtMyQY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D8HPDFtMyQY), and *Movement 4, Latin Ophicleide* is at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=mM-CMcRwTQU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mM-CMcRwTQU). This is a fine performance by both soloist and orchestra.



Ron Johnson with his collection, including the Monstre

● Many readers will recognize the name of Ron Johnson, the Cooperstown, NY multi-instrumentalist who owns the Robb Stewart Monstre Ophicleide, formerly belonging to Phil Palmer, and who has twice loaned it to Tony George in England for use in performances of Mendelssohn's *Elijah*. At the request of your editor, Ron wrote about his serpent-related activities (with some editorial paraphrasing). "I'm doing a program on the 21st and 22nd of March using my Kaiser church serpent. The program consists of show tunes and crazy stuff which is a blast! I still play my contrabass 'monstre' ophicleide all the time. Rehearsals begin in a few weeks for the Cooperstown Community Band's summer weekly concerts at one of the big hotels in the area, and I am also playing with the Oneonta City Band. The 'monstre' is always an immediate success wherever it goes. Otherwise not a lot of call for ophicleide in this area unfortunately. People here seem to see my love for the ophicleide and serpent as being rather "out there", which I consider a compliment!

I am sending a picture that was taken the day of a recent performance with the Fly Creek Philharmonic, where I also played the serpent and helicon. Another picture shows me with the huge shipping container that we've used the last two times the monster went to the U.K. I thought that putting "Ophicleides Are Not Extinct" on the side of the container was really rather clever and quite appropriate. However, the Customs officials in New York didn't think so. They didn't know what an ophicleide was, so just to be safe they sent it back to Cooperstown, only a few days before it was to be used in London. I later learned from Customs that they thought I was illegally shipping an animal called an ophicleide out of the US (of course I also had the instrument's name of "George" stenciled on the end of the container as well). Needless to say my shipping practices have changed! Oh well, it was very crazy and did cause somewhat of a panic, but finally it was trucked back to New York and arrived in the UK just in time for the performance. OPHICLEIDES ARE NOT EXTINCT!



Ron Johnson with the shipping crate used to send his Monstre ophicleide to England twice for performances of Mendelssohn's "Elijah"

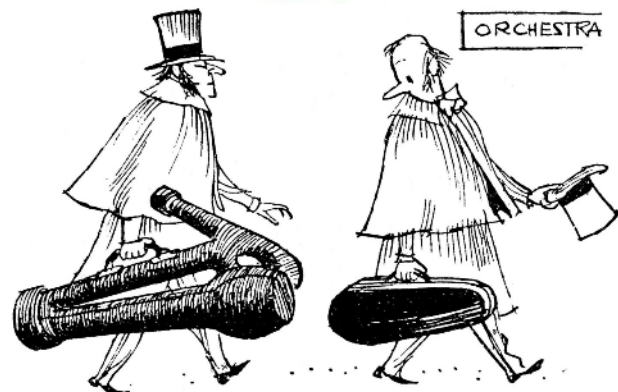
● The principal photographer for the books in the *Trumpets and Other High Brass* series, as reviewed in the *New Materials* section of this newsletter, was Mark Olencki of Spartanburg, South Carolina. Mark provided information on the tricky process of photographing brass instruments. He had some spare equipment, and was able to set up a specialized studio in the basement of the Utley house, so that everything would be in place and ready whenever an opportunity arose to photograph one or more instruments. This setup remained in place for almost seven years. Since not all the horns in the book were part of the Utley collection, the museum flew him up to Vermillion, South Dakota, to use his same photographic technique on instruments in that collection.

Mark's technique, while not unique to him alone, was basically to assemble two white tents, through which some combination of fixed lamps and flash lamps would illuminate the contents of the tent from all directions on the outside. One tent was small and on a table top, while the other tent was larger and on the floor. Each tent had a slit through which the camera lens was able to shoot the instrument inside. Mark recalls that he had 'a blast' doing this project. He and Sabine Klaus collaborated on how each instrument would be presented, each having ideas and noticing things that might have escaped the other. He also participated in doing some still photography on musicians who came to play the instruments for the book and/or the accompanying DVD. He volunteered his recollections of shooting photos of Doug Yeo with the metal serpents.

Mark has since retired from running his own photography business, and is now the staff photographer for Wofford College in Spartanburg, where Dr. Joella Utley is on the college's board of trustees.



Bass Horn, wood and brass with a globular bell and three brass keys, possibly an experimental model by Frichot (the inspiration for the cartoon below)



cartoon from the August 22, 1951 edition of PUNCH reproduced with permission of Punch Limited [www.punch.co.uk](http://www.punch.co.uk) reproduction prohibited outside of this newsletter